

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

Why take part?

Although previous Takeover Days had been enjoyable, staff felt they wanted to develop the programme to increase the impact on the children and the museum. Takeover Day was also a good choice for the museum to initiate new partnerships with several local schools.

Who took part?

Twenty primary and secondary pupils with additional needs from a Specialist Academy, the museum's first partner school. After discussions with museum staff, the school split the pupils into four groups. Pupils were selected for the teams according to how staff anticipated they would respond to each task or benefit from developing particular skills. For example, a reading support group were selected to work on interpreting a story for toddlers which helped develop literacy skills.

What did they do?

Between July and November there was a programme of museum visits, in-school sessions and interactions with museum staff to familiarise the children with the museum and their roles. Museum staff spent time understanding the range of needs of the children and learning from school staff to create a programme that would offer something for every pupil.

As part of the preparation, children:

- Watched a film about the museum and discussed roles
- Visited the museum for a familiarisation tour
- Observed a toddler group session and designed their own session
- Took part in workshops to explore concepts of curation and selected objects for a display

How did they spend their time on the day?

Children in each team carried out specific tasks and implemented their plans:

- The Curatorial team mounted an exhibition of objects they had chosen, enhanced by music and artworks
- Meet and Greeters used maps and guides to orientate visitors around the museum, informing them of what they could see
- Visitor Information Centre hosts welcomed visitors, counted cash and used the card machine to issue entry tickets
- Mini Mammoth leaders led a toddler session, performed their dance piece, helped children with the craft activity they had designed, signed the story, prepared and served snacks

What happened next?

The museum has already begun working with the school to develop further opportunities for pupils, including establishing a young curators' group. There are plans for reciprocal staff training, and reviewing the inclusivity of exhibitions. Takeover Day has given museum staff confidence to extend opportunities to pupils with more profound needs as well as older students.

'Severndale have become our partner school which gives us an opportunity to influence their curriculum planning. It's a reciprocal relationship, they're improving our practice, we're hopefully improving theirs and giving them a range of new and exciting opportunities.' Learning & Communications Manager, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery