

Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey

Why take part?

Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey is a museum with displays of farmland life and a historic abbey on site. The Education Officer first heard about Takeover Day at a SHARE Museums East meeting. As part of Norfolk Museums Service, SHARE is funded to do Museum Development in the East of England. SHARE gave eight museums a small budget to develop and participate in a Takeover Day. The Education Officer discussed Takeover Day ideas with the Kids in Museums Project Director and the other museum representatives at a sharing meeting. One of the museum's trustees was a school governor and invited the Headteacher to the museum to discuss Takeover Day. They were delighted with the idea and themed a Takeover Day which complemented the museum and covered the national curriculum.

Who took part?

95 children from Years 5 and 6 (9-11 year olds). Prior to Takeover Day, the Education Officer visited the school to work with the children. The museum is closed from November to March, so 70 children (8-9 year olds), their families and selected guests were invited as visitors on the day. The children travelled to the museum by coach and each year group was split with half visiting in the morning and the other half in the afternoon.

What did they do?

Children took on the following roles:

- Visitor Service Assistants – opened and closed the site, welcomed visitors and guided them into the entrance kiosk, took visitor details at the reception desk and handed over to the child tour guides
- Tour Guides – prepared their own tours in advance of Takeover Day and led tours, explained and interpreted the buildings to the visitors on the day itself
- Press Officers – wrote a press release modelled on the museum's standard press release. Designed an invitation for the guests who acted as visitors on the day
- Curators – visited the collection before the day, made posters of their interpretation of the artefacts and set up the display in the temporary exhibition space
- Café Assistants – took orders in the café and waited on tables
- Performers – at school, the children had learnt Plainsong, a medieval form of singing. All the children were involved in the performance at the end of their session to close the visitors' experience in the abbey

How did they spend their time on the day?

The children arrived in medieval costume to reflect abbey life. They performed a range of roles and rotated their jobs during the day, apart from the tour guides who only led tours. Splitting the day meant that the children could experience different roles during the day.

What happened next?

Being part of the SHARE group enabled the Education Officer to find practical support when planning the day, share resources and gain the confidence to try something new. The museum and the school have developed a close working relationship on which to build future projects. The museum staff benefitted from working together on a joint project to support the children on Takeover Day.

'Our organisation achieved a higher profile in the local community, both through the participating school and the visiting parents of the children involved. The day was also an excellent bonding exercise within the museum, bringing all the different teams together to achieve a result which was enjoyed by everyone.' Education Officer, Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey