

CASE STUDY I

FORDINGBRIDGE MUSEUM

HAMPSHIRE

Why take part?

A completely volunteer-run museum, one of the volunteers has a background in education and is passionate about proactively involving children in History. The museum volunteers put in a lot of effort to maintain and open the museum and felt it would be a rewarding experience for them to see the museum being accessed by a young audience.

Who took part?

22 Year 6 pupils. One of the museum volunteers sent emails to local primary schools and made follow up calls until a school responded.

What did they do?

The museum is normally closed during the winter months. On Takeover Day the children organised a special opening and guided visitors around.

How did they spend their time on the day?

An initial meeting between teachers and museum volunteers helped identify areas of the museum that the children could be responsible for and tasks they could undertake.

Museum volunteers visited the school to explain the challenge to the children. They provided information and stories about the town and exhibits and the pupils also carried out their own research.

A rota was organised by the school so that the children had the opportunity to try all the roles and talk to visitors about different exhibits. Some of the children dressed in Victorian costumes provided by the museum from its collection of dressing up clothes.

What happened next?

Getting visitors on a day that was in the museum's closed season presented a challenge. The children invited their relatives to visit and the event was publicised in the media and around the town. As a result the museum received over 60 visitors in two hours, many of whom had not been to the museum before. Visitor comments were very positive and an unexpected bonus was that visitors were particularly generous with donations on the day.

The school was extremely pleased with the day and asked about repeating the experience before they had even got back on the bus. The museum has loaned the school some items to use with pupils and intend to have more contact during the course of the year. Pictures drawn by the children were displayed at the museum's Christmas open day.

The museum volunteers are keen to run more Takeover Days and offer the opportunity to other schools as well.

'The best part of the day for us was when the children, without prompting or encouragement, told us how much they had enjoyed the day. Two of them said to me that it was the best out of school activity they had had and the teachers reported that the children were "buzzing" when they got back to school.'

