Heritage Lottery Fund helps Wolsingham Primary School unlock 100 years of history

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Celebrating the school's centenary year, this heritage research project will contribute to a year of activities for the school and the market town of Wolsingham. Pupils from the school will join parents, grandparents and members of the wider community in exploring Wolsingham's interesting past.

This celebratory year will involve a variety of events including activities to mark the Jubilee and the Olympics. Beginning with a tree planting event, supported by botanist, Dr David Bellamy, it will build up to a celebratory Centenary week in May. This will include; a Mini Olympic day in the style of the 1912 Stockholm Olympics where the children will wear historic costumes and take part in sporting and arts events from the period, to coincide and compare with our own Olympic year.

Expo Chef will be working with pupils to demonstrate the changes in diet between traditional British food in 1911 and an athlete's diet for the 2012 Olympics. Pupils will be participating in RoboSports, an initiative aimed at young engineers designed and led by 'Learning beyond the boundary'. Local Folk Duo 'Brother Crow' are also helping the pupils to write a song about the history of the school and this will be performed to parents.

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "HLF is thrilled to support such an exciting project that will make the most of all the important events coming up this year including the Jubilee and the Olympics. This is much more than just a school history project, it will give everyone in Weardale an opportunity to join in and explore their own local history and learn about the first hundred years of Wolsingham Primary School."

The school has also commissioned researchers from the Durham County Council Records Office to produce packs for pupils of all ages to research the school and their own family history. The pupils will also visit the local church and its graveyard to explore any connections with the school and past pupils. All of this work will result in an information booklet which will be published and distributed at the end of the project.

Activities outside of school include a series of 'local history' visits to places such as Beamish Museum, Bowes Museum, Middleton Outdoor Learning Centre and the Durham Light Infantry Museum.

A senior genealogist, working closely with the Durham Archives, will run a special 'family tree club' where several generations of residents from the surrounding area can research and gather information on their family trees confirming any connections with Wolsingham. This will be supported by use of the schools IT facilities and will culminate in a visit to the Durham County Records Office.

The school will throw open its doors between Thursday 24 and Saturday 26 May to former pupils, staff and residents of Weardale for a variety of events including the sealing of a time capsule made by local trades people and volunteers; model lessons including the modern curriculum and classes sharing research information from the decades they have researched; an exhibition of records and artefacts relating to the history of the school; stories form the history of Wolsingham and tours of the school conducted by pupils and staff.

The week will also signal the end of the search for the schools oldest living former pupil or staff member with introductions to the youngest pupils in the schools nursery and an interview by the student council. The week will conclude with a Friday afternoon tea shop run by the ‘Friends of Wolsingham Primary School’ and staffed by pupils. Fairtrade only of course! Finally a ‘Family fun day’ arranged by the Friends group including a barbeque lunch with performances from local community groups.

John Armitage, Headteacher of Wolsingham Primary School, commented: “The centenary of the school is a fantastic learning opportunity for pupils, staff and Weardale residents. The activities and events, organised across the year, will bridge the gap between life in 1911 and 2012 in Weardale and the local area and allow different generations to learn together and share knowledge with each other. The most important aspect for our school though is that the events and activities have all come from ideas generated by our own pupils and have been driven by pupils, staff parents and local community members and groups all working together.

"The funding from HLF has allowed us to make a lot of these ideas reality and the publication of ‘Wolsingham Primary School; The first 100 years’ will leave a clear legacy to evidence the impact of the events across the centenary year, as well as a resource to support generations of future learners.

Situated on the edge of the North Pennines, acting as the gateway to Weardale, Wolsingham is a beautiful rural market town steeped in history, standing in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Further information

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