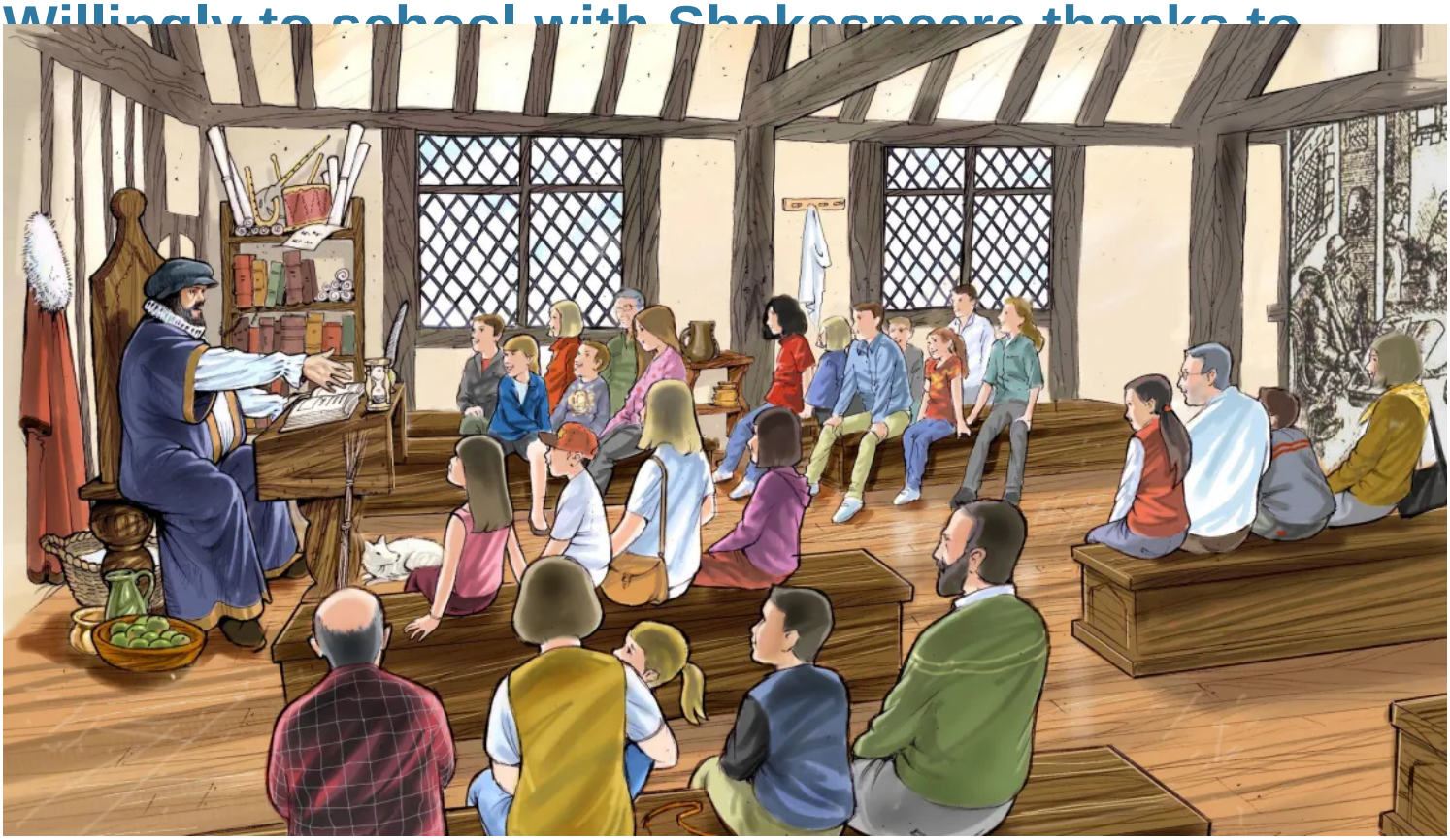
Willingly to school with Shakespeare thanks to



Artist's impression of how people can get involved in Shakespeare's school

Not far from his birthplace, the Guildhall at the King Edward VI School was where Shakespeare began his literary journey and, as the town’s first theatre, was where he would have seen some of his first performances.

Dating from 1420 and still used for teaching each morning, it remains largely unaltered from Shakespeare’s time but is in need of conservation work to secure its future. The project will also enable new audiences – particularly primary school children from the local area, Coventry and Birmingham – to follow in the great playwright’s footsteps.

A major part of the project will conserve a group of rare mediaeval paintings. Other works will include vital repairs to the timber structure, upgrades to the interior and the heating system and the installation of an accessible toilet and a lift. This will allow the Guildhall to function effectively in the 21st century while ensuring nearly 600 years of heritage is protected.

Reyahn King, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: “The Guildhall is a vital link in Stratford-upon-Avon’s Shakespearian and mediaeval heritage, so we’re delighted to be able to help secure its future thanks to money raised by National Lottery players. This project will enable the wider public and tourists from around the world to sit where Shakespeare sat and gain an insight into the world which helped inspire him to become the world’s greatest playwright.”

The project will launch arts activities, creative writing sessions and a ‘Willingly To School’ programme which will see schoolchildren experience a lesson in what was once Shakespeare’s schoolroom.

New interactive displays, filmed performances, a Tudor lesson and an 18th-century classroom will bring Shakespeare’s story to life. The Guildhall’s role at the centre of Stratford-upon-Avon’s civic governance and life will also be explored. With over 400 years of involvement in the social and religious aspects of the town – including Shakespeare’s father’s leading role in the council – there are plenty of stories to uncover.

Professor Ronnie Mulryne said: “As a former long term Chairman of Governors at King Edward VI School, and now a Trustee, I have come to appreciate the inspirational effect the largely-unchanged presence of Stratford's Guildhall, and the Tudor classroom where William Shakespeare studied, can hold for the students of the school, the people of Stratford and visitors from far and near. When you add that visitors will be able to view the space where Shakespeare made the transition from studying plays to seeing them performed by the leading professionals of his time, it becomes evident that all the research, interpretation and planning that have gone into this project will be amply repaid, thanks to the generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund.”

Works are scheduled for completion in April 2016, the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death.

Notes to editors

King Edward VI School is a selective grammar school for boys with a co-educational Sixth Form which is rated as Outstanding by Ofsted. The poet and playwright William Shakespeare attended the school in the 1570s, leading to King Edward VI School being widely known as Shakespeare’s School.

The Guildhall at King Edward VI School was built in 1420 and is famous as the place where William Shakespeare was educated and where he first witnessed professional theatre. It served as the centre of civic life and governance in Stratford for over 400 years and was the building in which Shakespeare's father, John, served as the town’s bailiff. It is still used as a schoolroom today.

Further information

For more information, images and interviews contact Rebecca Lamm, HLF press office, on 002 7591 6245 or Rebecca.Lamm@hlf.org.uk.



William Shakespeare



pon-Avon

William Shakespeare, 1564 - 1616

10 things you didn’t know about Shakespeare!