

# THE STRINGCREDIBLES

## PROJECT REPORT

### the Butterfly LANDS 2



In partnership with and supported by:



BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL CHARITY



THE GRIMMITT TRUST

and kind individuals

# THE PROJECT

**The Stringcredibles** have been developing connections between musicians and audiences since 2014. At the heart of our work is a quartet of professional musicians who work creatively with young people and those who facilitate their music education. Based in Birmingham, our work is largely within schools and communities within the West Midlands, with our main focus being on primary aged children. Through connecting our performances with the wider education curriculum and with children's everyday life experiences we make live, classical music approachable and relevant to all. It is our belief that every child has the right to a rich musical life and all the benefits to wellbeing, belonging and creativity that brings

**Prof Nathan Holder** is an award-winning musician, author, international speaker, and education consultant. With over a decade of experience, Nate has become a global advocate for empowering learners and educators to embrace inclusive and diverse music education

At the start of 2025 we set out to extend the reach of our show **The Butterfly Lands** which we had devised as a creative celebration of migration to the West Midlands. We felt that we had developed a product for which there was a high level of need and sensed that the time was right to share it as widely as possible. The Butterfly Lands first toured in 2024, reaching 3,680 children in 22 primary schools. It uses original music, poetry and illustrations to tell the interactive story of a butterfly who travels to 5 different islands (the islands of language, clothing, food, faith and music) learning about many cultures along the way and becoming more and more colourful and beautiful as it encounters diversity and embraces difference. Multiculturalism is celebrated throughout The Butterfly Lands: through the different backgrounds of the performers delivering the show, through the cultural diversity of the artists who have contributed to the content, through the positive explanation of migration to the West Midlands and through the inclusive messaging of the imaginative storyline. In this next phase of our journey with The Butterfly Lands we set out to:

- Foster excellence in performance and further collaborations between creatives at the highest level
- Advance youth creative education in the region, connect with local music hubs and encourage instrumental learning
- Use music and the arts to promote learning and life skills in young people who might not otherwise have access to educational experiences of this nature
- Encourage children and their families to reflect on their social responsibilities in response to the current political climate and a need for empathy and kindness within society
- Celebrate the cultural diversity of the region and the richness this brings to communities and young minds
- Support children from diverse backgrounds and champion a message of belonging, especially for newly arrived children and those seeking asylum in the UK



# ACTIVITY

During 2025, thanks to generous support from our partners and funders, we performed The Butterfly Lands for **6,520 children** and **326 adults** in **30 primary schools** across the West Midlands. We also expanded our team to include 4 associate performers.

In Sandwell we played for 810 children at:

St Mary Magdalene Primary School  
St John Bosco Catholic Primary School  
Eaton Valley Primary School  
Grove Vale Primary School

Thanks to the Rowlands Trust and SIPs Music and Arts

In Dudley we played for 350 children at:  
Kate's Hill Primary School  
Jessons Primary School

Thanks to the Grimmitt Trust, the Patrick Trust and Dudley Performing Arts

In Wolverhampton we played for 1,944 children at:

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School  
Goldthorn Park Primary School  
St Stephen's Church of England Primary School  
St Michael's Church of England Academy  
Grove Primary School  
Dovecotes Primary School  
Loxdale Park Primary School  
St Luke's Church of England Aided Primary School  
St Andrew's Church of England Primary School  
Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School

Thanks to the Heart of England Community Foundation The Grimmitt Trust and Wolverhampton Music Service



In Walsall we played for 1,584 children at:

Hillary Primary School  
Lindens Primary School  
Pinfold Street Primary School  
Fibbersley Park Academy

Thanks to the Golsoncott Foundation and the Patrick Trust



In Birmingham we played for 1,832 children (1,382 Birmingham Municipal Charity) at:

Bellfield Junior School  
Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School (with visiting children from St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary)  
Cromwell Primary School  
St James Catholic Primary School  
St Michael's Church of England Primary School  
Christ Church CE Primary School  
St Gerard's Catholic Primary School  
Somerville Primary School  
St Alban's Catholic Primary School  
St Matthew's Research School

Thanks to the Birmingham Municipal Charity, the Heart of England Community Foundation and generous individuals



# PARTNERS

This second phase of delivery was facilitated by a collaboration with Wolverhampton Music Service, Walsall Music Education Service, SIPS Music and Arts Service and Dudley Performing Arts – the first ever partnership project of the newly formed **Black Country Music Hub**. We were pleased to be able to support this newly formed hub structure and its reach. The brilliant leaders of the BCMH identified schools in areas of priority for music engagement and multicultural relevance whom they felt would benefit most from this programme.

Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell music services also subsidised the performances in their schools to make them more accessible. One hub leader wrote, 'Your Butterfly Lands Project is a brilliant way to model quality, hand in hand with inclusion, and [our] schools obviously recognise how special this is.'

When asked whether music lessons were something that could be supported at school following our visit, 65% of schools said yes, 15% said maybe, and in the remaining schools (where lessons were in fact already facilitated) the impact was also high:

Yes 100% – pupils were speaking about the performance for the rest of the week and staff were inspired!

Those learning violin will feel emboldened, whilst others will take greater interest in music lessons.

We were also delighted to partner with **Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary** in order to connect with schools which have many asylum-seeking and refugee pupils, and/or whose focus is on support and advocacy, promoting inclusion and awareness of the problems faced by people seeking sanctuary.

The **number of languages** spoken in the schools we visited ranged from 5 to 64, with the percentage of children who spoke **English as an additional language** ranging from 14% to 96%.

Our school has welcomed and supported 16 families seeking asylum over the last year.

Wide range of pupils from many different ethnic backgrounds. Children loved the themes of migration.

We have a lot of transient pupils in our school community...so we have to work with our families to understand and respect their cultural and religious practices.



# TEACHERS

---

100% of teachers surveyed agreed that the show was fun, well performed, suitably pitched for children and effective as a learning activity.

Schools commented on the fact that this type of musical experience was a **new opportunity** for them. 26% of schools surveyed had never hosted live professional musicians in school before.

"I can't value it highly enough. Many of our children would never have access to seeing the caliber of performance they saw or even have the opportunity to see something as beautiful as this. They are not from an area that values the Creative Arts."

"For almost all of our children, this performance is their first and only experience of live musicians performing."

Teachers also described the performance as **educationally excellent**:

"[Staff] have described it as one of the finest performances they have witnessed in our school, praising not only the quality of the production but also the skilful manner in which it connected to our curriculum. They were particularly impressed by the clear links to British Values and the sensitive exploration of themes surrounding acceptance and understanding of those who may be different from ourselves."

"Excellent - best music workshop I've ever experienced and I have been teaching for 25 years"

"It was phenomenal! The whole experience was so memorable and a great experience for all staff and children."

The **message of welcome** landed very positively with schools:

"Engagement from children was high and they understood the message when teachers discussed in class."

"Children were inspired and felt seen by the nods to different cultures. Inspired to have discussion on migration afterwards."

"Extremely valuable particularly with all the negative media at the moment. Reminding children of the values of love and welcome is pertinent."



There was a **sense of joy** amongst staff:

"Absolutely amazing! From start until finish all children were engaged and were loving every moment. The music gave me goose bumps and it was a joy to see so many children enjoying the performance, many of which would never have seen a live musical performance before."

"The performance was very professional and engaged all the children from the onset. The musical activities were enjoyable and very accessible for the children which allowed for every child to take part. The music and singing reflected their cultures creatively and the whole hall was buzzing with excitement."

# CHILDREN

The children we played for said they felt:

## Inspired

They made me feel like I could do anything!

The music was amazing and I like how they were teaching while singing and playing their instruments.

sparkle got more colours because the more she experienced different cultures the more she learned so that's why sparkle turned rainbow.

Sparkle got more colours because the more she experienced different cultures the more she learned so that's why sparkle turned rainbow.

## Seen

I could see my flag up on the whiteboard and know I was represented.

The food from my culture was in the show.

It made me feel special when Mexico and India was mentioned because my family is from those countries.

It made me feel special when Mexico and India was mentioned because my family is from those countries.



## Grateful

They showed that everybody is different and that we live in a country with different people from all around the world.

I felt happy and calm all at once.

It is good that everyone are not the same because if everyone are the same life would be very boring! Diversity is beautiful!

It is good that everyone are not the same because if everyone are the same life would be very boring! Diversity is beautiful!

## Empathetic

I want to help people who travel to be welcome, we never know the journey others have been on.

My favourite island was the island of Language because it taught us to greet other people in languages we don't know. Child from Poland

My favourite island was the Island of Language because it teaches us to greet other people in languages we don't know. Child from Poland.



# ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

We were glad to be able to welcome students from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire to observe our performances. One student wrote:

"I thought The Butterfly Lands was a really lovely show. It felt meaningful and different from other school performances I've seen. The way it explored sensitive themes around migration and identity was done thoughtfully - the children understood it through the butterfly's development, and you could see how much it meant for them to feel that their own culture, faith, food, clothing and background had a place on the five different islands in the story. I really liked the original music and how naturally the five performers connected with the children. The kids were engaged throughout and enjoyed joining in by offering suggestions from their own cultures. The children enjoyed singing along in pieces they recognised like the Can-Can, but also listened with real interest to the new pieces played by the quartet. I work in schools with a lot of diversity with In Harmony so seeing how excited the children were when their cultures were represented stuck with me. It made me think more about giving pupils chances to contribute and feel part of the learning and gave me ideas for bringing their backgrounds into our group music lessons."

Jake Ryan, postgraduate student, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.



**Nate Holder** reflects on the timing of this project:

Over the past few weeks across the West Midlands, there has been an increase in St. George and British flags in shop fronts, on lampposts, roundabouts and residential buildings. We've heard Robert Jenrick talk about not seeing 'white faces' in Handsworth, accusing the area of being one of the worst integrated places he's been to, while conversations around immigration, British values and Islam are all pointing to a Reform government come the next general election. Nevertheless, it has been an incredible experience to talk and perform in front of hundreds of children, showing them that as we learn about the people around us, ourselves and our communities become more colourful.

Nate's full blog post can be found here: <https://www.nateholdermusic.com/post/england-flags-migration-and-music-education>

**We would like to extend grateful thanks to our generous partners and funders, without whom none of this work would have been possible.**

*Report created by Bryony Morrison, March 2026.*