



# Hastings Thrives Annual Report 2024

Registered Charity No 1170342





## CHAIR'S REPORT

### Emma Shuttleworth

I've have the privilege of joining Hastings Thrives as a Trustee and Chair in 2024.

It has been an interesting year as we completed four years of songwriting funding from Youth Music & the Arts Council England, with the support of the Magdalen & Lasher Trust and the Co-op Community Fund. The journey has been transformative, introducing participants to the art of songwriting and fostering their personal growth. It has been truly rewarding to witness the development of skills, friendships, confidence, and self-esteem among our young people in Hastings.

Throughout this journey, we've been fortunate to have some exceptional teachers, each bringing their unique expertise and passion, all guided by the creativity of the young people themselves. Mike Willis, a seasoned songwriter with extensive industry experience in America, shared his knowledge with secondary school students. Andy Mersh, a talented primary school teacher at Silverdale, not only taught guitar but also contributed his performance skills from his involvement with the local musical theatre group, The Hastleons. Sidly Bennett, a local songwriter and member of The Ravens, has a natural gift for education, particularly with neurodiverse young people, with whom she connects deeply. We love how she captures this in her email signature: "Helping young people discover who they are through songwriting." Drummer Jason Smith, an expert in neurodiversity, did remarkable work at Saxon Mount and The Flagship School, pushing young people beyond expectations.

We were also fortunate to have Anna Page, who previously led our songwriting efforts, continue to support our program by providing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to our current songwriters, with a special focus on musical theatre.

Musical Theatre songwriting has been a standout success, serving as a powerful outlet for young people's creativity, combining song and drama. This year, we connected with Science Week 2024 by using the theme of TIME, which proved to be an inspiring foundation for our young people's work. We're immensely grateful to the many schools that embraced songwriting as a tool for development and inclusion.

We continued our popular Musical Theatre Courses aimed at young people on benefit-related free school meals and neurodiversity. We have been running these courses for over 5 years with the wonderful Suzie Dunster and Becky Knight, both of whom now work for performing arts company APA in Eastbourne.

# MUSICAL THEATRE SONGWRITING

We trialled several songwriting courses and none were as successful as our holiday musical theatre songwriting club for 8 - 12 year olds. We kept running them by request, and found the most amazing, creative, crazy and fun ideas, which brought laughter and smiles. A lot of the feedback talks about how creating and performing increased confidence. Students learnt about story arcs; wrote songs together; created the drama between songs; and did their own mini performance at the end.

## **Andy Mersh:**

It has been a truly heart-warming experience. I have had the pleasure of working alongside young people of whom I would argue host as much energy, character and talent as those of professional musicians. These are often children who would normally not have the experience available to them, nor the confidence to attend. It is awe inspiring to witness such rapid development of each character through the enjoyment of music and performance.



In engaging with these children, I have witnessed incredible change and a flourish of determination from each individual. The contrast seen in levels of engagement and participation from the beginning of a workshop compared to the end of our final performance clearly demonstrates the broadness of key social and interpersonal skills we can provide. This is also strongly supported by seeing the return of regular participants, some of those even carrying ideas and themes with them from previous workshops and events. Supporting this, we have received nothing less than praise and thanks from parents and carers of the children involved, just as eagerly awaiting the next workshop!

The performances have made an incredible impact with the relaxed 'it's okay to make mistakes' attitude, often leaving ear-to-ear smiles on all the faces of our audience members. This inclusive and diverse approach to performance has also encouraged participants to return to workshops, excitedly telling the leaders about their new personal projects or ventures that have been inspired from a topic we have covered or discussed.

It is wonderful to see the positive cultural capital impact of these workshops and I am thoroughly looking forward to continuing to improve the quality of children's exposure and understanding of music and performance through these incredible workshops.





**Video  
link  
JUST A  
DREAM**

## FEBRUARY - JUST A DREAM

### Synopsis

This story of resilience follows a young boy on his way to school.

At the time, everything is positive - he's been told there are no tests today, the sun is shining and there's a freshness in the air. Until suddenly, he arrives at school only to be caught with a surprise end of year test. He hasn't studied, he hasn't read the books and he begins to panic!

As the test begins, he begins to feel dreary and tired, his mind wandering. Out of nowhere, aliens appear and offer him a once in a lifetime opportunity - a time freezing button! Without hesitation, he engages the button, freezing the whole world around him.

At first, as you can imagine, he revels in the joy of the mischief he can cause during this time - not to mention the fact he no longer has to complete his test! However, things take a turn for the worst as he returns home and realises that he is all alone in this cold, frozen world.

Returning to school immediately to locate the aliens, he finds they have disappeared. He eventually finds them and acknowledges the error of his decision. He returns time to normal and faces his fears of completing his test. He tries his best and with a smile on his face! Reflecting on this experience, he vows to also face things head-on with a positive attitude, even if they seem challenging.

### FRIDAY FEELING

I've got the Friday  
La-de-da-de-de-da  
I've got a bounce  
And a smile on my face  
Cause today we're  
I've got the Friday  
La-de-da-de-de-da  
I've got a spring in my step  
Cause today's the





y feeling!

in my step,

y face,

e learning 'bout space!

y feeling!

n my step,

best,

Teacher said there's no test!

Cause I'm on the way to school,

And I know it's gonna be cool!

I'm sitting down in my place.

I'm excited to learn about space,

So let's pick up the pace!

I've got the Friday feeling!

La-de-da-de-da

I've got a bounce in my step,

And a smile on my face,

Cause today we're learning

'bout space!

I've got the Friday feeling!

La-de-da-de-da

I've got a spring in my step,

Cause today's the best,

Teacher said...

Oh yes, the teacher said,

That there's no test!

## EVERYTHING IS FROZEN

[Solo vocal x1]

[Chorus harmonies x1]

Everything, everywhere,

Everyone is frozen.

Everything, everywhere,

Everyone is frozen.

[1, 2, 3, 4 - clap x7]

I wish there was,

A way to fix this,

This was much bigger than the test.

I wish there was,

A way to go back,

It's clear with plan was not the best.

So it's time to act,

Be bold and brave,

And find those aliens,

And save the day.

It's gotta be time,

It's gotta be time,

To shine!







## JUST A DREAM

Intro from teacher:

Right from the start,  
I haven't had a part.

I've been trying to teach my lesson,  
But the children keep on crying!

[All: Wake up Bob!]

He's got the Friday feeling!

He's not scared of the test,

He's feeling his best,

And he's full of zest

[but not the orange kind!]

Chorus

He went on a strange  
adventure,

And met an alien crew.

But it was all a dream,

But dreams can come  
true.

And he left his worries  
behind,



When everything was frozen,  
In time.

He's got the Friday feeling!

He's on top of the world.

He's had his lessons learnt and rewards earnt.

And he's gonna go and have his Weetabix,  
[You had to be there last time]

[Awkward cough]

**Chorus**



## INTERLUDE SPEECH BEFORE THE ALIENS ARRIVE

This is so unbelievable,  
So unfair,  
So unprofessional!  
Teacher said, loud and clear, "No tests for all to hear,"



But here we are!  
There's no time to prepare.  
My pencil feels blunt,  
My brain has gone blank,  
I feel like I'm walking the plank! [splash]  
Wait!  
What's that mysteriously,  
Not obviously a green alien-like species,  
Lurking over there,  
That we definitely did not see while we were talking,  
And 100% did not know was appearing in this epic musical?  
OMG - it's an alien!

Video  
link  
**JUST A  
DREAM**

## FEEDBACK

They helped me sing more confidently

It was super fun!!!

I enjoyed everything!

We all contributed in the song. I really enjoyed everything.

I learnt about chords

It was for fun, not too serious. More learning of music, songwriting, acting but in a fun way. Andy was very nice.

It helped me as before I didn't sing/act/dance/play piano in front of people but now I'm more confident.

It's perfect

It helped me with knowledge

I liked everything and lunch

I enjoyed learning about different things and techniques

I would improve singing louder.

I enjoyed it because I learnt how to act.

They helped me to grow my music knowledge.

I enjoyed acting and singing

It's helped being more confident with singing

I really liked it

I liked being in a group

TYSM (thank you so much)!

I liked everything and it's helped me with confidence

I enjoyed singing and acting.

I have learnt chords and some musical vocab.

I would recommend adding dancing.

## MAY HALF TERM WITH A SPEEDY SPIDER

A spider named Speedy who lives in a haunted house, in the attic. He lives alone with the pigeons (who are there as the narrators, of course) and is fine with this until one day he realises how lonely he is. One day, he chooses to venture

outside and meets Morris the Mouse (from a previous workshop that some of the children were involved in), who invites him to a party. He runs across a road but poor Speedy gets left in the middle. He uses his clever thinking to get across the road using his web then meets a French toad who takes him to the party. They all have fun and celebrate their adventure with a

### DO I GO

Do I go? Do I stay?  
Do I find another way?  
Or stay another lonely day up here?

What awaits the otherside?  
What will open up my eyes?  
Dare I even step outside from here?

There are dangers below  
Out there in the snow  
Things I do not know  
Places I don't go

There are dangers below  
Nasty things that grow  
Creepy things that glow  
Other things that go, "Agh!"

### Chorus

There are good things out there

Many people who care

Lots of fun to share

If you're brave and dare

There are good things to see

It's your destiny

You deserve to be free

**[solo]** A new life for me

### FEEDBACK -

I enjoyed the randomness  
Making friends and having fun  
I enjoyed it all

Working as a group

Great

Making friends and having fun  
Great in General

## SPIDER LIFE

Life as a spider is great **x2**

I was a little old lonely spider

In a little old lonely house

I ventured out the window

And met Morris the Mouse

He took my hand and taught me to be free

Life as a spider is great **x2**

I got stuck in the road  
And didn't know what to do

I stayed calm and used my head

And my web abilities too

And I crossed the road and that's when I met Toad

Life as a spider is great **x4**

I met a lot friends on my adventure here  
And now I'm smiling from ear to ear

Life is good

Life is sweet

So let's go get some flies to eat

Life as a spider is great **(out)**

Video  
link  
**SPIDER LIFE**





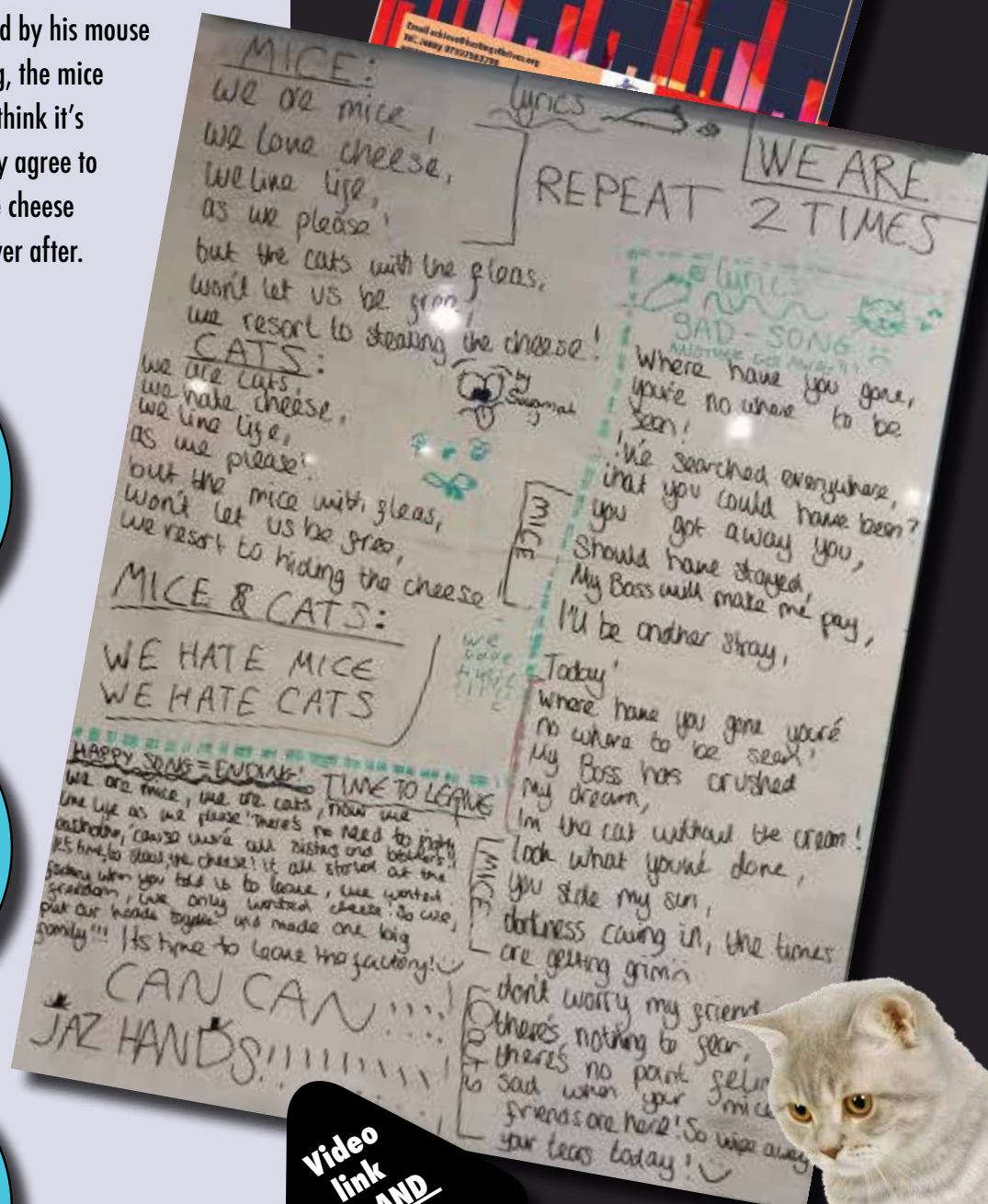
# EASTER

**Cat and Mouse** The scene opens with children working in a cheese factory, called 'Feline Goods', during Victorian TIMES. Then it cuts to the mice and the cats. Cats are security guards, mice are cheese thieves. One cat, Pillow, has to guard a special piece of cheese and captures one mouse, Morris, who is attempting to steal it. Pillow takes Morris to the boss, but he is rescued by his mouse friends. During the sad song, the mice feel bad for Pillow, so they think it's TIME to make a change. They agree to escape the factory, steal the cheese together and live happily ever after.

**Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
TIME TO LEAVE**

**Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
WE ARE**

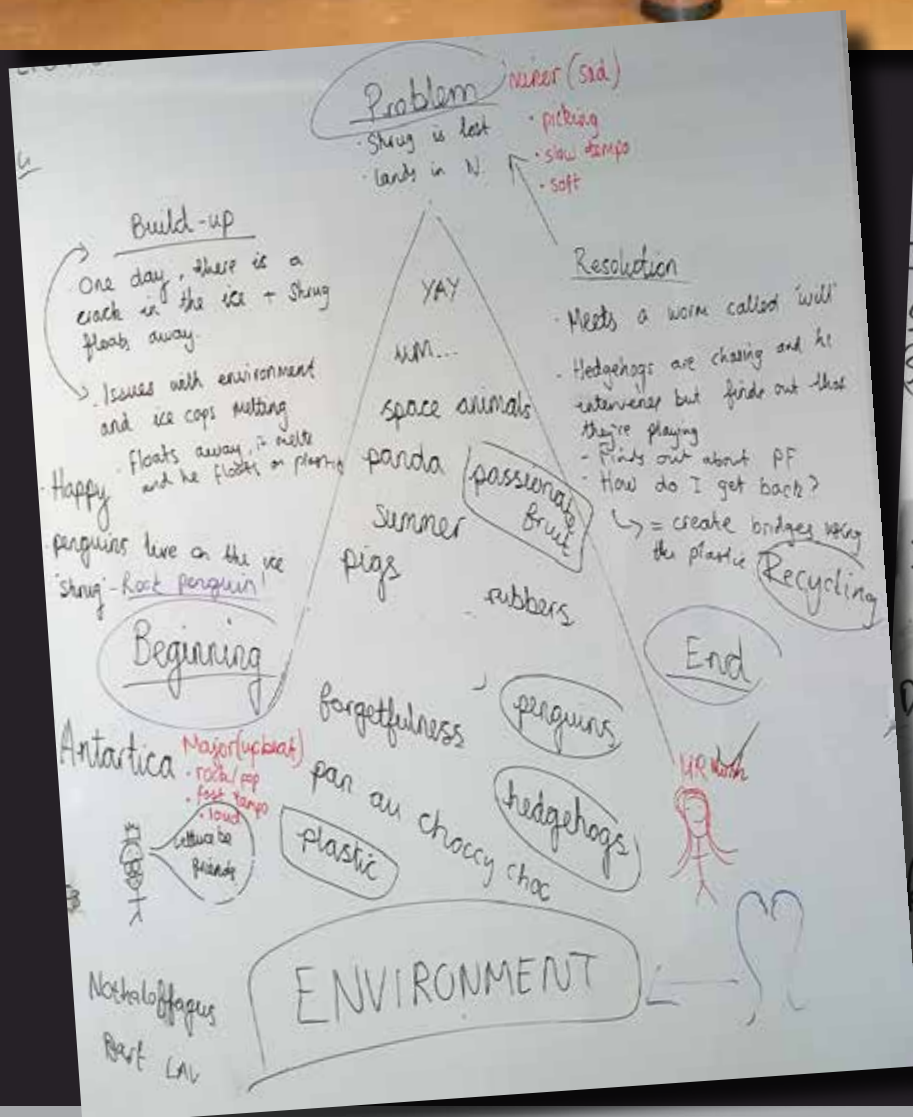
**Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
ANOTHER GOT  
AWAY**







Here is the Soundcloud link  
**FIND A WAY**



① 4 Rock Penguins  
"LA's and AAH's" - Intro/Build  
① x 4 ② x 4 ③ x 4  
CH Rock Penguins, Rock Penguins  
(SAB) Rock Penguins "livin' our lives we are..."  
Rock Penguins, Rock Penguins, Rock Penguins  
'livin' our lives we are...  
I- 'LA's and AAH's'  
Drum Deop- What do Penguins eat.  
avocado + Baked beans fish and chips  
fish and chips  
④  
Rock Penguins, livin' our life  
we are heeere!

Here Soundcloud  
**ROCK P**

## SUMMER STORY SYNOPSIS

A 'rock penguin', named Shrug, feels down in the Antarctic due to the impact of climate change and pollution.

Suddenly, there is a crack in the ice and poor Shrug ends up in a distant land, called Nothalloffagus - a peaceful land where the inhabitants care about keeping the place tidy.

# FEEDBACK - SUMMER MUSICAL THEATRE

## What did you enjoy?:

Learning to play the apple and my mini sob

I enjoy playing the drums

I don't know what I didn't enjoy

I did really enjoy it because it was all fun and we all got to have a go at something.

All of it

I have really enjoyed all of it and making the songs.

I liked creating the songs and playing the games but not the rehearsal.

I liked the drums and times for snacks.

It was funny

I really liked doing this and want to do it again.

## Has it helped you?:

It helped me to have more courage doing songwriting and going on the stage more.

Learning how to make a musical

It has helped me with confidence and communication

It boosted my confidence

They haven't help me.

Change the World  
1/ a packet + a bottle  
at a time  
I was a little ol' penguin stuck on my ice alone  
I needed a better place to call my home  
The World was full of plastic bottles  
floating in sea  
It's not a perfect place for you or for me  
and now we changed the world 3  
and I'm happy (Repet)

(Solos)

'Change the world'  
and now we've changed the world  
and now we've changed the world  
and you can change the world  
(Solo)  
and make our world a better  
place for..... US!!!  
Jazz hands Can Can.

② Find a way

I am lost and I'm alone  
It's dark - it's really cold ↑  
I'm not feeling very bold ↑  
No one is here to Cook my fish and chips  
.... there's no more ketchup dips and the  
World is full of plastic bits.

I'm dreary and I'm tired  
Something's been scratching me inside  
my little penguin mind... there has  
to be a better way to find a way  
to save the day [and change the  
world for better]... all the ice is  
melting beneath my feet - my flippers  
are getting wetter

\* find a way, to save today  
find a way to save the day  
today.....

Shrug gets carried away on an iceberg to  
a small island where the air is fresh and the

Sad and alone, Shrug feels she has nowhere to go and no way back home, until some  
of the inhabitants pull together and suggest building a bridge from all the plastic in the  
ocean, connecting the two worlds and teaching everyone to be more respectful to their  
planet.



# 1:2:1 SONGWRITING

Here's Noah and Toby with Andy Mersh

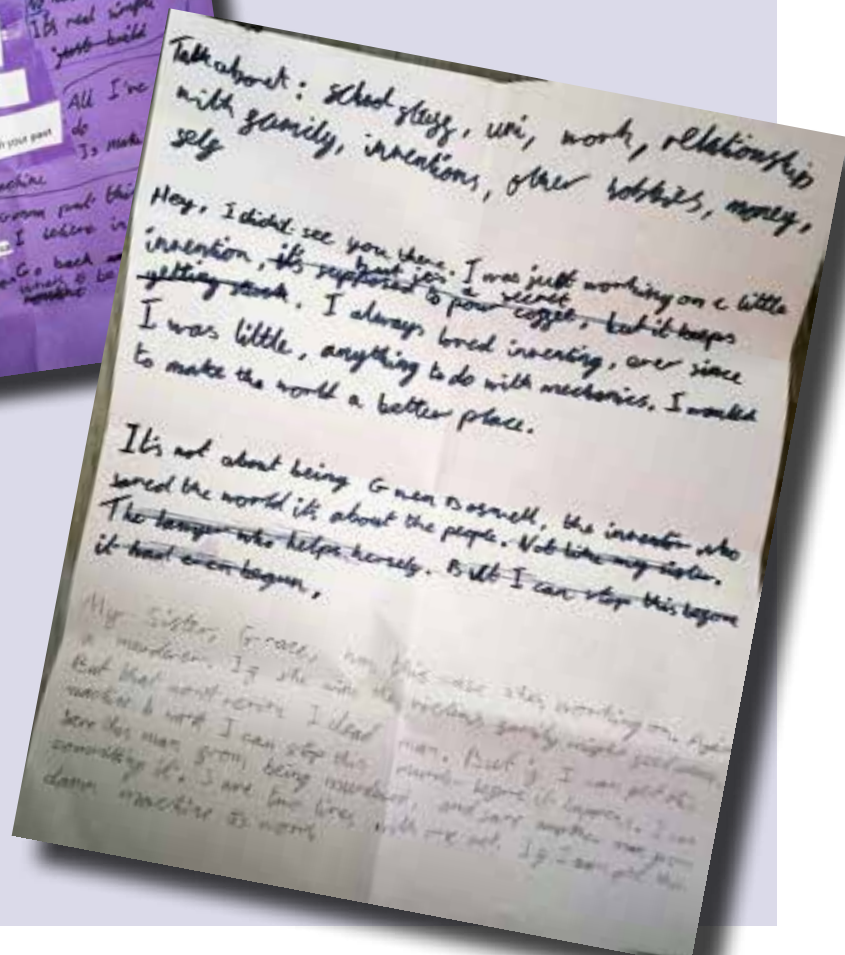


Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
**FIN THE FISH**  
**OUR LITTLE SONG**  
**FRANK THE FOX**



"Having the opportunity to do this recording was a dream come true, made even better by the nurturing, positive and encouraging environment created by Siddie and the team. Siddie always makes me feel so safe and supported, which allows me to feel I can be more vulnerable with my creativity, not to mention the immense talent and geniusness she brings to make the song the best it can be. Thanks to her she helps me and my music to reach its full potential whilst still making it so much fun and positive. So grateful for her and this whole experience it was truly amazing and really inspired me!"

Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
**MY MIND**





## Echo working with Siddy Bennett.

### CUCKOO

I feel like a clown Woohoo  
Been Crying Smiling through my  
frown Woohoo  
while juggling And cycling  
around Woohoo  
while shooting out a Cannon  
Im heading down Woohoo

"Dead inside  
Paralysed  
Fucking traumatised"

Thank you dad  
Thank you dad  
At least it made me funny

### Verse 2

I keep Laughing at the ceiling  
Woohoo  
I'm conniving, I'm scheming  
Woohoo  
Me and the ghosts have been  
speaking Woohoo Just give me  
something to believe in

### Pre chorus

### Chorus repeat

Spinning plates  
Painting on my face  
I just wanna fly  
I just wanna fly And just let  
yourself move

### Chorus

Take a look around,  
Don't put yourself down,  
Don't let them tell you to,  
Do the things they want to do.  
Live your life,  
Cause you are the one to be free

Those darkest times  
Take your mind, seek out lonely,  
Feed weakness and lack of  
control.  
Your skies full of pressure, your  
shoulders of weight,  
Break the tension from which it  
controls.

### Bridge

What's there in your eyes  
Is for you to decide  
The path is in reach can't you see

What's there in your eyes  
A beating inside  
A fire ignite and set free



## Star working with Siddy Bennet.

### WILLOW

My sacred willow  
I long to see you  
There's always time for you  
Under your curtain  
I can be certain  
That I will be  
renewed  
Invisible eyes  
Holding mine

You bend to the  
breeze  
Stand out from  
the crowd of trees  
Home and shelter,  
sanctuary

My sacred willow  
I long to hear you  
What secrets can you tell?  
Sharing your wisdom  
Answer my questions  
With you, all is well  
Silence inside  
Cleansing my mind

You bend to the breeze  
Stand out from the crowd of trees  
Home and shelter, sanctuary  
Sunlight shining through  
Mother Nature's truth  
Oh

You bend to the breeze  
Stand out from the crowd of  
trees  
Home and shelter, sanctuary  
You heal the pain  
And make things alright  
again  
Hope and peace, harmony  
Home and shelter, sanctuary



Here is the  
Soundcloud  
Cuckoo



## Star working with Siddy Bennett

### TURN BACK

Time haunts me  
My friend, my enemy  
My nightmares and my dreams  
Lost in remembering  
I remember  
The crack of dawn as your ship came ashore  
The crash of lightning, fighting the storm  
Think I saw you once before  
My voice was too sweet to ignore  
And all of your men, so entranced by the sound  
Losing control as your ship ran aground  
But as I saw it, dashed on the rocks  
For a moment I wished I could turn back the  
clocks

Ooh Turn back Ooh Turn back

Life taunts me  
Desire just out of reach  
I found it in you and me  
Now I'm lost in remembering

The sparks in your eyes, burning like fire  
With embers that set my heart alight  
Thawing my frozen shell of ice  
Til I felt for the very first time

Sailing to uncharted waters  
Me as your figurehead, you as my compass  
From the day we met I swore  
I'd never let you go

Ooh Turn back Ooh Turn back Ooh Please, turn  
back

We led a merry dance  
For a year and a day  
Through sun and moonlight, wind and  
rain  
And before I knew it, you'd slipped away  
Now I take flowers to your grave  
Wearing the necklace that you gave me  
Sitting alone in the dark of my cave  
Crying to sailors upon the waves  
Begging them to stay away

Ooh Turn back Ooh Turn back Ooh Please,  
turn back

Turn back Turn back

**Poppy working  
with Siddy Bennett.  
They performed  
the song at The  
Piper.**

### MY MIND

My mind is something  
Takes quite a beating  
Evil poison being spat  
From its fangs  
A million conversations  
But you're not part of one

#### (Pre chorus)

What used to be a rainbow  
has now merged into mud  
What used to be a forest  
Is all just blood  
I can smell the warning  
smoke

I know something is wrong  
Somebody save me  
I want yo ho home

#### (Chorus)

My My My My My My My My  
my mind

My My My My My My My My  
My mind

My mind is like rocks against  
a glass ceiling

Crashing down the walls

Destroying what was home

I'm suffocating on the air

In my own lungs

#### (Pre chorus)

What used to be a sunrise  
Has sunken into dark  
Wishing I could feel it  
Oh my bloodless heart  
I can smell the warning  
smoke

I know something is wrong  
Somebody save me  
I want to go home

#### (Bridge)

What a silly place to be  
Won't you come and join me  
Maybe you'll bring some  
peace

Some quiet to soothe the  
chaos

Raging on

Raging on

**Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
MY MIND**

**Elsie working with Andy Mersh**

## **DOWN TIMES**

Our hard times  
Our down times  
Feeling trapped and enclosed  
No words to describe when  
You're feeling lost and alone  
It's getting harder and harder  
like something,  
Something that I can't control  
Like a storm of emotion, the  
darkest devotion,  
That I can't let go

### **Bridge**

Breathe in, breathe out  
Let the music,  
The feelings, emotions pour out  
And just let yourself move

### **Chorus**

Take a look around,  
Don't put yourself down,  
Don't let them tell

you to,  
Do the things they want to do.  
Live your life,  
Cause you are the one to be  
free  
Those darkest times  
Take your mind, seek out  
lonely,  
Feed weakness and lack of  
control.  
Your skies full of pressure, your  
shoulders of weight,  
Break the tension from which it  
controls.

### **Bridge**

What's there in your eyes  
Is for you to decide  
The path is in reach can't you  
see  
What's there in your eyes  
A beating inside

**Mia working with Andy Mersh**

## **PIGEON LIFE**

### **Chorus**

I'm a pigeon going round the town, Flying the windy  
skies.

I'm a pigeon going round the town, Stealing people's  
fries.

I'm a pigeon going round the town, Soaring the gold  
sunrise.

Yeah I'm a pigeon, I'm a pigeon, a pigeon in the  
town.

People seem to think, All I do is eat

The breadcrumbs off the floor But to me there's so  
much more A pigeon to explore

With my tufty fluffy feathers,

I'll beg you for your cake, And don't make the  
mistake, Of not giving me your cake.

We like to tease the cats, Talk to  
the rats,

And hang out in the park, Until  
it gets a little too dark, Which  
is when we disembark.

While we're flying through  
the sky, With all the  
people walking by,

We smile  
at

the  
ones who  
feed us,

And drop a treat on  
the people who don't.

Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
**DOWN TIMES**

Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
**PIGEON LIFE**



**Star working with Andy Mersh**

## **PAINTED AWAY**

Paint, paint, paint away the pain

'Til I see your face again

I'm gonna paint, paint, paint, paint away the pain

I saw the world, I soared the skies

I broke away, now I'm free to be

Birds and bees and  
butterflies

Floating all around, I'm  
surrounded by beauty

Out of darkness, I painted  
light

I'm gonna paint, paint,  
paint away the pain

'Til I see your face again

Painting my life away

'Til journeys reach their  
end

Paint, paint, paint away the pain

'Til I see your face again

I'm gonna paint, paint, paint, paint away the pain

Journeying through constellations

North Star marks the destination

Bright petals bloom on the blank of my canvas

Gold gilded frames make up gallery walls

Of jungles and mountains and waterfalls

From Eastern heat to freezing cold

I returned back from braving them all

Returned back from braving them all

I'm gonna paint, paint, paint away the pain

'Til I see your face again

Painting my life away

'Til journeys reach their end

Paint, paint, paint away the pain

'Til I see your face again

I'm gonna paint, paint, paint, paint away the pain

Cycles of life, how time flies, sings us to sleep with  
Nature's lullabies

I spoke to flora, spoke to fauna



Heard their words, songs  
and secrets

Forests, deserts, stormy  
seas

I came, I conquered and  
I made it back in one  
piece

I saw wonders, standing  
up on deck looking up  
into the night

I chose to paint, paint,  
paint away the pain

Whatever trial it takes

Painting my life away

Till journeys reach their end

Paint, paint, paint away the pain

Till night turns into day

I'm gonna paint paint paint  
paint away the pain

Paint paint paint away the  
pain

Till I see your face again

All I can do is paint paint paint away the pain

**Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
PAINTED AWAY**



# SAXON MOUNT DRUMMING

Jason Smith ran a successful term of drumming with two groups of Year 8 students at Saxon Mount. Our grateful thanks to Adam Thompson, Music Lead, support staff and all participating students.

Whole session activity with a short recess between groups to allow changeover. Each session started on time with a group coming into the room and taking a seat. All students were always positive, engaged and engaging and responded really well to prompts, requests and facilitated instruction and guidance. The learners were keen to be involved and they really enjoyed all aspects of playing the drums and percussion.

Extended activities for practice at home or in other sessions was encouraged and responded too to promote



ownership of their own learning. They really enjoyed playing the drums and really enjoyed composing their own versions of rhythm to Song for Alex and other sung or drumless



## Jason donating a drumkit to Adam Thompson at Saxon Mount school.

melodies. They were a lot of fun to work with and very generous with positive feedback and really enjoyed their performances and their work. I spent a number of sessions with Saxon Mount and developed excellent rapport with the children

and they were able to build on their learning and extend on the positive impact of our sessions. This was supported with feedback from staff and T/A. The pace of learning was appropriate to their developing

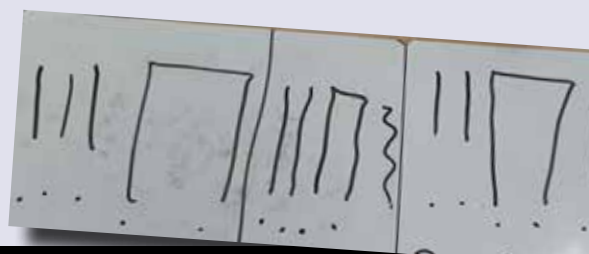
experiences and growing confidence and performance opportunities were anticipated and welcome.

Celebrating achievements as a group was fun and important to everyone in the room.

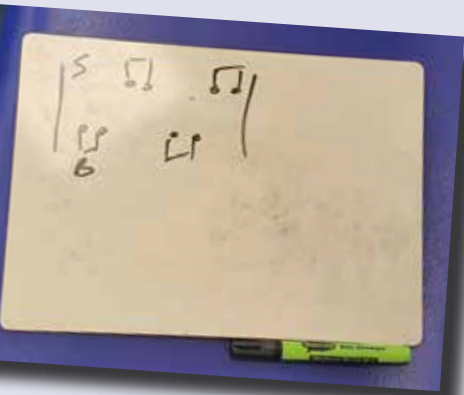
All students were developing confidence in their work and the level of positive interactions with me and each other and swapping out who they worked with and enjoyed pairing up for work and performances.

Each learner had opportunity to stage their performances and pace and volume was appropriate and managed over the sessions. Learners were always patient and reacted well to all of

the activities without any resistance or obvious reserve. After the first session, there wasn't really any point where established buy in was not at a high level. As the students progressed their knowledge and experience. The



sessions were very much facilitated and delivery reserved for a change in direction to achieve a new goal. Activity were shaped to allow inclusiveness and participation.



We worked on the idea of composition and accompanying melody with rhythm and how they may continue to practice beyond the session in an aim

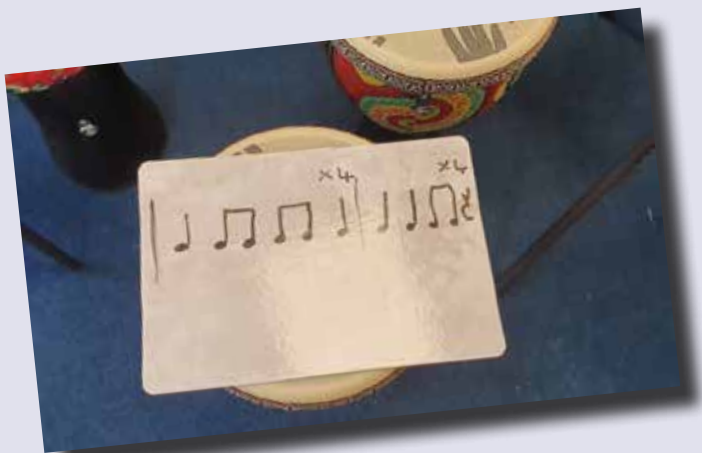


to explore their own rhythms and how to create beats with musical notation, legend and common musical terms.

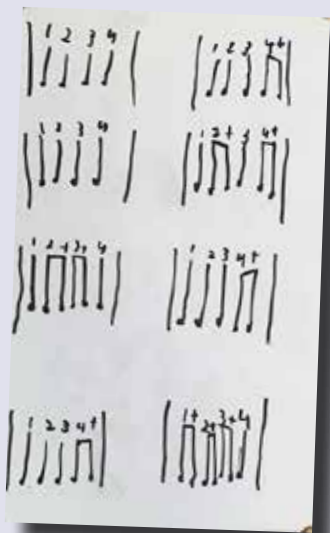


The support and teaching staff were naturally excellent and really supported learning and celebrated success throughout the workshops.

Adam Thompson: The year 8 pupils had a very successful time with Jason and engaged well with the activities. He pitched the workshop appropriately in supporting them to develop their rhythm skills using the percussion instruments. The energy he brought to the session was great and you



could already see growth in the pupils' confidence and positive attitudes towards music.



### Jason Smith:

This was a wonderful experience, and the students were engaging and full of smiles and reward throughout the session. The pupils recall of learning is excellent and moves forward through each session. The value of this learning is obvious throughout the session with active participation and miles of smiles. It also extends to the wider school facility and community with

fist pumps and high fives and hellos from not just in these groups but also students as pupils pass me in the halls, but in particular from the pupils I work with, as we celebrate their successes from the workshops. Sessions are so super inclusive and really dynamic, all learners, including those who haven't fully engaged to start, really got involved and participated as the sessions progressed.



# SILVERBURY FESTIVAL

We had a fantastic time in **Silverdale Primary**.  
Siddy worked with Reception children and Year 2's

**Claire Baker, Olive Class Teacher:** Words cannot express the impact you had on us all Siddy. Truly magical and memorable for us. We have been talking all week about how we were so blown away by your unbelievable talents. We haven't met anyone quite like you Siddy and we feel extremely fortunate to have experienced what you achieved with our classes. You are the most talented, inspirational and wonderful person. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We have not been able to stop singing the songs you created. Thank you very much.

**Silverdale Bulletin to Parents:** We were extremely fortunate to welcome 'Siddy' from Hastings Thrive today. Siddy is an inspirational songwriter and musician. She was so inspirational today...first she met the children in the hall to introduce herself, how she persevered to play the guitar, which was more challenging as she is left handed and she sang some songs to the children.

Siddy then worked in all the classes and explored what each class was interested in, she then worked to write unique songs with the children, using their phrases and ideas. It truly was a magical experience. At the end of the day we wanted to create a little festival, which we called '**Silverbury Festival**' (a take on Glastonbury) each class performed their song and it was unbelievably brilliant. The songs were very different and special; reflecting the children. What an experience! We presented Siddy with an Inspirational Ninja Sticker.



## YEAR 6 LEAVERS SONGS

Siddy ran Leavers songs for Year 6's in two schools - **Ark Little Ridge** and **The Baird**.

**Roz Aidie, The Baird:** Just to say the leavers song went down so well when they performed it yesterday. Very moving, great feedback from parents, pupils and staff.

**Katie Warren, Ark Little Ridge:** I just wanted to say a big thank you to you for coming in and working with our Year 6's last week. The children really enjoyed the session and the song went down really well at our graduation and leavers assembly.

Here is the  
Soundcloud link.  
**YEAR 6 BAIRD**  
**SONG**



# FLAGSHIP DRUMMING

Jason Smith ran a successful 1:2:1 summer term drumming school in The Flagship. This was followed by an Autumn programme of 1:2:2 classes courtesy of the Magdalen and Lasher Trust. Our grateful thanks to everyone at The Flagship.

All students were positive, engaged and engaging and responded to prompts, requests and facilitated instruction and guidance. The learners were keen to be involved and they really played them drums, as well as composing their own versions of rhythm to Song for Alex and then to the leavers song. They were fun to work with and very generous with positive feedback and really enjoyed their performances and their work.

Each learner had opportunity to stage their performances and pace and volume was appropriate and managed over their whole session time. Learners were patient and reacted well. Confidence was growing and musical conversations were expressive and creative. Interactions with the students were developing too in terms of natural conversations, excitement to attend and their positive approach to me and the opportunity to access these sessions as part of their daily activities: in short, they really looked forward to coming into sessions and participated at a high and mutually rewarding level.

Individual ability and application were identified and widened to scaffold new experiences and learning and activity altered to allow inclusiveness. We worked on the idea of composition and accompanying melody with rhythm and how practice can be extended beyond the session to enable individuals to continue to explore their own rhythms and how to create beats with musical notation, legend and common musical terms.

The support and teaching staff are hugely supportive and were excellent throughout sessions, and really played a part in positive learning experiences and celebrated success

throughout the workshop. In the Autumn term we shifted to two students per class, which meant interacting and working with each, producing another level of complexity.

**Anne Jones, Principle:** Jason worked with 15 students who all responded well and we can't wait to welcome Jason back - I've already started to put together a list of excited children.

"I can't wait to see him again"

"When's Jason coming back?"

"He taught me some complicated stuff but I really enjoyed it"



"I got to show him some of my drumming"

"Can we get Jason in again?"

"I loved the drumming session, the man was really nice and said I was a natural, I really want to do more sessions."

**Jason Smith:** For a person who is rarely speechless ;) I am overwhelmed by your earnest welcome, generosity and in awe of the high level engagement, response and outstandingly 'fun filled' positive experiences when working and learning with your pupils.. in short thank you, high fives and I'm really looking forward to seeing you all again.

# MUSICAL THEATRE COURSES

We ran 3 musical theatre courses over 2024 for the Holiday Activities and Food Initiative, a Government initiative managed by East Sussex County Council. Aimed at young people on income-related school benefits, as well as some other criteria, like SEND, fostered, child carers, these courses continue to be tremendously popular. We are unusual as we engage secondary school aged young people in activities.

The courses are run by the very inspiring Suzie Dunster (Drama) and Becky Knight (Dance). Suzie works for New Horizons and Becky for St Richards Catholic College in Bexhill. They are part of APA, a performing arts company in Eastbourne. [www.apatheatreschool.com](http://www.apatheatreschool.com)

Classes usually start with dance, as it's easier for young people to access body movement first. As they develop confidence in the group, they work as groups and individuals to act out scenes from musicals. Sometimes a whole class may manage a solo. We concentrate on making it fun, with a focus on participation and individual achievement rather than precision.

At the end we do a mini performance to parents, carers, friends and relatives, to celebrate learning and achievement. Each person receives a personalised certificate celebrating their strengths. We also provide food during the day.

The Easter workshop consisted of learning a variety of numbers, songs and scenes from 'Bugsy Malone,' 'Barbie,' 'Newsies' and 'Lion King' and culminated in a performance on the final day to a selection of parents and carers, followed by a short presentation of certificates for their individual achievements.

Participants also enjoyed a variety of games and exercises to strengthen performance skills, confidence and group work – and all were provided with healthy lunches and refreshments. The children also

This lovely quote from Billy Thompson, SLA, continues to apply today.

*"A brilliant way of engaging students which allowed them to explore their creative side. Students socialised brilliantly – and for our students to come out of their shells in such a short space of time was brilliant to see. There were students who would not normally engage and try out new things who got involved and thoroughly enjoyed themselves."*



## Easter 2024

x 14 Students

*T\*\* always enjoys her time with Hastings Thrives. The staff are amazing and always make her time here exciting, fun and educational. She can be dysregulated at the start of the holidays and this really helps to keep her in a routine*

12 completed an evaluation form

### Developed

Confidence x 11

Singing x 8

Dancing x 12

Acting x 12

Working in a group x 10

Creativity and having ideas x 8

### Enjoyed

Making friends x 11

Playing games x 12

Learning dances x 12

Singing Songs x 10

Working in a group x 11

Rehearsing scenes x 12

## Parent Feedback

**"N\* has absolutely loved this course. He often struggles in groups but has had brilliant support and has grown in confidence and managed really well. He has blossomed on this course, taking solo lines and feeling very confident in himself."**

**"T\* has absolutely loved the course and came home so excited and happy every day. He has grown in confidence and really blossomed."**

**"A\* has really enjoyed this group and has been keen to show me her dance."**

**"Made friends, increased confidence and self-esteem."**

**"Thank you so much for organising this event including coaching. Happy that my son was able to take part in it."**

**"B\*\*\* has come home buzzing every day!"**

**"R\*\*\*\*\* has really enjoyed it, thank you all so much."**

## Tutor feedback

Many young people had attended before and it was fantastic to see how much they have developed in confidence and skill since we first met them. Their repeat attendance is encouraging their leadership skills, and they are able to guide and help others who are new. There was a real sense of ownership amongst the group this time, and we were able to step back and allow them to be more independent.

One young boy with complex needs, who has attended once before, was much more engaged this time. Although he didn't participate fully, we were able to find him other roles within the sessions, and he did not dysregulate as much as before. Some older ones were keen to sit with him and chat during breaks too.





## Summer 2024

x 24 Students

*We ran 2 summer courses. The workshops consisted of learning numbers, songs and scenes from musicals such as 'Newsies,' 'Aladdin,' and 'The Lion King,'*  
*The feedback is amalgamated here.*

24 completed evaluation forms

### Developed

Confidence x 21  
 Singing x 13  
 Dancing x 22  
 Acting x 23  
 Working in a group x 18  
 Creativity and having ideas x 5

### Enjoyed

Making friends x 17  
 Playing games x 21  
 Learning dances x 20  
 Singing Songs x 12  
 Working in a group x 16  
 Rehearsing scenes x 16

## Parent Feedback

**"Thank you for having her, she has had the best time and always looks forward to these courses."**  
**"It has been great to watch (him) perform when he was so nervous at the start. Thank you for giving him the chance to have lines."**  
**"Such a well-run course, my daughter has enjoyed every part - especially dancing."**  
**"My son really struggles with communication so it has been lovely to watch him interact with the other children. He has made a new friend so thank you."**  
**"My child has had a good time and would like to come again."**  
**"It is a pleasure to watch the show and they get better every time!"**  
**"Yes, very positive and fun."**  
**"I didnt think my son would enjoy it as much as he did, I hope he will continue to do these clubs."**  
**"Thanks for having them, they have enjoyed it very much."**  
**"I am so impressed that you managed to get my son to dance! Thank you for this week, I hope he will come again."**  
**"Yes, lots of fun and great show at the end!"**  
**"(He) has been so excited every day to come here so thanks for having him and he liked the food!"**  
**"You supported my son so well when he was overwhelmed and you have been so patient and kind. Thank you for making him feel included and for understanding his needs."**  
**"Great. Lovely staff and such a positive energy."**  
**"(She) was very reluctant to come at first but is glad she did. She says you are all very funny!"**

## Tutor feedback

Many young people were very enthusiastic and willing to challenge themselves.

The older children who have attended previously were able to lead elements and mentor the younger children which strengthened their leadership skills and created a supportive dynamic in each group.

The content was picked up quickly and we delivered more than we expected both weeks.

The level of SEND was higher than usual but more information was provided in advance meaning we were able to prepare separate activities to suit all.

Many children took an active role in production elements which is an area we wanted to develop.

Many children had attended previous workshops and it is great to see their development over time.

The sAll children were accepting of one another and there were very few social issues in either week.

Both shows were exceptional and the children pulled together fantastically to support each other.

pace is great for this purpose and parents/carers appreciated the easy drop off/pick up situation.

The variety of food was very gratefully received and being able to provide healthy snacks all through the workshop improved their concentration.

There was a lot of positive interaction during break and lunch times and older ones made an effort to look after younger ones, and those who did not know anyone else.

Every young person who wanted to have a solo moment was able to have one, and enthusiastically rehearsed.

General behaviour and levels of respect for the space were exemplary throughout.

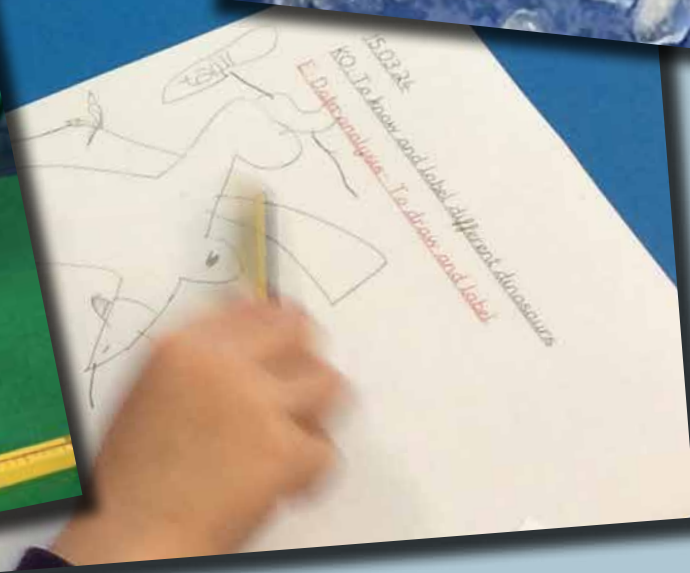


# SCIENCE

Jacky Cross continued to run science network sessions throughout 2024 for local primary science leads.

For Science Week three schools received some funding for materials including Ore Valley, The Baird and Silverdale. Photographer Gary Willis, who works at the Science Observatory in Herstmonceux, also attended the Baird, talking about capturing moments in time through photography. We also ran a session on archaeology for careers day.

*Pupil activities at The Baird for Science Week*

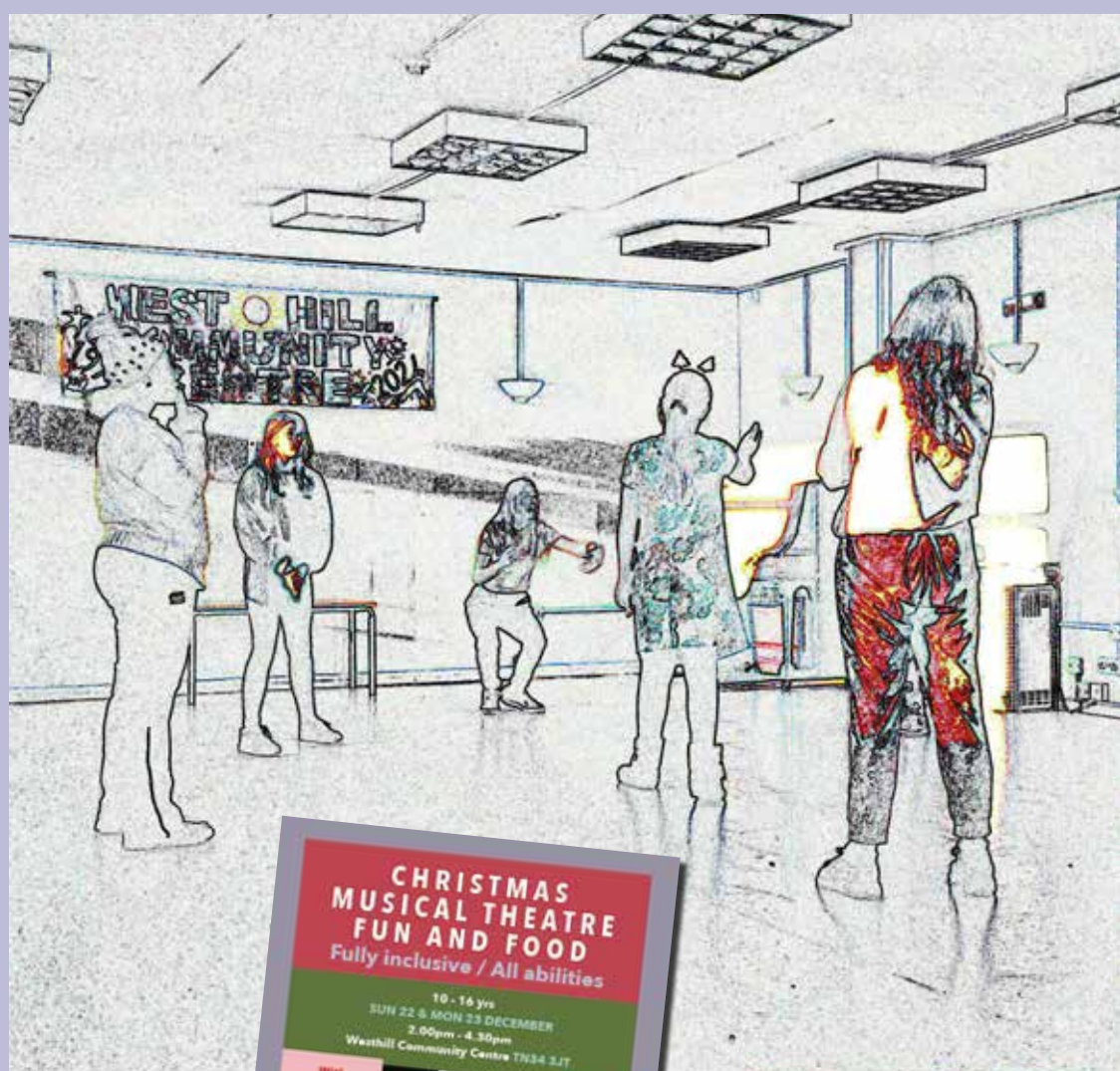




# XMAS ARTS AND FOOD

We ran a pilate project at Christmas looking at food and music activities. We started the session with games and activities before dividing into two groups, with one group writing a story and the other preparing food. It was a lovely spread, with young people preparing food and laying a christmas table to share with family.

*Please let us know if you do it again. She loved it.*



# Annual Accounts 2024

Hastings Thrives had cash funds of £23047 at the end of 2024, with a total income of £26580 and expenditure of £31742. The vast majority of income was in the form of grants, from Government, Trusts and Companies, as we did not host a major event this year.

We continued to rely on volunteers and Trustees to carry out most of the administrative and background work of the charity, with a freelance project manager, who provides most of her services as a volunteer. We pay professionals on a project-by-project basis to deliver quality activities, meaning our overheads are kept to a minimum, while maintaining quality provision to neurodiverse young people, their friends and young people on benefit-related free school meals.

No of young people accessing songwriting	694
No of young people accessing more than 3hrs	84
No of schools involved	9
No of group sessions delivered	262
No of 1:2:1 or 1:2:2 sessions	156
No of people accessing Musical Theatre	58
No of people accessing science	210
CPD for songwriters	5hrs

## Income

HAF programme £8040

Magdalen & Lasher Trust £5000

PostCode Lottery £10,000

## Expenditure

SongSeeds £17667.47

HAF £7436

Admin £2376

Science £790

Post Code Lottery £580.84

Ark Alexandra Poetry group £30.40

## RESERVED INCOME

Restricted Income	£17729
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Unrestricted Income	£5317
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## ASSETS

Hastings Thrives has no physical or financial assets.

## NOTES.

HAF overpaid by £1907 in 2023. This was noticed by Hastings Thrives and returned in 2024.

The 2024 accounts revise the restricted income from the 2023 accounts by £1870 - to allow for money allocated by the Trustees for performance.

# THANK YOU

We have had a wonderful year.

We are very grateful for funding from Youth Music and Arts Council England and our matched funders: The Magdalen and Lasher Charity, The Co-op Community Trust, and Private Donations. Also to East Sussex HAF funding, for their continuing trust in our provision over the past 5 years, and to the Postcode Lottery Trust.

We are very grateful to our songwriters during the year: Andy Mersh, Siddy Bennett and Melisa Chauhan. Also to support from songwriter Anna Page (CPD training), And to Suzie Dunster and Becky Knight for continuing to deliver confidence making musical theatre courses.

We are also grateful to the many people, schools, organisations and companies who volunteer their time and help to make everything happen, including:

Adam Thompson, Saxon Mount  
Anne Jones, Flagship School  
Kym East, The Hastings Academy  
Billy Thompson, St Leonards Academy  
Andy Mersh, Silverdale  
Claire Burford, Christ Church  
Roz Aidie, The Baird  
Rochelle Abraham, Torfield  
Katie Warren, Ark Little Ridge  
Gail Borrow from A Town Explores A Book  
Gary Willis, Herstmonceux Science Observatory  
Jacky Cross, Science Advisor  
Yiote and Jessica, YiaYias Recording Studio

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