

## IMPACT REPORT: AUTUMN TOUR 2024

### A statement from our co-director, Kate Arafa



We know that children who have an author visit are more likely to enjoy reading and those who own books and read for pleasure do better at school, have higher levels of mental well being and are more confident to support their own children's learning in the future. Yet a report by the National Literacy Trust last year shows that children's reading enjoyment has fallen to its lowest level in two decades and only 1 in 3 children say that they enjoy reading in their free time.

At The Children's Bookshow we are working hard to reverse this decline and bring the joy of reading to children through our programme of live theatre performances and creative workshops with some of the best authors and illustrators from around the world. There were so many highlights from our autumn tour; children watched spellbound as award-winning author and illustrator Sydney Smith painted live on stage to a city soundscape at Hull New Theatre, Catherine Johnson fascinated children at Bristol Old Vic with the story of Matthew Henson who was one of the first men to reach the North Pole but has been airbrushed out of history because of the colour of his skin, and US poet and educator Kwame Alexander brought the house down with his poetry performance at the Old Vic in London for over 850 children. And every child that attended one of our performances was given their own copy of the authors' book to take home and keep.

**"It's so important for us at  
The Children's Bookshow  
to put books directly into  
the hands of children"**

It's their own copy, to treasure, to share with their families, and return to again and again.

### TOUR SNAPSHOT

# 8685

Children and teachers  
attended a live theatre  
performance

# 1673

Children attended an  
in-school workshop  
with an author or  
illustrator

# 7611

Free books given away  
to primary school aged  
children

# 22

Years of The Children's  
Bookshow

## OBJECTIVES

- To introduce children to world-class authors and illustrators through a programme of live theatre events and in-school workshops
- To provide children and teachers with a rich experience of literature, that will help to inspire interest in reading and writing, increasing engagement and enjoyment of reading both within the classroom and at home
- To introduce children to the creative process and to build confidence in their own creative endeavours
- To give children the experience of seeing an artist talk about their book and work live on stage, as well as the opportunity to visit a theatre
- To get free books into the hands of children and to create a buzz about reading

## OUTCOMES: IN NUMBERS % of teachers who responded to our evaluation

# 100%

of teachers said that their in-school workshop increased children's confidence in working creatively

# 94%

of teachers said that children were very pleased to receive their free book

# 85%

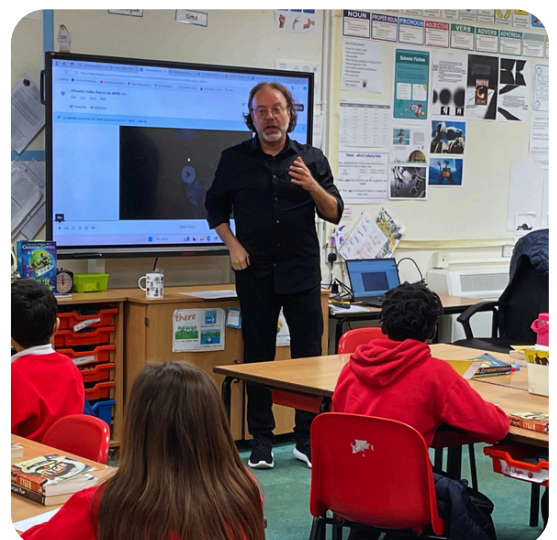
of teachers said that the in-school workshop helped increase children's engagement with the author's book

# 89%

of teachers gave the performance they attended 5/5, when asked if their class enjoyed it

# 100%

of teachers said that they would definitely bring their class to a Children's Bookshow event again



## OUTCOMES: TEACHER FEEDBACK

Teachers' feedback reveals that The Children's Bookshow tour delivered transformative experiences through three primary areas of impact:

### Enthusiasm for reading

Attending engaging in-theatre events sparks enthusiasm for reading among pupils across the board. Teachers consistently reported increased engagement with books and reading as a result of attending a tour event, with many pupils expressing excitement about meeting the artists, and getting repeated value from their free books.

"We had a 40 minute bus journey home and the children read the poems out loud to one another all the way!"

"One boy was literally jumping up and down at the end of the session saying 'I'm so happy, I love the book and I got to meet the author!' He's not someone who usually enjoys reading."

### Creative expression and confidence

Working directly with authors in-school has the power to transform pupils' approach to creative writing and artistic expression. Many teachers reported that children who normally hesitate to participate found their voice in our author workshops, gaining more confidence in their creative abilities.

"Catherine Johnson was very inspiring and inclusive, giving children from different backgrounds the sense that they have a voice and can tell stories that are important to them."

"SF Said's approach to editing and redrafting has made us rethink how we teach story writing. The way he encouraged the students to write freely, made it accessible and successful for everyone."

### Meaningful cultural experiences

For many students, attending a Children's Bookshow event represents a significant cultural first — from visiting a theatre to meeting a professional author. Teachers also valued the diversity of the cultural connections presented by our authors, and the opportunity to create very inclusive learning experiences.

"For some of our children this was the first time they have ever been inside a theatre and they will treasure it."

"We liked the rich cultural links in Valerie Bloom's performance, how she spoke about Jamaica and taught some of the children Jamaican words/phrases."

## GEOGRAPHIC & DEMOGRAPHIC REACH



Teacher feedback tells us that the impact of attending a Children's Bookshow event can also spread to friends, siblings and other family members:

**"The talk about the book has certainly made them more interested in reading the story and several children have said they are reading it at home and sharing it with their families"**

## AT A GLANCE

# 14

Theatre venues across England, including 1 new destination for 2024

# 54

Schools as venues for artist workshops

# 4

Arts Council England Priority Places

# 61%

of schools that attended a theatre performance had an above-average level of pupil premium funding

# 72%

of schools that received an in-school workshop had an above-average level of pupil premium funding



## TEACHER CASE STUDY: IMPACT ON PUPIL WELLBEING

While The Children's Bookshow is primarily focused on promoting reading for pleasure and creativity, we are increasingly thinking about wellbeing and mental health in children too. Teacher feedback from 2024 reveals the potential for our work to make a significant contribution to pupil wellbeing and mental health, from various perspectives. These insights come from two teacher interviews, conducted after the 2024 tour:

### Creating balance in a high-pressure curriculum

Attending a Children's Bookshow event can provide relief from curriculum pressures:

*"I think particularly for Key Stage 2 and the writing curriculum and what the children have to cover in preparation for SATs, for some of our lower-attaining children, the content and the level of grammar is very cognitively challenging for them. The Children's Bookshow offers us all of the stuff that you would like to do if they didn't have to do SATs grammar. The best bits of literacy come out."*

### Building a culture of reading for pleasure

The program helps children to associate literacy with creativity and imagination, and to discover the joy of reading for pleasure, which we know has a positive impact on mental health outcomes:

*"It's really lovely for them to see that literacy is more than just 'fronted adverbials' and 'identifying statements'. Literacy is to be enjoyed and that's the main thing."*

*"We are able to say if you like reading this book you might like reading this as well so it has started a lot of discussions. It's certainly created that buzz to get things moving a little bit with reading for pleasure."*

### Creating safe spaces for learning

For lower-attaining or vulnerable children, our events can offer a particularly valuable experience:

*"I think it's really enjoyable and it feels safe - the children don't have to worry about getting things right or wrong. I think for those children with social, emotional, and mental health needs or those who are finding school challenging, it's actually really important to be able to offer them this kind of experience."*

### Reducing anxiety around school work

Working with authors in school and hearing about their real-life processes for writing can help children (and teachers) to adopt new techniques to reduce perfectionism:

*"We've adopted SF Said's technique and asked children to edit their own writing. We say, 'here's a piece of paper, you just have a go and show me when you think it's the best it can be'. For those anxious, nervous writers that's very positive for them."*

### Inspiring future goals

The program creates lasting inspiration that extends beyond the immediate experience:

*"In terms of long term wellbeing, this is an aspirational experience for our pupils; to think that they could go to university or they could go to the theatre or read different books - or that they could be the writer who stands on that stage."*

Thank you to the funders and supporters who make our work possible



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



and to the authors, illustrators, poets, publishers and venues who took part in the 2024 tour.



Find out more about The Children's Bookshow



[admin@thechildrensbookshow.com](mailto:admin@thechildrensbookshow.com)



[@childrensbkshow.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/childrensbkshow)



[www.thechildrensbookshow.com](http://www.thechildrensbookshow.com)



[@ChildrensBkShow](https://www.instagram.com/ChildrensBkShow)