west sussex music

Annual Review
2025-26



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Our vision

is for West Sussex to be a place where every child and young person can explore the life-changing benefits of music: on their education, their wellbeing, and their future.

Introduction



Welcome from the Chair of the Trust Board

On behalf of the Trustees, I am delighted to introduce this Annual Review which reflects the Trust's developments, successes, and challenges in 2025-26.

It is so pleasing to see that initiatives started just a few years ago, such as our Worthing Orchestras Inc. SEND group and Play In A Band sessions, are now firmly embedded and that our recently opened music centres at Bognor Regis and Crawley are attracting new eager young musicians. I am also grateful that Rachel Portman OBE has agreed to support our work as our Patron.

The Board of Trustees is fortunate to benefit from the skills and experience of its members, and we were delighted to be joined by three new trustees in 2025-26: James Bartlett, Director of Music at Christ's Hospital; Nicola Hughes, parent of two WSYO players and community services clinical lead, and Tim Riches, financial consultant.

I am grateful to all my fellow trustees, James our CEO, the leadership team and staff, our associate tutors and partners for ensuring that children & young people can explore the life-changing benefits of music on their education, their well-being, and their future.

Dr David Skipp
Chair of West Sussex Music Trust



Welcome from our Patron

I was delighted to be asked to become Patron of West Sussex Music this year.

I believe it is so important for young people to have opportunities to discover music, whether that means learning to play an instrument, finding their voice through singing or simply enjoying making music with their friends. Music can bring people together in a very special way; building confidence, creating friendships and giving young people a sense of achievement.

At a time when opportunities to learn music in some schools are becoming increasingly limited, the work of West Sussex Music is more important than ever. We help young people find their own musical paths and discover the pleasure that music can bring, whatever their ambitions for the future.

I know how valuable encouragement can be in a young musician's life, and I hope that West Sussex Music will continue to inspire many more children and young people to explore their musical interests, develop their talents and, above all, enjoy making music together.

I am very proud to support the work of West Sussex Music and look forward to what the next year brings!

Rachel Portman OBE
West Sussex Music Patron

The Water Diviner's Tale

More than 250 performers took to the stage at Worthing Assembly Hall on Monday 23 March 2026 for a powerful and moving performance of *The Water Diviner's Tale*, a rarely staged work by Academy Award-winning West Sussex composer Rachel Portman OBE.

The oratorio, which explores the urgent issue of climate change, was narrated by Elinor Moran and conducted by Adam Barker. It featured five young professional soloists – Lori Grainger, Eve Maxwell, Kristian Thorkildsen, Henry Godwin and Freddie Crowley – alongside West Sussex Youth Orchestra, West Sussex Youth Choirs, Chichester Festival Youth Theatre, and choirs from Felpham Community College, Handcross Primary School, Midhurst Rother College, Storrington Primary School, The Regis School and The Southwater Junior Academy.

Written in 2007 by Rachel Portman in collaboration with poet and novelist Owen Sheers, *The Water Diviner's Tale* tells a compelling and thought-provoking story about the impact of climate change on the world. This original work for massed children's choirs, youth voices, soloists and orchestra was originally commissioned for the BBC Proms.

In a special surprise for the audience and performers, Rachel came to the concert and afterwards said,

"What an incredible inspiring musical event. It was a real joy to hear West Sussex Music's young musicians perform my composition. The singers sang so brilliantly together with the fantastic West Sussex Youth Orchestra and Choir! It was so moving to see them all coming together singing their hearts out, making music for climate change. I was deeply moved by the dedication and enthusiasm of everyone involved, and by the experience of hearing so many young people making music together so beautifully."

Preparations for the concert began in January, with schools, youth choirs, and orchestra rehearsing independently before coming together for the first time on the day of the performance. The event marked the culmination of months of planning and collaboration between schools, arts organisations and music leaders across the county.

"The children have thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience and really rose to the occasion last night in the concert and went for it with their singing. Their faces when they finished the work and knew they had done well were wonderful. I am absolutely convinced that connections with the 'real world of music' and lifelong memories will have been made," **Rebekah Kerney-Haynes, The Southwater Junior Academy**

The idea for the concert was first proposed nearly a year ago, with the aim of uniting West Sussex Music's youth ensembles, school choirs and partner organisations in a large-scale creative performance. *The Water Diviner's Tale* was chosen not only for its musical richness and relevance, but also for the opportunity it offered young performers to engage with the work of a living, locally connected composer.

"What a marvellous evening last Monday. Absolutely fantastic. We loved seeing our grandson take part and the standard of the performance was stunning," **Grandparent of performer.**



Singing

Young people across West Sussex have had the opportunity to sing their hearts out this past year with exciting initiatives to champion choral singing in schools.

Members from professional singing group The Sixteen, led workshops for secondary school students to kick start the new season of the Sings Live! programme; inspiring young singers and providing training to school-based staff.

West Sussex Music with specialists from The Sixteen visited Bishop Luffa School, Durrington High School and Ifield Community College, who each welcomed neighbouring schools to join them back in October 2025. In total 12 schools and 300 students participated in the three massed singing workshops.

The Sings Live! programme culminated in a day's choral workshop in partnership with, and hosted by, Christ's Hospital. It was led by specialist choral leaders Emily Barden and James Bartlett. Following the workshop's rehearsals, the day ended with a performance to families.

The theme of the day was "the natural world" and the repertoire included *Voice In The World* by Emily Barden; *Song Of Promises* from *The Water Diviner's Tale* by Rachel Portman; *Lovely Day* by Bill Withers; *Better Is One Day* arranged by Trey McLaughlin, and *Colors Of The Wind* by Alan Menken & Stephen Schwartz.

"The event had a profound and positive impact on our pupils, staff, and the wider school community. Our students look forward to taking part each year, and the experience consistently inspires them. They are always amazed by the talent showcased by students from other schools, and being part of such a large, collaborative ensemble broadens their musical understanding, ambition, and confidence. For staff, the event strengthens professional relationships with colleagues across other schools and offers valuable opportunities to widen our pupils' cultural and musical experiences. Additionally, it supports our Artsmark journey by providing strong evidence of cultural engagement, collaborative practice, and a diverse artistic offer for our students." **Kenny Park, Oak Grove College**

In December 2025 the beautiful sound of 180 children performing with a professional choir and orchestra filled Worth Abbey in Crawley. The children from St Andrew's CE Primary School, The Mill Primary Academy, and The Holy Trinity CE Secondary School, together with members of the Glyndebourne Chorus and Sinfonia, performed songs they had composed, as well as movements from Handel's *Messiah.*

The uplifting performance was the culmination of workshops that had been organised and run during the autumn by Glyndebourne, a partner of Sussex Music Hub, and was the third year the event has taken place.

"The opportunity this has given our Year 5 pupils is something they will remember forever, and their families too. We are so proud of them and so proud of the teaching team for their commitment to the work. The Glyndebourne team worked with us very effectively and with real warmth." **Headteacher, The Mill Primary Academy.**

In the spring and summer terms we led 34 massed singing events for 81 schools and 4400 primary aged pupils, bringing together multiple schools to a host school for a half-day Big Sing (key stage 2) or Little Big Sing (key stage 1).



Music Centres

Every week hundreds of young people come together at our Saturday and evening music centres to make music in bands, orchestras, and choirs. These activities offer opportunities for developing musicians at every stage of their musical journey, to meet new friends, take part in concerts, and progress their musical skills and understanding.

One of our proudest moments of 2025-26 was the opening of a new music centre at Crawley based at The Mill Primary Academy on Friday evenings. The original Crawley Music Centre temporarily closed in 2020, and it was so exciting to re-establish our music centre offer in the town.

For the fifth year we have run our innovative Tomorrow's Orchestra Programme (TOP). More than 130 primary-aged children keen to learn orchestral instruments in an ensemble setting began their musical journeys at Bognor Regis, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Midhurst and Worthing music centres in January. Fewer than six months after receiving their first lesson the TOP26 cohort from all six centres performed together on stage at Worthing Assembly Hall.

"We're delighted with the programme so far and Hector is loving learning the cornet. John is just brilliant, we couldn't have hoped for better," **Worthing TOP parent.**

The TOP players feed through into our Junior level ensembles, and it has been gratifying to see new junior groups established at Bognor Regis and Midhurst and those at Chichester, Horsham and Worthing becoming more established.

During the year music centre ensembles had opportunities to perform at a variety of exciting venues such at Brighton Dome, Christs Hospital, The Factory Live, and Worthing Assembly Hall, as well as local events such as Worthing Festival, where the West Sussex Youth String Orchestra performed an outdoor set at Homefield Park.

"We just wanted to say a VERY big thank you to you all and WOW!!!! What an incredible evening and wonderful celebration of the children's achievements so far (and all your brilliant encouragement and teaching too!)." **Parent at summer concert.**

This was also the first year we ran a two-day choir course. The course took place at Slindon College in July and culminated in a public concert at St Mary's Church, Storrington where family and friends enjoyed an uplifting concert showcasing everything the singers had achieved in just two days.

For young people accessing the wide range of musical opportunities at music centre, this isn't the end of their journey. Many students progress onto studying music at music college or university and beyond!

"I wanted to write and say a massive thank you for all the support, Sophie has had over the years. WSM started Sophie on ensemble playing some 8 years ago in the Horsham Junior String Orchestra. It was her happy place from the start. At every stage she has been encouraged. Playing the Bach was a dream come true for Sophie after learning it for her grade 8." **Parent of alumnus**



Orchestras Inc.

In 2025-26 our Orchestras Inc. (SEND) music programme has continued to grow in two out of school locations. The groups meet regularly at Horsham and Worthing Music Centres on Saturdays and this year have been supported with funding from the Chalk Cliff Trust, Horsham District Council, and the Worthing Borough Council CIL Neighbourhood Fund.

Orchestras Inc. is an inclusive, creative music group for children and young people under 25 with special educational needs or disabilities and is now in its second year of having a music centre presence, as well as school based one, enabling parents and carers to get involved to enjoy making music with their children.

These inspiring SEND music sessions are free to access and open to all children and young people with additional needs, including those attending special schools, those at mainstream schools or colleges with additional needs and those who are home schooled.

The Orchestras Inc. team working at music centre also delivers the programme in special schools as a fully funded free offer and has developed an approach that is centred around core musical principles but tailored to the individual needs of each participant.

"My son has the opportunity to explore a variety of instruments, and the chance to experience different music and learn new things in a supportive and fun way. It's good to see him becoming more confident and feeling a sense of achievement to be part of something together." **Parent of Orchestras Inc. musician**

The Orchestras Inc. musicians have performed alongside the other music centre ensembles over the year, including joining forces with the West Sussex Youth Orchestra for a performance of a selection from *The Jungle Book* at Horsham, and with the Tomorrow's Orchestra Programme musicians at Worthing, collaborating on *Golden* by the K-pop Demon Hunters.

"This was a hugely positive experience - it was lovely to all mix together to produce a collaborative piece of music" **Parent of Orchestras Inc. musician**

Something that continues to be a valuable consequence of integrating Orchestras Inc. into our music centre offer has been the growing appreciation and involvement in sessions from other young musicians from the two centres.

Alison Sutton, Assistant Head of West Sussex Music, and Orchestras Inc. Leader said:

"Orchestras Inc. is such a joyful and uplifting project to be part of. We see children and young people grow in confidence week by week, discovering new skills, expressing themselves through music and simply enjoying making music together. We're incredibly grateful to our funders for helping us continue to offer these opportunities for free to families across West Sussex."

Our plans for 2026-27 are to expand the Orchestras Inc. offer to a third music centre so that families in the Chichester and Bognor Regis areas can access sessions.



Play In A Band

The second year of our Play In A Band programme at Horsham and Worthing has gone from strength to strength, including the establishment of performances at professional music venues that give young bands the opportunity to experience performing live music in a real-world setting.

Play In A Band (Worthing) is based at Northbrook College's state of the art music studios which feature over 20 acoustically designed spaces, including control and live room suites, performance areas, and post-production rooms. Play In A Band (Horsham) is based at QM Studios, a professional recording studio offering three fully equipped rehearsal rooms, control room and recording booth.

This year the end of term performances have taken place at The Factory Live in Worthing, a music venue in the town which gives the bands the experience of playing live, in front of an audience, with professional equipment, lighting and sound systems.

"In an increasingly digital world, there is something powerful about young people coming together to create music in the same room. Play In A Band encourages listening, adaptability and shared responsibility, all qualities that are essential not only for music-making but for life beyond the rehearsal space. For many of our young people, Play In A Band is their first experience of performing live in a professional music venue. We want every young person to feel that their creativity matters and that there is a place for them in music. Watching them develop their skills, support one another and perform with confidence is incredibly rewarding." **Elizabeth Leondaritis, Youth Engagement Manager**

Play In A Band is for young people from age 8 to 16yrs learning drums, guitar, bass, keyboard, and vocals. Alongside their musical training, students benefit from structured skill development, mentoring from experienced tutors, and opportunities to collaborate with peers from other centres.

"Our son has really enjoyed his time playing drums, thank you for all the support you have given him, and for expanding his musical knowledge beyond drum 'n' bass into proper rock!!" **parent of PIAB member**

As well as improving their musical skills, Play In A Band provides the opportunity to make new friends, celebrate successes, and support each other throughout.

Each week, our performers work with experienced professionals and like-minded young musicians to explore a wide range of popular songs. They learn how to arrange music together, improve their stage presence, and gain practical experience in live performance.

Sessions are welcoming, creative and collaborative, with the chance to perform to friends and family at the end of each term with neighbouring bands.

For some of the performers when it comes to the showcase event it's their very first experience of playing on a professional stage in a live music venue – an exciting but daunting milestone that they always embrace with remarkable confidence.



Holiday activities

This is the fourth year we have been running holiday activities across the county. During 2025-26 twenty-two workshops offered a free midday meal and a range of musical activities to young people.

West Sussex County Council's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, funded by the Department for Education, covers 50% of the costs of our holiday activity provision.

It supports young people entitled to targeted free school meals, enabling them to access free holiday activity clubs and receive a free meal. Additionally paid places are available to other participants.

The holiday activities took place in Bognor Regis, Crawley and Worthing. Workshops are open to all young people aged 8-16 with half of all places being completely free to families in receipt of free school meals, funded through the HAF scheme and other places being subsidised through the West Sussex Music bursary fund.

The objective of these activities was to offer high-quality music provision and increase participation of young people in these areas and offer a nutritious lunch.

Activities included Music Production & DJ-ing, Rap & Lyric Writing and Play In A Band taking place at our music centres at The Phoenix Centre, The Mill Primary Academy, and Northbrook College.

Attendees made valuable friendships, improved their lyric and songwriting, learned how to produce a song, recorded music using digital audio workstations, played as part of a band, mixed music using midi DJ controllers, and developed performance skills.

"I just want to say thank you so much for the last three days. It was incredible to watch the performance at the end of today and see Sam with such confidence! He really struggles with the school system and the insight you've given him that things can be different and there are places he can be himself and thrive is huge! My face still hurts from grinning so much!" **Parent of holiday activity participant**

At the core of this, is our community engagement. Creating links with local councils, community music providers, industry experts, arts educators, offering this access to music at a grassroots level, and going up.

We're indebted to our visiting music teachers, our associates and Hub partners for their leadership and creativity in developing the programme during the year.

"The holidays are a fantastic opportunity for young people to try something new, develop their musical skills and meet others who share their passion for music. It has been wonderful to see so much enthusiasm across all of our activities this year. Whether they were performing in a band for the first time, producing their own music or singing in front of an audience, every participant should be incredibly proud of what they achieved." **Elizabeth Leondaritis, Youth Engagement Manager.**

All Holiday Activity participants receive a Digital Badge after completing the workshops. Digital badges are innovative, visual representations of skills, achievements, or certifications earned online. They serve as a modern credentialing tool, allowing individuals to showcase their accomplishments across platforms, enhancing credibility and engagement.



Our year in numbers

29,295
Students involved in activities

96%
Schools engaged with WSM

122
Schools engaged in CIL

9634
Students engaged in CIL

4361
Students in tuition

1103
Students financially supported

7396
Students at live music performances

6640
Students engaged in singing

11,597
Students loaned instruments

1203
Students in ensembles

158
Holiday activity attendees

1769
Teacher training attendees

Our mission is to:

- Encourage and develop the musical potential of all children and young people, with opportunities for them to progress as musicians and as people.
- Support young people and those who work with them to improve social, personal and wellbeing outcomes through music.
- Work collaboratively in partnership with, and for, children and young people to develop and signpost high quality, accessible and diverse musical learning opportunities for them.
- Increase the music provision available for all children and young people in West Sussex

Instrumental and vocal tuition

West Sussex Music's instrumental and vocal tuition is delivered by 120 visiting music teachers and associate tutors, who work with pupils in schools and colleges throughout the county.

Our tutors offer tuition across a wide variety of instruments and styles, from orchestral brass, woodwind, strings and percussion to contemporary instruments such as guitar, keyboard and drum kit. Singing, Indian classical singing and music theory are also available.

Whether a student is keen to learn piano, take up the violin, cello or flute, explore jazz on the trumpet or saxophone, or get started on guitar or drums, there are opportunities to suit a wide range of interests and ambitions.

Learning an instrument or developing vocal skills can have a lasting impact, helping children and young people build creativity, memory, confidence and social skills, alongside a lifelong enjoyment of music.

"I wanted to draw your attention to the wonderful teaching Anna, my daughter, receives from West Sussex Music. She has always delighted in the teacher's lessons and how he makes learning the cornet so fun." **Parent/carer**

We continue to make the best use of our tutors' availability so that as many students as possible can access lessons, while working to grow our teaching team and broaden the range of tuition we offer.

Lessons usually take place in schools during or shortly after the school day, with parents and carers booking and paying for tuition. Students who are members of our Music Centres can also access tuition as part of their membership, through Saturday lessons or evening sessions.

Our former students are an important part of the West Sussex Music community, with many returning to work as tutors or in support roles. Their journeys demonstrate the lasting influence of music education and provide valuable inspiration for the next generation of musicians and music educators.

Bursary Fund

We believe every child and young person should have the chance to make music, whatever their circumstances, and we are committed to removing financial barriers to participation.

Our Bursary Fund uses a proportion of our Department for Education music hub grant and donations from individuals to help eligible young musicians access free or highly subsidised group lessons, instrument hire and Music Centre membership. This support is available to students receiving targeted or expanded free school meals, children in care, young carers and refugees attending school in West Sussex.

"I can't thank West Sussex Music enough for the opportunity for my son to benefit from lessons and instrument loan. Without support from the bursary fund it is not something we could have afforded."
Parent / carer



Classroom instrumental lessons

Learning a musical instrument is a fantastic experience with a wealth of educational, personal, and social benefits. We have a wide range of whole-class subsidised school programmes that help introduce all children to making music, as well as supporting teachers in their own professional development.

Our classroom instrumental lessons (CIL) offer pupils a fantastic free musical opportunity and are designed to enrich a school's music curriculum. Through the supporting resources and CPD, CIL gives the opportunity for class teachers to learn new skills and build confidence.

Schools may choose from either 1Term2Learn, Key2Music (one year key stage 2) or GetIn2Music (one year key stage 1).

"A professional teacher teaching an instrument so well was an amazing opportunity - we would never be able to offer this to our pupils without the CIL programme. It has helped us fulfil our aim of all children learning a musical instrument during their time at the school. It has enlightened teachers about how to teach instruments and the elements of music. The pupils have loved embracing this opportunity which will be with them for life."
Rachel Anscombe, Lindfield Primary Academy

The ten-week 1Term2Learn whole-class sessions run across one term. They include the free loan of instruments, free CPD for the class teacher with weekly sessions led by West Sussex Music approved tutors supported by the class teacher. We have delivered lessons in a range of instruments: clarinet, cornet, djembe drums, glockenspiel, guitar, keyboard, recorder, tenor horn, trumpet, ukulele, and violin.

These programmes have singing, musical games, and fun at their core to develop broader musical skills.

"It gave all children, regardless of ability, the opportunity to receive quality music lessons from a professional music specialist. As class teacher I will be able to build on what has been delivered in the sessions and it has given me a fresh approach."
Rachel Field, Rogate CE Primary School

West Sussex Music provides a subsidised programme to classes in a specified year group. We hope all children will have benefitted from the DfE funding by the time they leave Key Stage 2. This year 9634 pupils from 122 schools have benefitted from a whole-class first access programme and feedback demonstrates just how much schools value the experience:

"It has been a wonderful and rich way for Music to be taught at Rudgwick. It helped me with my CPD in music. The children were able to access instruments that may not have been possible in their personal lives, and it added a wonderful arts layer to our school as we work towards achieving an Artsmark." **Miss Matthews, Rudgwick Primary School**

"Having a specialist teacher gives access to the whole class to learn to play together and then perform together. They also gain a firm understanding of what they are playing, including the structure and vocabulary involved in music lessons."
Mr Wooller, Storrington Primary School



Live music

Over the year, we have enjoyed many wonderful opportunities to introduce children and young people to live music performed by talented professional musicians.

In September 2025, Worthing Symphony Orchestra performed two daytime concerts for more than 850 schoolchildren at Worthing Assembly Hall. Pupils from 18 local schools, alongside home-educated young people, enjoyed a programme of classical masterpieces and film scores, conducted by John Gibbons and designed to introduce key stage 2 children to orchestral music.

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for giving our students and staff(!) the opportunity to experience the Orchestra this morning. They absolutely loved it and have been chatting about Wallace and Gromit all afternoon. It's going to be so valuable for them, especially as they begin studying the instruments of the orchestra this year." **Kenny Park, Oak Grove College**

In January, Children's Concerts brought two live music performances for schools to Chichester Festival Theatre. Children were entertained by Southern Pro-Musica led by Jonathan Willcocks and compered by magician and musician Neil Henry. As well as a host of well-known orchestra favourites, the whole audience were encouraged to join in with a song they had all prepared.

"They played really well together as an orchestra, and I like seeing them play the trumpet like me."
Pupil aged 8

In February, thanks to funding from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) Key Stage 2 children of all abilities took part in a creative music workshop at Crawley Music Centre. Led by Dr Tim Steiner, children taking part got to play alongside three professional RPO musicians, and created a piece inspired by outer space. A week later, the RPO and Dr Tim returned to The Hawth, Crawley for their live music concert Noisy Kids: It Came from Outer Space.

"It was his first experience playing with other musicians in a group and we had the lovely RPO guiding us. Amazing. It was a beautiful inclusive experience. Just wonderful." **Parent of SEND workshop participant**

In late February the RPO came back to Crawley Music Centre to lead a creative workshop for SEND young people and parents/carers with John Webb and RPO musicians. The following week, participants were invited to join Dr Tim and the RPO at Crawley's Charis Centre, for a "Relaxed Performance" in partnership with Creative Crawley. Featuring well-known classical works, games, songs and audience participation, the event welcomed everyone to experience the music in whatever way worked best for them.

In July, more than 270 children from six local schools attended live music concerts at Midhurst Rother College. Presented by Kidenza and Emily Barden, and co-funded by West Sussex Music, the concerts showcased fun engaging orchestral music and audience singing.

Following two morning concerts for primary schools, Kidenza also ran a sit alongside orchestral workshop with Midhurst Rother College musicians. We were grateful to Kidenza and The Boltini Trust for thir financial support for the event.



Curriculum support and CPD

West Sussex Music provided curriculum support to 225 schools during the year, with free curriculum advice and training for school leaders and class teachers. This offer was provided via a programme of face-to-face and online opportunities and culminated in two music education conferences in the summer term.

New for 2025-26 was a programme of support for New Music Leads and Early Careers Teachers in primary schools. These face-to-face sessions covered a range of subjects to support their role in schools and strengthen relationships to a wider network.

"We have been so impressed by the support from West Sussex Music and their music training, conferences and CPD in school. The session today was very helpful." **Headteacher, Hassocks Infant School**

Schools were supported to connect with the wider music education sector through Music Mark membership which also offered a CPD and networking programme. Additionally, representatives from the Sussex Music Hub, Lead Schools for Music: Development Group provided input into the CPD programme.

"Thank you for being inspiring. Having just taken on the music lead role I'm excited about the future for our school". **Class teacher, Shoreham Beach Primary**

School music leaders were brought together through two music education conferences.

The first was the Sussex Secondary Music Conference at the University of Sussex on 18 June; a day of professional development, collaboration and discussion focused on the future of music education.

Delivered in partnership by the University of Sussex, West Sussex Music, and Create Music, the conference welcomed secondary teachers from across West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove to explore the theme Redefining Music's Place in the Curriculum: Empowering Inclusive Musical Learning.

The day featured a keynote address from Professor Robin Banerjee, from the University of Sussex, who shared research highlighting the positive impact of music participation on young people's wellbeing, attainment and social development.

The second was the annual West Sussex Primary & SEND Music Conference which welcomed 80 music educators on 9 July to enjoy a day packed with inspiring workshops, practical ideas and opportunities to connect with colleagues from across the region.

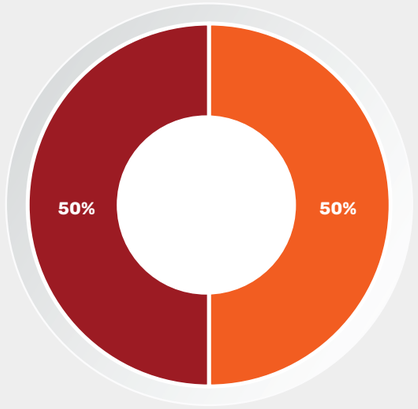
Held at Haywards Heath College the conference welcomed primary and special school teachers, music leads and educators for a programme designed to build confidence, share best practice and celebrate the vital role of music in education. Throughout the day, delegates took part in a variety of hands-on workshops led by expert practitioners.

Among the standout sessions were workshops delivered by guest leaders Aga Serugo-Lugo and Shivani Rattan, as well as West Sussex teachers Jo Eames, Alex Bondonno, and Fiona Bull, each offering fresh ideas, practical classroom strategies and plenty of inspiration for teachers to take back to their schools.



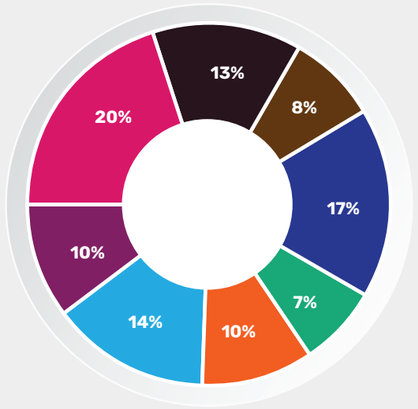
Finance

During 2025-26 West Sussex Music benefitted from Sussex Music Hub funding from the Department for Education, administered by Arts Council England, to deliver the National Plan for Music Education in West Sussex. Additionally West Sussex Music has traded income from its provision to students and schools, as well as other grants and charitable fundraising.



West Sussex Music income 2025-26

- DfE Hub Grant
- Traded income and other grants



Use of the DfE Hub grant 2025-26

The chart above demonstrates how the Hub funding was used to support the seven objectives of the National Plan for Music Education.

- Bursaries
- Ensembles
- Concerts
- Instruments
- CIL
- Overheads
- CPD
- Projects

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Looking forward

West Sussex Music and Create Music are consortium partners leading Sussex Music Hub, a network of over 50 partner organisations ranging from local community groups to venues, orchestras, and NPOs with regional and national reach. Department for Education music education funding is administered locally by hub lead organisation Brighton Dome & Festival Ltd.

I would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to colleagues and board members at both West Sussex Music and Create Music, and hub partners for their hard work in supporting the work of Sussex Music Hub (SMH). It has been rewarding to establish the SMH Lead Schools for Music: Development Group with 20 school representatives from across Sussex. This group is already impacting on a new joint CPD programme for schools which will culminate in two co-designed music education conferences in June 2027.

Additionally, the teams at West Sussex Music and Create Music have collaborated closely to develop and curate a Sussex-wide instrument and resource library for schools and young people. Thousands of instruments have been loaned to support music programmes in schools, curriculum music lessons, instrumental tuition, and the Hub's music centres and accessible SEND music groups.

As we work together as a hub to develop a cohesive vision across the region, albeit delivered by separate organisations, our programmes of activity will endeavour to ensure that all children and young people, particularly in underserved communities, have access to high-quality music education in schools and beyond.

In West Sussex this will include the following exciting initiatives:

- A new cohort of over 120 beginner instrumentalists through the Tomorrow's Orchestra Programme (TOP27) will be recruited for January start in at least five music centres.
- A new junior level ensemble will be established at Crawley Music Centre.
- Expansion of our Play In A Band programme at more music centres and into schools.
- Expansion of our schools' singing programme to include two Sings Live! whole-day workshops and the return of a primary schools singing festival at The Hawth, Crawley.
- A new massed choral performance for secondary schools and County Ensembles *New Nation Rising* by Shirley J Thompson, OBE at Worthing Assembly Hall.
- Open a new Orchestras Inc. SEND music group at Chichester Music Centre.

I look forward to reporting on the success of these initiatives and our other achievements in 2026-27.

James Underwood
Chief Executive, West Sussex Music

Staff and governance

West Sussex Music

James Underwood	Chief Executive
Lee Hume	Head of Finance
Lou Pickett	Head of Operations
Alison Sutton	Head of Learning
Paul Smyth	Head of Participation
Jane Swindells	Primary Curriculum Manager
John Randall	Music Centres Manager
Elizabeth Leondaritis	Youth Engagement Manager
Claire Robins	Schools Singing Leader
Lee Ashment	Area Music Centre Manager
Matt Coulton	Area Music Centre Manager
Jacqui Drummond-Fawcett	Lead Teacher
Mike Hart	Stock Control Manager
Georgina Klovig Skelton	Education Project Manager
Heather Downie	Arts Administrator
Ray Cornell	Arts Administrator
Jo Anderson	Schools Administrator
Nicola Needham	Schools Administrator
Shelley Young	Schools Administrator
Mandy Gibbard	Customer Accounts Administrator
Maddie Maddison	Customer Accounts Administrator

Trust Board

David Skipp - Chair
Claudia Golden – Vice Chair
James Bartlett
Susie Harris
Hannah Howard
Nicola Hughes
Tim Riches

2025-26 Hub partners