



West of England  
**MUSIC  
& ARTS**



# **Creatives in Schools Grant**

## Case Study Three

The Cultural Education Hub from West of England Music and Arts gives grants to creative practitioners to develop and deliver a series of free creative workshops for schools, providing students with access to exciting new creative and cultural experiences.

# Doing - Talking - Writing

Developing children's skills in writing creative prose through drama activities

## Toby Hulse

Playwright and theatre director Toby Hulse delivered a series of creative writing workshops across five Weston-super-Mare primary schools, using drama as a tool to inspire storytelling and imaginative prose writing. The workshops helped children explore key elements of creative writing - including setting, character, dialogue, and plot - through practical drama activities rather than traditional pen and paper tasks.



Over five days, Toby ran 19 workshops with over 500 pupils (Years 3-6). Each 60-90 minute session introduced playful drama exercises that encouraged children to develop stories collaboratively, building confidence in language use and creative thinking.

The sessions explored how:

- Dialogue can infer plot and relationships
- Action can suggest character
- Setting can be built through sensory imagination
- Sequencing events can create tension and narrative interest

Workshops were delivered in classroom settings, allowing Toby to trial and adapt exercises for non-specialist teachers - with the aim of developing a teacher-friendly resource that makes drama-based creative writing more accessible in schools.

"Each workshop allowed young people to work creatively as writers without the restrictions of physical writing. The drama activities stimulated playful talk and encouraged everyone to contribute."

- Toby Hulse

## Key Learning

Toby reported that the Creatives in Schools grant helped him build his skills and experience.

Toby also found that the grant enabled him to make contact with schools in his local area of Weston-Super-Mare, after recently relocating from Bristol. He noted that many schools were initially cautious about hosting an artist and needed a lot of hand holding compared to Bristol schools he has worked with before who have a history of working with visiting artists, highlighting a need to build confidence and understanding around the benefits of this work. He also noted a lack of awareness about theatre, drama and careers in arts from the children he worked with.

“Delivering these workshops numerous times in a wide variety of settings gave me the opportunity to develop and hone what the teaching and learning offer is in considerable detail.”

“In the same way, I was able to find and establish new pathways through the material that I was delivering, so that discovery and learning built progressively through each session, and pointed towards further work that the class teacher could do.”

- Toby Hulse

## Impact

Teachers reported that pupils were highly engaged, including those who often struggle in conventional classroom tasks:

Several teachers also fed back that they were likely to incorporate elements of the workshop into their own teaching practice. After a session at Worlebury a parent got in touch to ask about other creative writing sessions or activities with Toby, as her daughter was so inspired by the session.

“Children thoroughly enjoyed the experience and were engaged throughout. They relished the opportunity to use their imaginations through acting, oracy and literacy. Toby was brilliant at teasing more detail and information from the children about the worlds they had come up with. Children in the class who tend to struggle sitting and listening were fully engaged and immersed themselves in the workshop.”

- Worlebury St Paul’s CofE VA Primary School

“The children all thoroughly enjoyed the workshop and developed their inference skills around character”

- Milton Park Primary School

The Creatives in Schools programme is part of the Cultural Education Hub, led by West of England Music and Arts. The hub is funded by the West of England Mayoral Authority and Arts Council England, and is a strand of the Culture West programme.