

# 20 YEARS OF CHAMPIONING CREATIVITY



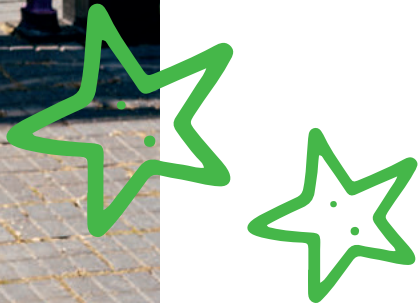




# WHAT'S INSIDE?



Chair's Foreword .....	2
Director's Foreword .....	3
20 Years of Championing Creativity .....	4
Key Moments Throughout the Years .....	6
A Special Place of Inspiration, Imagination and Creativity .....	8
Unlocking Stories Through Creative Learning .....	10
Increasing Access .....	14
Protecting and Celebrating Our Literary Heritage .....	18
Our Impact on Buckinghamshire, Our Home .....	22
The Vision for Our Future .....	24
The 'Unlocking Stories' Capital Project .....	28
A Bright Future, Working in Partnership .....	30
What It Means to Work Here .....	35
A GIANT-sized THANK YOU .....	36





# Chair's Foreword

Isobel Hunter MBE, Chair of the Board of Trustees



I am honoured to serve as the Chair of the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre in its 20th anniversary year. As an archivist by training, and now a representative of public libraries, I was naturally drawn to the chance to help care for and share Roald Dahl's archive.

The Museum in Great Missenden — where Dahl lived and worked — is a remarkable organisation. It was founded by the family to celebrate the joy of storytelling through its unique collection of manuscripts, photographs, letters and mementos from Dahl's eventful life.

However, what has made the Museum so special, is the unique methodology the staff have developed over the last two decades to use the archive to spark the creativity of children, families and adults. Visitors leave with more than happy memories as they also take away renewed confidence in their own ability to imagine, tell stories and communicate.

As our economy continues to shift towards innovation, knowledge-based and digital industries, fostering creativity in children is more vital than ever before.

These are difficult times for independent charities and visitor attractions, and there will be challenges in the years ahead. But, thanks to the remarkable generosity of the Dahl family, a growing network of support, an ambitious vision, and commitment to our task, the Museum's future is full of opportunity and possibility.

This report gives a flavour of twenty years of work of which we are justifiably proud. However, in some ways — especially after the upheaval and uncertainty of the pandemic — it feels like we're just getting started on Chapter 2 of the Roald Dahl Museum story.

*I. Hunter.*

# Director's Foreword

Steve Gardam, Museum Director



I love working here. Ten years ago, when I was offered this job and telling family, friends and colleagues, time and again there were yells of excitement at the news, mirroring the big grin on my face.

In the time since, I have found this kind of encounter remains the very best of the Roald Dahl Museum experience: we are fundamentally a place of welcome, and we welcome people who are already bubbling over with their enthusiasm for Roald's remarkable stories. Our duty — which is not hard to fulfil! — is to meet their enthusiasm with our own, seasoned with our expertise. That makes magic.

I asked Liccy Dahl, our wonderful founder, how she would reflect on the journey of the Museum since she set us on this road. This is her marvellous reply:



**// Just over twenty years ago Linda Ambrose, who had the endlessly entertaining role of being in charge of Roald's fan mail, rang me to tell me the NatWest Bank on the High Street of Great Missenden was for sale. She suggested I might be interested in buying it, to which I answered, 'What would I need a bank for?!' — She replied, 'To hold Roald's Archive'. This was the start of creating the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre and here we are, twenty years later.**

**I believe that a day for a child at the Museum provides an unforgettable experience. My hope is that each child who visits us is inspired to have a life-long love of reading. Some might even become authors.**

**If we succeed in this, my dream will have come true. //**

*Liccy Dahl*

Thank you Liccy; we share and nurture your hope. We may be a small charity by some measures, but working here has never felt like a small job, and I must also thank every colleague who has shared in the task.

To care for Dahl's creative legacy is a thrill, and a responsibility that my team and I take incredibly seriously. We champion creativity. We help make marvellous memories. As Roald himself said: 'All good writing is essentially re-writing', and that's our guide for our next two decades: to iterate, improve, and increase our positive impact, through all our phizz-whizzing work.

*Steve*

# "WE ARE THE DREAMERS OF DREAMS"

Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

## 20 years of championing CREATIVITY

At the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre, we welcome more than 50,000 children, mums, dads, aunts, uncles, grannies, granddads, friends and fellow fans of Dahl's magical books, every year.

In the village where Roald Dahl lived and worked, we care for his

incredible Archive as part of our national, and international literary heritage. For 20 years we have shared the stories behind the stories that Roald dreamed up and wrote down in his world-famous Writing Hut — now preserved as the heart of the Museum and where so many beloved characters were 'born'.

This is a place for readers, writers, artists, modellers, makers, and more. It is a place for children (and the inner child) of ALL ages, to nurture a love of stories and creativity. It is a place of beginnings, of getting things started. It is a place to be SPARKY.

### As a charity, our purpose is:

That everyone who experiences the Roald Dahl Museum & Story Centre understands how the work of Roald Dahl can be a key to unlock the stories we all have inside.

This purpose supports our vision, founded on a firm belief that making stories is essential to being human. We believe:

## EVERYONE IS A STORYMAKER

## TWO DECADES IN NUMBERS

### 1 MILLION

More than one million people have been welcomed to this special place (1,149,291 by the end of March 2025, to be exact!).

### 90,000

In 2016, over 90,000 people visited in a single year as we celebrated Roald Dahl 100 – the centenary of his birth.

### 1,200

We have welcomed more than 1,200 visitors to our new 'Explore Your Way' days and school programme for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) since 2024.

### 200,000

The creative craft of Roald Dahl has been brought to life for almost 200,000 school children in more than 6,000 workshops in our award-winning school programme.



### 18

We have earned 18 awards and accolades for the quality of our education, visitor experience and inclusive access.

### 2,400

Since the start of 2025 alone, we have offered more than 2,400 low cost tickets to people on Universal or Pension Credit to welcome even more families during difficult economic times.

### 100

The Archive of Roald's 27 books, 65 short stories, and 16 film and television screenplays is stored in over 100 acid-free, museum-grade boxes in a specially built, environmentally controlled store. They also contain many letters, photographs and unpublished stories!



### 800,000

We have invested close to £800,000 in the upkeep of our galleries and Grade 2 listed historic site (in parts over 400 years old) since opening in 2005.

### 20

We had to close for five months in 2018 due to a flood, and for nearly 15 months due to the COVID pandemic in 2020–21.

### 300

On top of that investment, the fragile interior and nearly 300 unique artefacts from Dahl's Writing Hut have been preserved as a magical, messy, shrine to imagination, at the heart of the Museum since 2012.



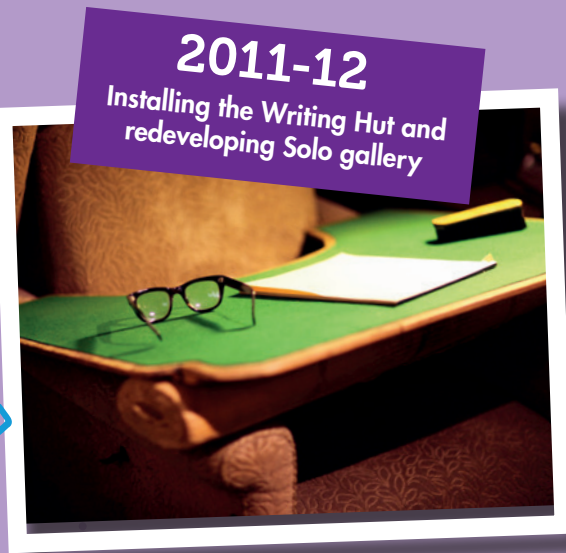


# Key moments THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



**2005**

Opening the Wonka Gates to our first visitors!



**2011-12**

Installing the Writing Hut and redeveloping Solo gallery



**2001**

The Museum charity is founded



**2008**

Visit England Awards for Excellence: Small Visitor Attraction of the Year



**2014**

50th anniversary of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory



**2016**

Roald Dahl 100 — centenary of Roald's birth and over 90,000 visitors



**2017**

Billy and the Minpins display of new illustrations by Quentin Blake



**2018**

Museum flood closure... and installation of Matilda statue



**2020-21**

COVID closure... and development of livestream learning online schools programme



**2022**

Capital regeneration project plans get going



**2023**

Glittering Eyes outreach programme launches



**2024**

Explore Your Way days and SEND school programme begin



**2025**

Capital project scope set, and the future starts to take shape



# A special place of INSPIRATION, IMAGINATION and CREATIVITY

The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre offers a visitor experience rooted in its setting and collections. We are in the very village where Roald Dahl lived, worked, and found 'the seed of an idea' for so many tremendous tales.

Over the last 20 years we have welcomed over one million people through our Wonka gates to explore three packed galleries, all featuring hands-on activities, audio-visual treats, accessible crafts, and original material from the Roald Dahl Archive.

Roald would have walked past the Museum buildings (when they were a pub, a bank, a hairdressers) any time he passed along the High Street between 1954 and 1990.

Most wonderfully, we know from the Archive and Roald's hints at the location of Sophie's 'norphanage' in *The BFG*, that the mural of the Big Friendly Giant on the front of the Museum is in *exactly the right place* for the start of that book. Matilda's library is just along the High Street. Five minutes' walk takes you to the woods of *Fantastic Mr Fox* and *Danny the Champion of the World*.

Our visitor experience is founded on these 'bits of jewellery' — as Dahl described the nuggets of inspiration hooked by the 'invisible tentacles' of his attention — revealing how Roald found his creative spark in the apparently ordinary and everyday... So that our visitors might realise how they could do that, too.

Our Museum is too small to recount a whole life as complex as Dahl's: *Boy* and *Solo* gallery displays use collection artefacts to pick out the moments in Roald's life that can be linked to his best-known books: pranking the local sweet shop owner in Cardiff, being a chocolate tester at boarding school, working in Africa, his life-changing experience as a fighter pilot in the Second World War.<sup>1</sup>

These galleries lead to the Writing Hut — Roald's 'little nest' — which was moved to Solo gallery from his garden close by amongst the Chiltern Hills. It now sits at the heart of the Museum.

The *Story Centre* and *George's Crafty Kitchen* are full of hands-on family activities so that visitors of any age can explore their own creativity and — maybe, just maybe — start to unlock the stories they have inside. Live storytelling and extra workshops give the Museum a vibrant pulse during school holidays.

The UK Government and leading educationalists recognise that "[Imagination is] the ability of the mind to be creative and resourceful. Creativity is children's unique response to all that they see, hear, feel, and experience. A child's individual responses to materials, experiences and ideas inspire their creativity and imagination... [and] creativity is associated with focus, independence, a willingness to explore, and ingenuity."<sup>2</sup>

There is a vital need for places that explicitly encourage this basic need of children — to grow their creativity and imagination as they grow, to help them explore the world around them with boundless curiosity, to find their own inspiration, the fuel of imagination. The Roald Dahl Museum is such a place.

"My daughters (9 & 6) had a wonderful time (as did we) learning about Roald Dahl, his life and his stories. They have been inspired to re-read his books. Highly recommend this for a family afternoon out."

Daniel K, TripAdvisor review.

"I really enjoyed my trip and had the best day of my life at the Roald Dahl Museum! I couldn't imagine a better day out!... There were lots of different activities and games... I loved it so much that I now want to be an author! I am very inspired from Roald Dahl and his Museum!!!"

Arianna, aged 9, TripAdvisor review

"I loved it so much  
that I now want to be  
an author!"

"My 6 year old daughter chose this for her birthday treat. She had a wonderful time and we loved seeing her engaging with all she found in front of her. She was inspired by her visit and has decided to write a story called *Molly & the Massive Pumpkin!*"

Hannah, TripAdvisor review



1. We acknowledge, but we do not repeat publicly, his antisemitic statements [roalddahlmuseum.org/our-story/anti-racism-statement/](https://roalddahlmuseum.org/our-story/anti-racism-statement/)  
2. <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/areas-of-learning/expressive-arts-and-design/imagination-and-creativity#why-imagination-and-creativity-are-important>



# Unlocking Stories through CREATIVE LEARNING

Every school group visiting our award-winning school programme gets our fantastic Learning team facilitating their visit. This is not 'classroom learning'; it happens in our galleries and with our collection. It is hands-on, creative, and rooted in real skills: editing; crafting characters; understanding inspiration, imagination and creativity as a positive process.

A strong pedagogy runs throughout our programme. We champion learning that is investigative, purposeful and active. We draw on specific approaches to teaching such as the Magenta Principles<sup>3</sup> and Bloom's Taxonomy<sup>4</sup>. Regular team training means that our staff also keep learning and improving the school programme.

Student evaluation shows that a Roald Dahl Museum school session changes participants' perception of

the storymaking process from a SPAG (Spelling and Grammar) and story components exercise, to one which starts with far greater awareness of ideas and how these can be developed.

Over 98% of teachers we surveyed rate teaching the creative processes behind writing as 'very important', 85% rate their experience with us as 'good' or 'excellent', and 84% say they intend to change their approach to teaching these following a visit to the Roald Dahl Museum.

All sessions include engagement with Dahl's Writing Hut at some point as the centre of our collection — it has enduring impact as 'the place where it all happened'. Even for very young children, the Hut gives the process of writing a famous book a grounded location.

**186,000**

Over 186,000 school children have taken part in creative activities since 2005.



**5,000**

Over 5,000 students have taken part in facilitated livestream learning sessions since 2021.

**6,000**

More than 6,000 creative school workshops delivered.



**100**

100% of teachers rate a Roald Dahl Museum visit as very important or important for their pupils.



"It gave me little ideas — it's easy to say, 'use your imagination' but this has given me the tools to do that."

*Teacher feedback 2024*

"[Back in school] I can make things more practical like the activities in the Story Centre so my students can process ideas before they start writing."

*Teacher feedback 2024*





## Sandford Award-winning

The Roald Dahl Museum school programme earned quality mark accreditation from the Sandford Award for Heritage Education for 2018–2023, and again in 2023–28. The 2023 assessment report said:

**“The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre has once again received a Sandford Award. This is testament to its unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional and immersive educational experiences. The assessment highlighted the Museum’s devotion to providing enriching and engaging learning. This commitment is tangibly reflected in the Museum’s efforts to offer young individuals experiences that are investigative, purpose-driven, dynamic, and impactful.”**

*Sandford Award Assessment, 2023*



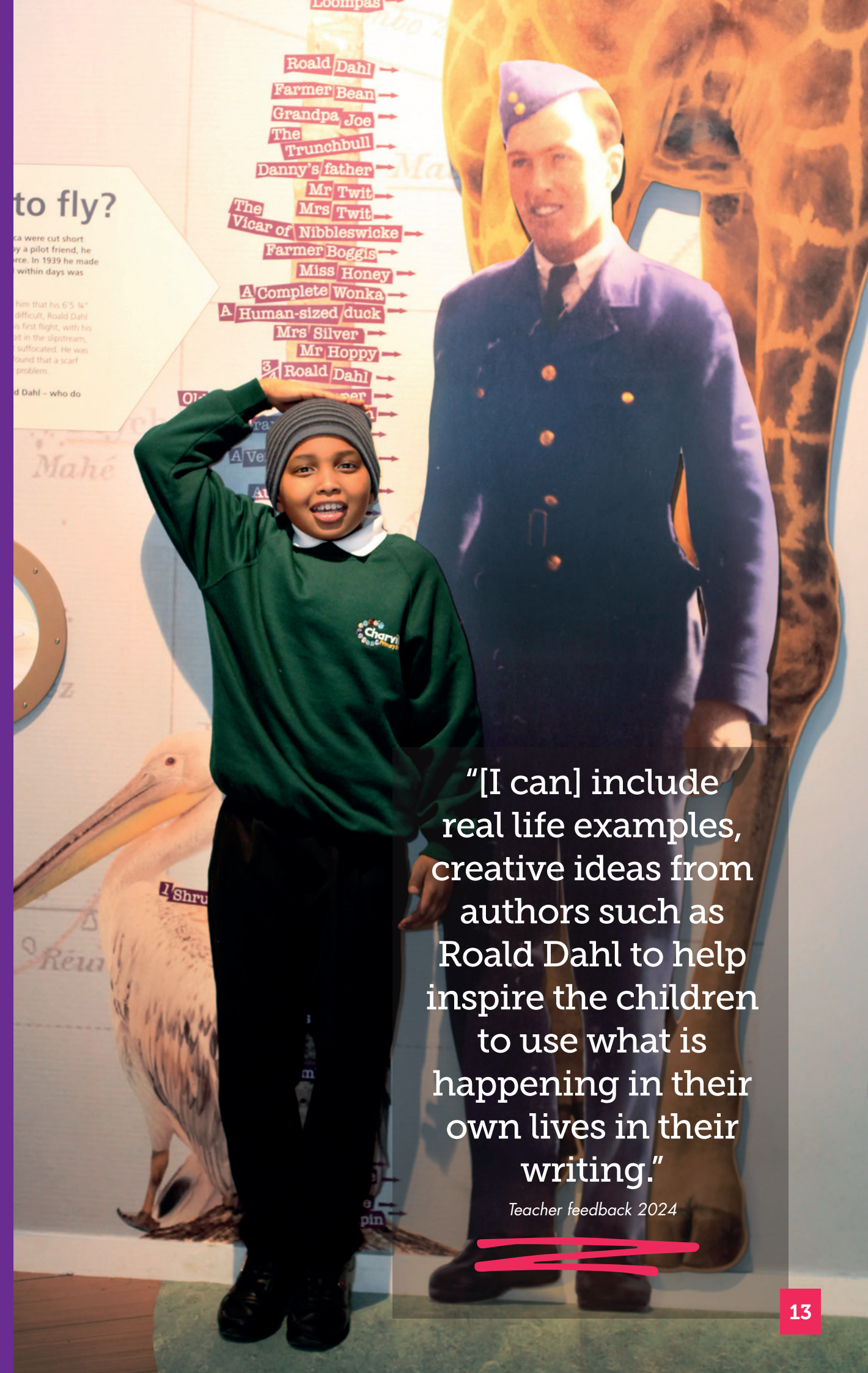
## SPOTLIGHT Livestream learning: best-in-class online school workshops

In 2020, many publicly funded museums turned their attention to online activities as the pandemic closed their sites. For the Roald Dahl Museum, this provided an exciting opportunity to extend our reach, not just for lockdown, but for the long term.

Generous support from the Art Fund supported the Learning Team to devise a livestream equivalent to our on-site school programme. The team had to rapidly self-train in digital skills: filming, editing, combining different software platforms to enable delivery. We worked with our partner schools to help test session formats.

The essence of the programme is to be as close as possible to a real-world Roald Dahl Museum experience. Fully facilitated livestream sessions use a blend of pre-recorded films of the galleries and village, plus live presentation and interaction. We send out resources for use in the classroom, which contains content from the Archive for inspiration, and the resources support the children to produce their creative responses.

Over 5,000 children — many of whom are unlikely to have visited in person due to distance — have taken part so far.



**“[I can] include real life examples, creative ideas from authors such as Roald Dahl to help inspire the children to use what is happening in their own lives in their writing.”**

*Teacher feedback 2024*



# Increasing ACCESS

In our 2024 'Digital Explorations' project with the National Paralympic Heritage Trust (NPHT), a NPHT colleague leading a session with children from Pebble Brook Special School helped us see Roald Dahl's Writing Hut as an adapted space. It was adapted by Dahl to accommodate his own special needs, both as a creative person and physically, as someone who — as he put it — 'could never sit up at a desk'.

In fact, this 'framing' of the Hut aligned with a longer continuum of work to adapt the Museum site to be increasingly accessible to audiences with diverse needs.

In 2016–17 we collaborated with a technology partner to be the first public venue to trial the 'Signly' app — augmented reality interpretation videos accessed via smartphone, for British Sign Language users; the Signly project won a Jodi Award for accessibility in the cultural sector.

Through our participation in the MuseumWIDE<sup>4</sup> programme in 2021, we identified that we had a visiting audience of self-led Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) groups, who found the Museum of interest, but for whom we had no specific provision — we set about changing this.

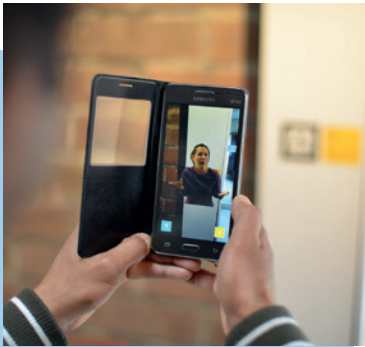
In 2022, with Museum Development funding, we embarked on a training and development plan for our Learning team and Visitor Experience staff, to develop a SEND-specific version of our Sandford Award-winning facilitated school programme. Since then we have made tremendous progress.

In 2023 we introduced 'Explore Your Way' (EYW) resources including a 'quiet space' pop up tent kit. Our SEND school sessions launched the same year and now provide exclusive access to our entire site for three to four SEND Schools each term; the latest round of sessions have been fully booked. In 2024 we first programmed/ marketed specific EYW days in our public opening oriented towards SEND families.



12

12 SEND schools programme days offered since 2023, with 9 more programmed through 2025–26.



14

Explore Your Way 'Explorer' resource bags used 14 times during April 2025 alone.



1,058

1,058 Explore Your Way visitors to date since 2024, 176 per day on average.



6

6 Explore Your Way days programmed since 2024, with 5 more programmed in 2025.

## Taking it further

We are working to establish a permanent SEND focus group founded on its members' lived experience. Focus group members will be both advisors and participants and help us to develop SEND-appropriate interpretative approaches to improve the visitor experience for everyone.

"The best museum I have been to in a long time... small, but perfectly formed. Sometimes the big spaces can be so overwhelming and bringing three children with additional needs, this is always a consideration.

Cannot thank the amazing staff enough for being incredibly understanding and super supportive of our neurodiverse needs before and during our visit. The kids LOVED it! Especially the hands-on workshop. I am still not sure who enjoyed it more, me or them, but we are definitely going back"

Eliza M, TripAdvisor review, May 2025

4. WIDE means being welcoming, inclusive, diverse and equitable, and – as a place that people visit – leading with 'welcome' is our preferred way of thinking about what is usually termed EDI/DEI work.



### Why inclusive access matters

The SEND in Museums website highlights that around 1.1 million or 8% of children in the UK are disabled, and over 10% of UK homes have a disabled child in the family.

When also considering non-disabled siblings and friends in visiting families and groups, there could be up to 20% of children who are affected by access needs<sup>5</sup>.

This all strongly resonates with us as an independent museum charity. We work hard to grow our audiences through being as accessible, relevant and welcoming as we can be. Championing creativity is inherently inclusive, because we believe that *everyone is a storymaker*.

#### SEND School programme teacher feedback

"Amazing space, staff really accommodating and made it accessible for us. Great bag to take around and sensory story really good and engaging."

"Sensory trail — lovely starter activity to make the transition easier. A really inclusive activity, enjoyed by all the children."

"Very friendly staff, catered to the needs of our pupils and we loved the sensory storytelling!"





# Protecting and Celebrating our LITERARY HERITAGE

Stored in over 100 acid-free, museum-grade boxes in a specially built, environmentally controlled store, the Roald Dahl Archive is a unique and internationally significant collection of papers. It includes early drafts of all the author's 27 published books and 65 published short stories, together with unpublished works, ideas books, 16 film and television screenplays — among them Dahl's adaptation of Ian Fleming's *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* — three stage plays, television scripts, speeches and articles.

There are also around 10,000 pages of literary correspondence between Roald and his agents, publishers and editors, as well as with his many fans around the world. This adds invaluable context to reveal the stories behind the stories.

There are also more than 900 personal letters written by Roald to his family — particularly his mother — throughout his life from childhood. These letters show how from a very young age his adventures, interests and sense of humour connect to his creative legacy.

## Beyond the Archive: Adding to the Museum collections

A film set and puppets from Wes Anderson's 2009 *Fantastic Mr Fox* stop motion animated film, on loan from the Walt Disney Archives in California.

Costume and props from Steven Spielberg's 2016 film *The BFG*, including the nightdress, glasses and slippers worn by the character of Sophie, played by Ruby Barnhill.

35 original artworks by artist Frances Cony to illustrate Rik Mayall's legendary reading of George's Marvellous Medicine on BBC1 children's programme 'Jackanory' in 1986.

Costume and props from Tim Burton's 2005 film adaptation of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, on loan from Warner Bros. This includes Willy Wonka's top hat, velvet coat and sweet-filled cane, as well as two animatronic Oompa Loompas and a 'Whipplescrumptious Fudgemallow Delight' chocolate bar prop.

Roald Dahl's RAF flying helmet, logbook and wartime medals, on loan from the Dahl family.



## Research

Some 200 researchers from around the world have visited the Roald Dahl Archive since the Museum opened its doors in 2005, from college students, university professors and established writers to digital artists, film directors and other creatives.

Most notably, the Archive was used extensively by the award-winning TV film producer and librettist Donald Sturrock in writing *Storyteller*, his acclaimed 2016 biography of Roald Dahl. Sturrock's book has added immeasurably to the cataloguing of the collection and its usefulness to researchers into the future.



**"The Archive of the Roald Dahl Museum is a wonderful resource. It contains a welter of fascinating delights: from Dahl's original handwritten manuscripts, to passports, magazines, drawings and an amazing collection of his letters. Dipping into it takes you straight back into his private imaginative world and often into the period of history in which he was writing. It is a unique collection."**

*Donald Sturrock, Dahl's official biographer*





## SPOTLIGHT The Writing Hut

In the winter of 2011–12 the complete interior of Roald Dahl's famous Writing Hut was moved from the author's former home in Great Missenden — where it had remained undisturbed since his death in 1990 — to the Museum to become a centrepiece in our public galleries. It allowed visitors, for the first time, to peer inside this most idiosyncratic working space where Roald created his iconic characters such as Willy Wonka, the BFG and Matilda.

The Hut collection comprises nearly 300 objects, from the author's self-adapted armchair and Anglepoise lamp, to the Toby jug in which he kept his pencils. The contents of the Writing Hut were meticulously recorded, disassembled and re-installed at the Museum, exactly as Roald had left them, right down to the discarded manuscript pages in the wastepaper basket and the dirt on the floor.

The entire process to relocate the hut interior took a professional conservation team almost six months to complete — lifting the linoleum off the concrete floor alone was nearly three weeks of painstaking work. It was an extraordinary feat of conservation skill, patience and attention to detail to ensure that the integrity of Roald's 'little nest', as he called it, remained intact in its new home.



## SPOTLIGHT My favourite object — Will Phillips, Head of Collections

The story of the opal rock on the desk in Roald's Writing Hut is a wonderful example of how Dahl's words could inspire his readers to see the world around them 'with glittering eyes'.

The opal was sent to Dahl by a small class of just five pupils at a remote opal mining community school in Mintabie in the Australian outback, after the author spoke to them from Adelaide via a telephone link as part of his 1989 *Matilda* book tour. We heard the story from the teacher, Mark Taylor.

In just a few words spoken down a crackly telephone line, Dahl transformed the way the children saw the world around them. No longer did they see themselves living in a remote, hot, dry and difficult environment, with only the most basic facilities and more than 1000 miles from the nearest city. Instead, as Dahl suggested, they lived in a magical place where treasure could be found, literally, under their feet. "You could be standing on some treasure at this very moment", he said.

Dahl had lit a spark. The Mintabie children, decided to send Roald an opal from their 'magical' landscape. Dahl was genuinely touched by the gesture and wrote back to say that the opal would take pride of place in his hut "for as long as I live and probably for many years after that". Indeed it has.

And the story doesn't end there. Mark Taylor, the teacher of that Mintabie class in 1989 — who had never before been to the UK — had the opportunity to visit the Museum in May 2025 and see again the opal rock that his pupils had sent to Roald 35 years ago.

Although the opal is usually displayed in the darkened environment of the Writing Hut, Mark asked if we might look at it outside in the sunlight. It was transformational: the colours of the opal danced as Mark moved it around in the sun. Mark, of course, understood this object in a way I didn't. In his turn, he showed me how to look 'with glittering eyes'.



Mark (left) and Will (right) in the Archive looking at the book of letters from Australian schoolchildren that Roald kept





# Our Impact on Buckinghamshire, OUR HOME

The Museum makes a significant educational, cultural and economic contribution to our home county of Buckinghamshire, embedded in our local Great Missenden community for 20 years. Missenden is the geographic centre of the Chiltern Hills National Landscape — the heart of 'Roald Dahl Country'.

With a 95% Quality Assured rating by Visit England, we are a prominent cultural destination for Bucks and the Chilterns and play a vital role in promoting arts and culture in the county and region. We are committed to collaboration with local government and all our friends and neighbours.

*"As a local councillor for the Missendens, I am proud that Great Missenden has now been the home of the Roald Dahl Museum for 20 years. This is something to celebrate because it has become a key part of the community and has brought many thousands of children and their families to visit - this has made a big contribution to the liveliness of the area and helped it to continue to thrive. We look forward to celebrating the next 20 years."*

*Peter Martin, Buckinghamshire Councillor*

**45,000**

The Museum currently welcomes an average of 45,000 family visitors per year.



**80**

Some 80% of our guests are first time visitors to the Museum; we know we have potential for growth.



**60**

We have a wider-than-local appeal with 60% of visitors travelling to us from outside of Buckinghamshire.



**40**

40% of family visitors travel for over an hour to visit us.

The Museum generates £1.2m for the Buckinghamshire community each year.<sup>6</sup>

6. Calculated using the Association for Independent Museums Economic Impact Toolkit, accounting for local visitor spend (above and beyond what they spend in RDM), local employee related turnover and local investment in goods and services. <https://aim-museums.co.uk/resources/economic-impact-of-independent-museum-sector/>

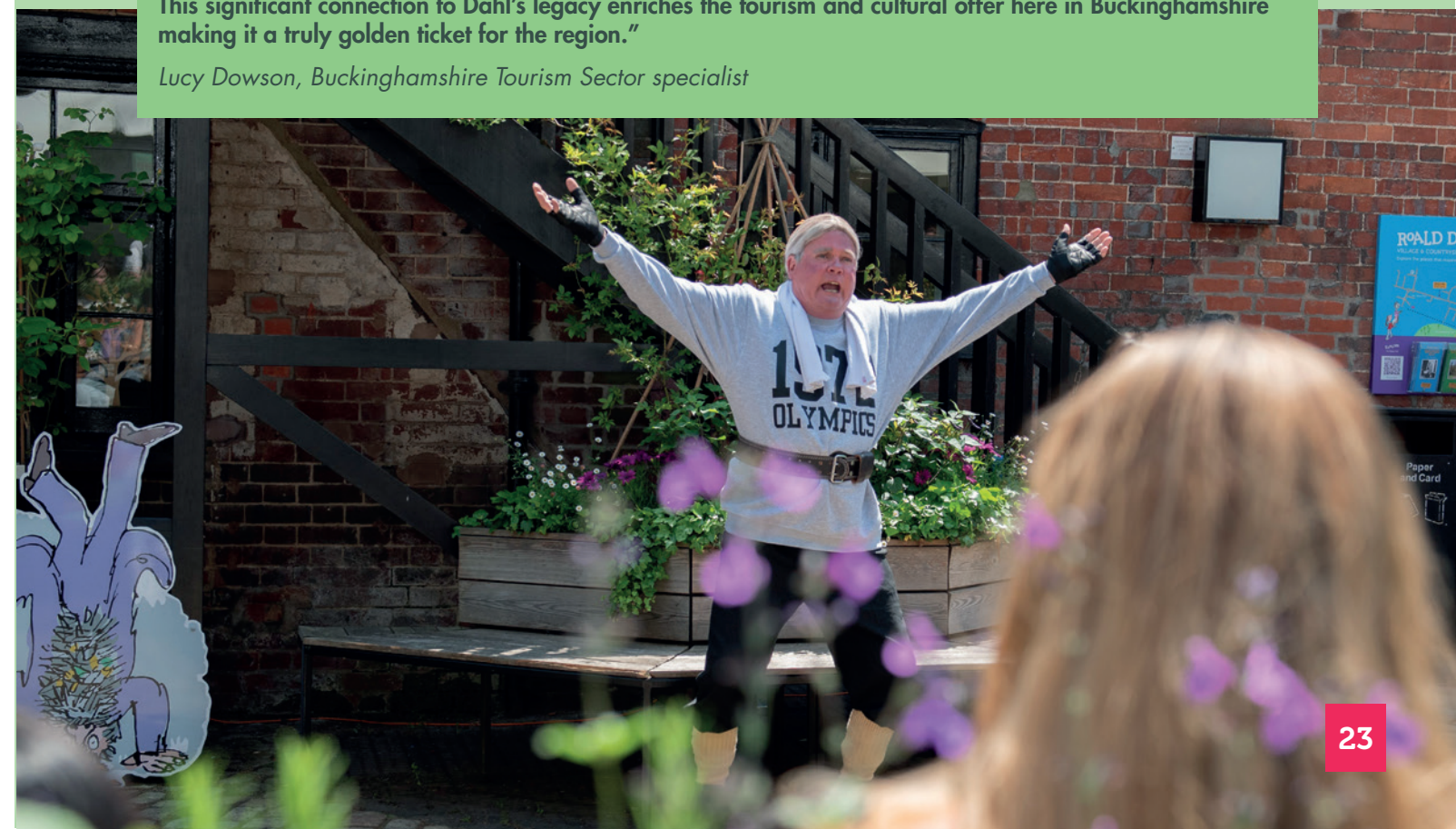


*"Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns tourism offer is driven by the wonderful local countryside, about which Roald Dahl wrote so beautifully, in *Danny the Champion of the World*, *Fantastic Mr Fox* and many more stories. The Roald Dahl Museum sits at the very heart of the Chilterns National Landscape area and is a great hook for attracting visitors to the Chilterns. The Museum promotes exploration of Great Missenden and the wider Chilterns, with its countryside trails and by participating in the Chilterns Walking Festival and other Festivals and regional campaigns."*

*Annette Weiss, Head of Engagement & Partnership, Chilterns National Landscape*

*"The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre in Great Missenden is a whizzpopping driver for the local visitor economy in Buckinghamshire. It attracts thousands of human beans each year with the Museum's scrumdiddlyumptious exhibits and events, which significantly contribute to the area's economic vitality. This significant connection to Dahl's legacy enriches the tourism and cultural offer here in Buckinghamshire making it a truly golden ticket for the region."*

*Lucy Dowson, Buckinghamshire Tourism Sector specialist*





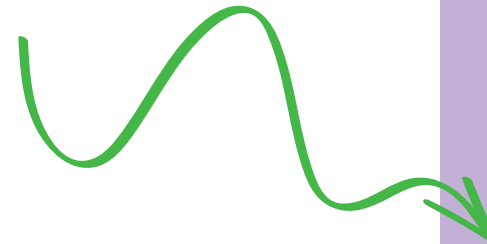
# The Vision for OUR FUTURE

Our vision is: *Everyone is a Storymaker*. Realising this ambition means continuing, enhancing, and expanding our current work, to make the Roald Dahl Museum even more WIDE (welcoming, inclusive, diverse and equitable).

An essential part of this future is transforming our Museum site — you can read about our capital project plans later in this report. But our vision goes beyond regenerating our buildings and exhibits. We believe making and sharing stories is an essential element of

human community. Encouraging creative encounters between people of all ages will continue to drive our charitable work.

Here, we highlight two current programmes to show our intention for the future, evolving from where we are now:



## SPOTLIGHT Creativity is for life — Titchy Toddlers

The current Roald Dahl Museum was designed for families and school groups with children aged 5 to 12 years. This makes sense: Roald Dahl fans are typically old enough to read his books! But of course, visiting families have children of all ages.

Our capital project will allow us to design new gallery displays more suitable for early years, and those designs will be informed by the success of our Titchy Toddlers and Awesome Under 5s Day programming, first trialed in 2021, and launched in 2023.

Titchy Toddlers provides exclusive and adapted access to the Museum for little ones, aged six months to four years old with their adults during term time. Each Titchy session is based around Roald Dahl's stories and characters, using props and toys which support the smallest visitors to explore the galleries in their own way.

We now also run 'Awesome Under 5s Days' as part of our holiday programming, which are days oriented to little ones in a similar style to Titchy Toddlers but where older siblings are welcome too.

"Lovely storytelling + other activities — my son was enchanted!"

Visitor feedback

The national Early Years Foundation Stage framework advises: "Give children enough space and time to experience and explore. Help and encourage them to develop their own curiosity and creativity. A child's imagination and creativity are enriched through their awareness of art and other children around them. All of these creative experiences build powerful connections within the brain."<sup>7</sup>

29

29 Titchy Toddler sessions run so far since launching in 2023.



86

A new audience: 86% of Titchy visitors do not otherwise visit the Museum.



67

67% of families attended 2025 Awesome Under 5s Day specifically for the Early Years offer.

4

Four Under 5s Days run so far since launching in 2024.

<sup>7</sup> <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/areas-of-learning/expressive-arts-and-design/imagination-and-creativity#why-imagination-and-creativity-are-important>





## SPOTLIGHT Through schools to communities — the ‘Glittering Eyes’ initiative

Since 2022 we have been working with Waterside Primary Academy in nearby Chesham on our flagship outreach initiative, ‘Glittering Eyes’. This is based on Roald’s principle that magic and wonder can be found in the most unlikely places, if you can ‘watch the whole world with glittering eyes’.

We know that Great Missenden is a special place as the centre of Roald Dahl’s creativity. It’s made special by how *Roald Dahl looked at it*, finding magic — finding *inspiration* — in everyday, ordinary things: from an upstairs window (with a giant blowing dreams through it) to a supermarket (raided by a daring fox to feed his family) to a library (occupied every afternoon by a child genius). Through the Glittering Eyes programme, we support children to experience this creative process for themselves through an exploration of their own local area.

The Glittering Eyes project model has been built carefully with teachers at Waterside to work within the circumstances of their pupils. It offers important opportunities to take part in professional creative activities that Waterside children might not otherwise get. This was a strong driver for the school to take part.

So far, sessions have been delivered in school, online, and, most importantly, in the open air near the school grounds. Pupils have worked with a professional artist chosen by the children and teachers — in the first two years this was picture book artist Rose Feather — and with Roald Dahl Museum educators.

The project celebrates the work of the children by publicly displaying final artistic pieces, and raises the profile of school activity in their local community. Waterside children have visited the Chesham High Street displays of their creative work with their families.

**“And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don’t believe in magic will never find it.”**

*Roald Dahl, Billy and The Minpins*



## The impact of ‘Glittering Eyes’

Both teachers and pupils have spoken of the difference this project has made for them. Teachers recognised pupils’ achievements in new ways beyond the standard curriculum: One pupil, who found writing a challenge, was able to develop and tell a story verbally which Waterside staff described as ‘beautiful’. Evaluation also showed that the ‘specialness’ of working with both a professional artist and Museum educators was significant for both teachers and pupils.

Teachers observed that specific behaviours changed notably in creative sessions for pupils, supporting wellbeing: improved temper control, better concentration and greater self-confidence.

Pupils from a challenging Year 1 class regularly reported as feeling calmer, less tired and less grumpy after creative activities.



**“It makes you reflect... are there other ways that we can be creative with the children in the classroom? That’s not just like ‘we need you to do this’ and ‘do something that looks like this’.”**  
*Waterside Primary teacher*

**“I was literally like jumping on my bed and mum was like ‘why are you jumping on your bed?’.**

**And then I told my mum that I was actually doing stuff in school which was like with Rose and with teachers and we did illustrations and books writing and my parents were really happy because actually I’m sometimes normal but not happy that much, so my parents were so happy because my mind was starting to open a bit. Because I never got much happiness.”**

*Year 5 pupil*

## Taking it further

We approached Waterside having used criteria including Free School Meals, Education HealthCare Plans and local data about Hard Pressed Neighbourhoods and rates of social mobility to establish that the school served an area of need. Our ambition for Glittering Eyes is to expand to more schools in ‘Opportunity Bucks’ areas of need, in Aylesbury and High Wycombe.<sup>8</sup>

8. <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/partnerships-and-communities/opportunity-bucks/>



# The Museum's CAPITAL PROJECT

**" Never do anything by halves if  
you want to get away with it.  
Be outrageous. Go the whole hog. "**

Roald Dahl, *Matilda*

In this report, we celebrate two decades of charitable impact... so far! To realise our vision for the next 20 years and more, as a museum and visitor attraction, we must undertake the most exciting, comprehensive capital transformation of our site since we opened in 2005. With buildings that are 400 years old and infrastructure at least 20 years old, this major investment in visitor experience, accessibility and environmental sustainability is now urgent.

Our charitable purpose is to help everyone who experiences the Museum to explore their own creativity, to understand how they can unlock stories of their own. This is why we call this capital transformation the Unlocking Stories Project.

Our watchword is 'evolution': the Roald Dahl Museum of the future will feel both comfortably familiar, and wonderfully fresh. The Dahl family have generously provided a major anchor donation, which has seen

us make strong headway in developing architectural designs, already identifying how we might repurpose spaces to increase galleries and exhibits by 50%.

Project design is centred on the needs of our audiences — an online survey in 2023 saw more than 1,500 responses, three times the amount expected. Detailed design work will continue until Spring 2027, and following closure for works, the new and improved Roald Dahl Museum should — with good fortune — reopen in 2028.

We are a place of welcome, a place people visit and enjoy. Every visitor helps our work to continue through buying tickets, shop purchases, food and drink. We aim to increase visitor numbers by more than 30%, with a regenerated site that meets and beats visitors' expectations, for more impact, and for financial sustainability.



Through the Unlocking Stories Project, we will

**Increase the quality,  
amount, and flexibility  
of gallery space,  
as the foundation  
for growth, greater  
impact and financial  
resilience.**

**Improve our  
environmental impact  
and manage the highest  
priority risks of ageing  
infrastructure.**

**Visibly transform our  
site, and revitalise  
our programmes, as  
an exciting, dynamic,  
must-see museum with  
a globally significant  
collection.**



Please join us on this incredible  
journey into our next chapter.

Sign-up to our e-newsletter to be kept  
up-to-date with Museum news.





# A Bright Future Working IN PARTNERSHIP

Creativity is so often collaborative, and so is our work. Even a singular genius like Roald Dahl needed the support and challenge of editors, agents and family members to make his stories better.

Our enduring relationship is with the Roald Dahl Story Company, owners of Roald Dahl's copyright intellectual property and now part of the Netflix group. Under Dahl family ownership, the Story Company coordinated 'Roald Dahl 100' in 2016 to mark the centenary of Dahl's birth. To celebrate, the Museum partnered with the Southbank Centre and Wales Millennium Centre loaning precious Archive items to 'The Wondercrump

World of Roald Dahl' exhibition, seen by an estimated 60,000+ people across the two venues. At the same time, more than 90,000 people visited the Roald Dahl Museum that year.

In 2023, we worked with the Story Company and Penguin Random House on the Roald Dahl Classic Collection, each title featuring exclusive Archive content and a mini essay about the crafting of that story. We have worked with Penguin since 2017 to develop Museum editions of six Roald Dahl books, with our latest — *Matilda* — out in 2025.



We continue to work closely within our county and region

\* Our work on the 'Glittering Eyes' initiative with Waterside Primary school has seen that partnership sustained over more than two years, and it continues in 2025. As part of our community outreach we have taken part in the local 'Hats Off' community festival on nearby Chesham for three years in a row, where Waterside children recognise us, and bring their parents to meet our staff.

\* Our SEND work has benefitted from the leading presence of the National Paralympic Heritage Trust (NPHT), here in the birthplace county of the Paralympic movement. NPHT have included us in funded projects and have advised on our improving inclusive practice.



\* We frequently work with Bucks Culture — an independent charity established to nurture and champion arts, heritage and culture in the county. We have delivered essential safeguarding training for other cultural organisations on behalf of Bucks Culture, and we are regular participants in the annual Bucks Open Weekend. We also helped to establish Young Creative Bucks, the local Cultural Education Partnership (CEP), and our Head of Learning is now on the CEP advisory board.

// Buckinghamshire is a county full of stories and creativity, and that is brilliantly embodied in the Roald Dahl Museum. The Museum team are active champions of culture in Bucks, playing significant parts in county-wide projects, supporting colleagues whenever they can so we can all make a bigger impact. //

*Julius Weinberg, Chair, Buckinghamshire Culture*







## SPOTLIGHT HMP The Mount Partnership

In late 2023, HM Prison The Mount, in nearby Bovingdon, approached the Roald Dahl Museum seeking help to create and deliver a project to strengthen bonds between male prisoners and their families through shared storytelling.

Great partnerships need energy, and the enthusiasm from prison colleagues was clear. We took the time needed to develop the partnership carefully, including how to approach work in such a particular environment.



Our Head of Learning, Natalie, delivering a session at The Mount

We now offer a monthly family story session: the prison buy books from our shop for each child, and visiting children sit with their dads and accompanying family on beanbags. This is very different from typical prison visits, as the men are allowed physical contact at these sessions, and our Learning staff read aloud with them.

For children and caregivers, the sessions soften the harshness of the prison environment, reduce anxiety, and offer continuity of relationship in a way that promotes emotional stability. The use of books as take-home gifts extends the impact beyond the prison gates, encouraging shared reading and learning that continues at home.

In the prison, this programme is a motivator for the men as they need to be at a certain standard of behaviour to be allowed to take part. Reading stories helps address low literacy, which is a known factor in recidivism (reoffending after release).

Importantly, the activity aligns with the HM Prison and Probation Service Policy 'Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties' and the recommendations of the Farmer Review<sup>9</sup>. Both highlight the crucial role of family relationships in increasing 'desistance': a sustained change to constructive, non-criminal behaviour.

The programme has had clear impact on participants:

One man has said: "You've given me something to look forward to all month."

A participant's wife commented: "When I come here, it makes me feel like I'm not doing so badly."

Another man met his own newborn child for the first time at a session in June 2025.

Our staff have had their own — unexpected — emotional experiences through the programme, such as seeing men and their children able to hug (which is not possible in typical prison visits).

The programme has a growing reputation in the wider prison service; new senior prison staff transferring to the Mount had already heard about this work and its impact. The shared storytelling activity may seem simple, but it offers powerful family experiences. We aim to develop the activity further into a more creative format.

"By involving a trusted external organisation like the Roald Dahl Museum, the programme feels like a genuine investment in families — not just a gesture, but a meaningful experience that communicates care, attention, and respect. For many families, it may be the first time they have experienced a prison visit that is uplifting, child-centred, and focused on the future rather than the past. From a rehabilitation standpoint, the impact is substantial.

The sessions support desistance by reinforcing positive identity ('I am a father, I am a storyteller, I am capable of giving something valuable to my child'), increasing motivation to engage in purposeful activity, and fostering emotional accountability. These effects are particularly powerful because they are rooted in relational change — one of the most enduring drivers of behavioural transformation."

Rachel Halling, Director of Education, HMP The Mount





## SPOTLIGHT Misbourne Secondary School Partnership

In March 2025 a Chiltern Railways funded project established a large-scale mural at Great Missenden station. The mural was conceived and produced by professional artist Sólveig Eva Magnúsdóttir working with students from the local Misbourne secondary school.<sup>10</sup>

Establishing robust school partnerships can be difficult given the pressures on teachers and the pace of school life; this is even more so at secondary school level. However, we could build from a work experience programme with the Misbourne in 2023–24, and this existing relationship made it possible for us to broach this mural project with the school.

We worked with the junior leadership team students, who helped recruit, brief and work with Sólveig to develop the mural design. The recruitment of the artist followed best equitable practice: from initial outline responses, we selected three artists and paid them a development fee to work up their proposals for consideration via interview, with the students.

The partnership with the Misbourne is founded on the Museum being able to offer what the school and students truly need. In this case, the intended experience for students was only partly about the creative aspect; it was consciously about the process of developing and delivering a project, providing valuable real-world experience.



**"We are delighted to have supported the Roald Dahl Museum and The Misbourne school to create an inspiring mural for Great Missenden station in 2025. The mural will bring a sense of community to the station, brightening up the journeys of both our daily commuters and those visiting the beautiful Chilterns for leisure trips."**

*Zach Bailey, Regional Growth Manager at Chiltern Railways*



**"I found the interview a really exciting process, that opened my eyes up to how professional interviews work and how they are conducted in a business setting."**

*Misbourne student*

## What it means to WORK HERE

Hannah Nielsen is a Learning Officer, recruiting, training and managing the Learning Session Leader team. Hannah knows what she's doing... because she started here as an LSL (Learning Session Leader).



"I don't think I would have called myself a Roald Dahl 'superfan' as a child... but I did love the *Giraffe and the Pelly* and *Me...* and I still do!

I was always passionate about history and reading as a child; as I grew older this connected to an interest in teaching, but not in formal education. I found that museums offered that possibility, telling stories and learning from the past in really engaging and special ways.

I did an Master's degree in public history and heritage, which gave me a grounding in theory but not the practical... I got that from working here for three years as an LSL! Through the Museum Learning team training programme, mixed with the practice of welcoming schools every week, I have developed my skills in working with children and connecting their own lives to Roald Dahl's stories and creative craft, and now I'm training new Learning Session Leaders to do the same."

Dayner Rowe is a Learning Session Leader at the Museum; one of our team of skilled educators leading sessions in our school and public programmes.



"I can't quite believe I work at the Roald Dahl Museum! I was always a big Roald Dahl fan as a child — I remember being read *Fantastic Mr Fox* and then chanting the 'Boggis, Bunce and Bean' rhyme around my family's house for weeks!

I trained as a teacher and brought my class to the Museum... we had the best day. It was early on in my career in schools, but even then, the experience of visiting was so memorable that I wished I could work here. 12 years later, I was looking to work more flexibly, saw the opportunity, applied and now I'm a Roald Dahl Museum LSL! I love it."

**"It's the best job in the world!"**



# A GIANT-sized THANK YOU

## THANK YOU to our donors and supporters

The Museum receives no regular public funding; our business model is based squarely on what we can earn from visitors, and the essential support that generous donors can provide. Specific grants add to this mix, enabling us to deliver projects and increase our public benefit through carefully targeted activity.

Liccy Dahl — the founder of the Museum charity — along with her family, has been the bedrock of this donated support. Liccy bought the Museum site and gifted it to the new charity she had founded. She also donated the Roald Dahl Archive and contents of the Roald's Writing Hut as our founding collections. For more than 15 years the family made annual donations from the profits of the Roald Dahl Story Company, and — when the company was sold in 2021 — made a major anchor donation for our much-needed capital regeneration project, to make us fit for the next twenty years.

We give sincere thanks to all the Dahl family, especially Liccy; and Ophelia Dahl (Roald's daughter) and Luke Kelly (Roald's grandson), for their stewardship of the Roald Dahl Story Company and enduring support for the Museum. Dahl's biographer Donald Sturrock has likewise been a consistent champion of our work.

In 2025 we thank our most recent project funder, Chiltern Railways, for their support for our Great Missenden station mural project, through their Community Investment Fund.

For support in kind — training, advice, advocacy — over many years, we thank the Association for Independent Museums, the Association of Cultural Enterprises, the Group for Education in Museums, the Arts Marketing Association, the Museums Association, Bucks Culture and the National Paralympic Heritage Trust. Thanks must also go to colleagues at Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity and the Roald Dahl Story Company for their friendship and insights into the wider world of Roald Dahl.

For their support during the COVID pandemic, we thank Arts Council England (and Museum Development South East, distributing funds from Arts Council England), Buckinghamshire Council, Bucks Business First, and the Art Fund, alongside the essential support of the national Job Retention Scheme and the Dahl family. This emergency funding did more than sustain us; it also enabled investment for recovery.

Nonetheless, at 20 years old, recovery continues to demand intense effort. Our Museum charity needs the Unlocking Stories capital project to help us grow our audiences and earned income to a viable level, and this must go hand in glove with work to welcome a wider range of donors and supporters, to sustain our investment for excellence, and secure a long term future.

THANK YOU to our visitors and participants: past, present and future. Quite simply, it's all for you.

"How wondercrump!  
How whoopsey-splunkers!  
How absolutely squiffling!"

Roald Dahl, *The BFG*

## THANK YOU to our staff and volunteers

The work of the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre over the last 20 years has been delivered through the incredible contributions of so many staff members. There are too many to mention by name, but you are all part of our Museum family.

From our teenage Museum Assistants to collaborative consultants and long-serving team leaders, the Roald Dahl Museum has been a professional organisation from the outset, providing first jobs, exciting projects and career-building opportunities to dozens of colleagues.

Our volunteers have been few in numbers but great in influence: the evolving roster of voluntary trustees who have governed the course of the charity for the past two decades.





"Words went off like  
**FIREWORKS**"

Roald Dahl, *Matilda*



THE **ROALD DAHL**  
MUSEUM AND  
STORY CENTRE

[roalddahlmuseum.org](http://roalddahlmuseum.org)

Find us on



@roalddahlmuseum