



North East Festival of Languages

8th January to 31st March 2025

Evaluation Summary





**North East
Festival of Languages**
8 January to 31 March 2025



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Introduction and overview

Express Yourself: North East Festival of Languages 2025 was the fifth annual celebration of the region's diverse languages and cultures and the region's connections to the world.

Open to North East schools, community schools and groups (with selected activities open to UK schools), between January and March 2025, the Festival:

- provided a comprehensive programme of free language and culture activities designed to enrich the educational experiences of children and young people aged 3–18
- offered a flexible programme of live and online events, pre-recorded workshops, creative projects, competitions and resources, aligned with curriculum and inclusion objectives
- inspired engagement with languages, promoted cultural awareness, raised aspirations, promoted inclusion and widened perspectives of future education and career opportunities



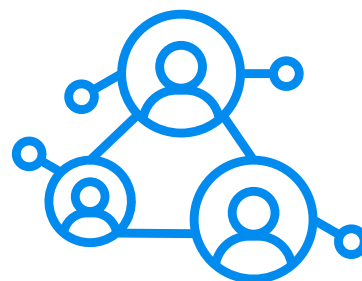
93,798

Children and
young people aged
3-18 took part



428

Schools
participated in
the Festival



1,200

Teachers engaged
their pupils in Festival
activities

This summary of the detailed evaluation report, includes:

- key achievements, core strengths and challenges, with recommendations for future Festivals
- an overview of participation and engagement in the Festival
- impact of the Festival on schools and children and young people
- the timeline of Festival development, launch and delivery
- the partnership which makes the Festival possible
- the Festival programme and different types of activities, with feedback from participants
- additional benefits linked to Festival participation
- acknowledgements and Festival links

The evaluation involved a review of participation data, teachers' responses to the Festival feedback survey, filmed case studies, website and social analytics and year-on-year comparisons.

Key achievements



Record-breaking participation

93,798 children and young people took part (target 15,000); 428 schools participated (target 150); and over 1,200 teachers were engaged (target 300). In 2025, the festival engaged more children and young people than all four previous annual festivals combined



Creative, inclusive, flexible programme

A diverse 'pick and mix' programme (in-person, online and pre-recorded) for pupils from Early Years to Key Stage 5 including: world languages and cultures events and resources; multilingual creative projects; competitions; curriculum-aligned and careers-related activities and resources



High quality delivery

Feedback from teachers responding to the Festival survey demonstrates the high quality of the programme, including people delivering activities (71% excellent, 26% good), content (68% excellent, 29% good), materials (67% excellent, 29% good) and access to activities (67% excellent, 30% good)



Creative products and Festival legacy

Tangible outputs from the creative multilingual projects: 2 ebooks and a digital anthology of children's writing, Festival song video of children and young people's performances and Friendship Trees public installation of children's artwork); plus 5 case study films about the Festival and key activities

Core strengths



Strategic Partnerships

Festival success was underpinned by long-standing and new collaborations with regional, national and international partners, including local authorities, universities, cultural and community organisations and language specialists



Efficient delivery model

The long lead in time (from June) with a clear timeline, advance launch and bookings from November and centralised coordination enabled streamlined organisation and delivery of the Festival and effective monitoring across Festival activities, with delivery partners and schools



Outstanding value for money

Total cost: £124,169. With 66% in-kind contributions, core funding (£38,400 - North East Combined Authority) and event funding (£3,355 - QFI), the Festival leveraged substantial resources, enabling broad access and rich content



Professional PR and outreach

43 media features reached 6.3 million people; 45 website news articles and 1,000 social media posts drove awareness; the website attracted 47,945 page views and 16,410 new users; five Festival filmed case studies were produced; Communications directly/indirectly with schools via networks were impactful

Challenges



Coordination and administrative capacity stretched

Capacity was stretched due to higher than anticipated levels of engagement across the Festival's programme, an exponential increase in registrations and administration reliant on the Festival Coordinator



Uneven engagement of North East schools

Engagement was strongest in Newcastle and Durham, where the Festival has the most well established networks, but needs to be improved in the other five local authority areas to provide more opportunities and access



Lack of ability to document events and activities

There was limited capacity and funding to document activities through film and photography to demonstrate the extent of the Festival's impact, which meant that some events and activities were not profiled as well as others

Recommendations



Increase administrative and coordination capacity

Secure funding for additional coordination and administrative support to build the Festival's capacity to develop and grow and reach more children and young people in more schools, community schools and groups in the region



Mandate registration for all activities

Not all Festival activities required registration. It will be important to ensure that all relevant events and activities require registration in future to ensure accurate tracking, monitoring and reporting, as well as recognition



Expand internship opportunities for students

Offer students internship opportunities (relating to PR, digital marketing and journalism, events and languages) to build capacity for documenting, promoting and profiling activities, but also to provide valuable work experience



Refine and add to programme content

Review all feedback from teachers and delivery partners about the 2025 programme content, delivery and engagement, identify and address any improvements and gaps to strengthen future Festival programmes



Continue and expand promotional activity

Secure funding for professional communications and PR support for future Festivals to continue to raise the profile of the Festival and increase the capacity to produce documentary films, case studies and creative products

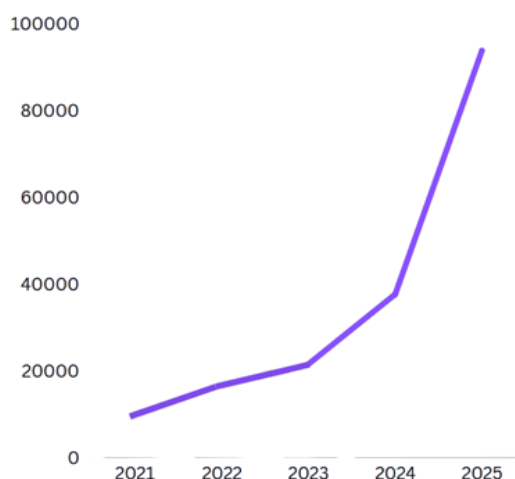
Festival participation

The 2025 Festival had record breaking participation levels across all activities, with more children and young people participating than in the previous four annual festivals combined.

The free programme from January to March was aimed at North East Combined Authority area schools (Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland, Durham). They were encouraged to 'pick and mix' activities. UK schools could access webinars.

Festival participation 2021-2025

Number of children and young people (aged 3-18) taking part



Festival 2025 participation



93,798 participants
(3-18 years old)



428 schools
involved



267 schools new to the festival (ISA)



6,815 Early Years (3-5) & KS1 (5-7)



28,211 KS2 (7-11)



49,563 KS3 (11-14)



7,131 KS4 (14-16)



2,078 KS5 (16-18)

47,512 children and young people from **207 North East schools** were involved in activities across the whole Festival programme, with 449 activity registrations (multiple activities)

5,881 young people (mainly KS3) in **22 Tees Valley schools** were involved mainly in webinars

38,854 young people (mainly in KS3) in **175 UK schools** engaged in the Festival webinars (mostly in one or more languages and careers webinars)

1,405 children in **24 primary schools** from **13 countries** engaged in creative projects

267 schools were new to the Festival and eligible for the **International School Award (ISA) Foundation Certificate** through an agreement with British Council

PARTICIPATION BY ACTIVITY	No. schools	Pupil participation	Key Stage
CREATIVE MULTILINGUAL PROJECTS JAN-MAR (NE schools only)	185	18,088	
Weaving Friendship project (Artist-led project – Sue Loughlin, Newcastle City Council and International Newcastle)	60	6,699	KS1-5
Festival Song (Music Partnership North Newcastle)	61	7,465	KS2-5
Mother Tongue Other Tongue (Crista Hazell, Project Coordinator)	37	2,304	KS2-5
Calligrams Celebration (Association of Language Learning)	27	1,620	KS2
COMPETITION JAN-FEB (NE schools only)	33	3,479	
North East Schools' Crêpe competition (La Petite Crêperie)	33	3,479	KS2
WEBINARS IN MARCH (NE and UK schools)	284	55,000	
#LetAfghanGirlsLearn (The Maiden Foundation) Live & Recording	16	4,604	KS4-5
Languages in the Working World (David Binns, Sanako) Live only	19	2,852	KS3
Spanish Language and Careers (Spanish Embassy) Live & Recording	37	8,024	KS3
Languages and Careers in Football (Futbol Lingo) Live only	57	5,269	KS3-5
Where can Languages take me? (British Council) Live & Recording	143	32,041	KS3-5
German Primary Online x 2 events (Goethe Institut) Live & Recording	12	2,210	KS2
PRE-RECORDED/ONLINE ACTIVITIES JAN-MAR (NE schools only)	117	14,739	
Spanish A Level Films (Spanish Embassy Education Department)	5	41	KS5
French Puppet Shows x 3 (Nathalie Paris, Nattalingo)	32	4,556	EYFS KS1-2
Lingotot activities in 5 languages (Lingotot)	20	3,051	EYFS KS1-2
Yoruba Language and Culture Workshops (Kayine Education)	20	2,678	KS2
Multilingual Digital Stories (Goldsmiths)	11	1,667	KS2-5
Indigenous African Languages workshops (Success4All)	5	420	KS1-5
Fun with Japanese online workshops (The Japan Society)	29	2,326	KS1-2
IN-PERSON EVENTS IN MARCH (NE schools only)	95	2,411	
Experience Japan workshops 14 March (The Japan Society)	3	80	KS
Football workshops 26th March (Futbol Lingo)	8	148	KS2-3
Welcome to China events during March (Confucius Institute)	8	218	KS2-5
ENACT Spanish workshops 20th March (Newcastle Uni - ENACT)	2	60	KS2
Welcome to the Arab World event 10th March (QFI, Newcastle City Council and International Newcastle)	8	231	KS2-4
Mini Olympics 27 March (Newcastle University Sport)	7	160	KS2-3
German A Level Film and Literature (Newcastle University SML)	6	51	KS5
Spanish Apprentice Year 10 Tourism Challenge (The Auckland Project and Durham University School of Modern Languages and Cultures)	8	40	KS4
German Careers Roadshow 29 Jan (Goethe Institut/Durham Uni)	9	283	KS3-5
Welcome to Japan Day 28 Mar (Durham University and Oriental Museum and Teikyo University)	4	91	KS2
Bengali Day in Newcastle (Newcastle Bangladeshi Association)	2	60	KS2
Welcome to Germany & the German Speaking World (British Council)	3	90	KS2
Love Your Mother Language Day (Newcastle City Library)	NA	90	KS1-2
Yoruba language and culture sessions (Success4All)	6	180	KS2-5
Y12 Language workshops at Northumbria University 12 March	5	33	KS5
Bangla Day (Sunderland Bangladeshi International Centre)	2	54	KS2-5
Language & culture tasters (Newcastle Uni Language Resource Centre)	2	40	KS3-5
Language Treasures at Great North Museum (GNM Hancock)	5	390	KS2-3
Learn Arabic with Team Games (Success4All) to 5 March (families)	1	42	KS2-5
Language immersion (Durham University)	4	10	KS5
Chinese documentary films (Newcastle Uni and Chinese Film Archive)	2	60	KS4-5
<i>Spanish Teachers' Day 8 March (Spanish Embassy/Newcastle Uni)</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
<i>Individual registrations (home schooling)</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>56</i>	

Impact

Based on the evidence of participation, as well as teachers' and pupils' feedback, the Festival met its original objectives:



Engaged schools and reached children and young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups, who would not usually access these activities or have opportunities to engage



Widened perspectives of children and young people and teachers about the benefits of speaking their own and other languages, language learning and intercultural awareness for future life, education and career opportunities



Increased opportunities for pupil engagement in languages and careers events and activities and access to resources which may not be currently accessed by schools



Encouraged language learning take up and progression in North East Combined Authority area schools



Increased exposure to and understanding of Home Heritage and Community Languages and different cultures to build understanding within the school community and celebrate the linguistic and cultural diversity



Increased university links and real-world on campus experiences for schools to widen engagement, raise aspirations and inspire learning and progression



Helped schools and pupils build connections with a broader range of language, culture and career partners than they would usually access

80% teachers tried something new

79% teachers said they used activities to promote language learning

71% teachers said that pupils were more motivated about languages

77% teachers said pupils enjoyed a new activity

64% pupils were more aware of the importance of learning & speaking other languages

61% schools were able to celebrate diverse languages and cultures

54% pupils were more aware of the impact of languages on their lives & future careers

Impact on children and young people

By empowering children and young people with language skills, intercultural competence and access to opportunities, the Festival helped to break down barriers, unlock their potential, and create pathways to brighter futures.



Promoting literacy and oracy

Widening access to diverse linguistic resources and immersive experiences helped to empower pupils to develop strong literacy and oracy skills, essential for academic success and lifelong learning



Promoting language learning

Having fun with languages and enabling pupils to enjoy learning, see the opportunities available and develop their interest in continuing their language learning journeys



Providing accessible learning opportunities

Offering different age groups many ways to engage (in-person, online, live, pre-recorded, through projects and competitions) widened accessibility to pupils in schools and community schools



Expanding Cultural Capital

Celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity exposed pupils to new ideas, perspectives and traditions, broadening their cultural horizons, developing cross-cultural competencies and a sense of belonging



Inspiration and Empowerment

Showcasing role models, language enthusiasts and success stories, helped inspire and empower children and young people to explore their linguistic potential, pursue their passion for languages and embrace multiculturalism as a source of strength and enrichment



Promoting multilingualism

Celebrating linguistic diversity helped empower children and young people from diverse backgrounds have pride in their identity, embrace their home languages and be inspired to learn more languages



Widening perspectives on career pathways

Offering a range of languages and careers webinars, in-person events and resources helped widen perspectives about the wide range of career opportunities available to young people who develop language and intercultural skills



"The range of activities and resources have been excellent. The events being free means that we have been able to offer opportunities to students who otherwise would not have had access to these rich, cultural experiences."

Ashleigh Jane Power, Teacher
Cardinal Hume Catholic High School, Gateshead

"We hugely appreciate the effort that goes into organising all the amazing activities and opportunities on offer during the Festival. It really provides a fantastic chance for children to appreciate and soak up other cultures, opens their minds to other lifestyles and possibilities of travel and work in other countries. Excellent!"

Emma Kemp, Teacher
St. Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Newcastle

"I think the range of activities on offer was amazing, had I more time (it's my first year in a new school), I'd love to have had our students involved in more. My department would love to take part and do more next year, as there were such fantastic opportunities"

Jennifer Dowson, Teacher
St. Benet Biscop Catholic Academy, Northumberland

"The activities provided have helped our school to enjoy learning languages and have provided new experiences and opportunities for the children."

Lucy Banner, Teacher
Chilton Academy, County Durham

"Students have enjoyed the activities again this year - it can be very difficult to get students out of school, so activities which can be done in school, but involving other schools, makes our students realise the extent of language learning, but also how many different languages are spoken in our region. Hearing other people from the North East and their experiences of learning a language is a good way of motivating students."

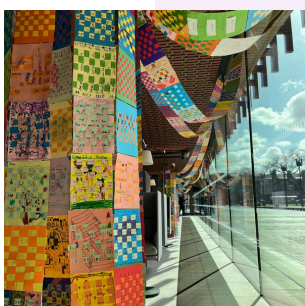
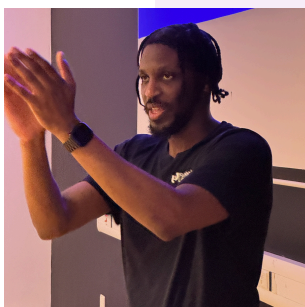
Janet Stephenson, Teacher
King James I Academy, Bishop Auckland

"As a school we look forward to the various activities on offer. We always take part in the song and the German taster day but we try to find something new. It's a great way to encourage our children to engage in other cultures and languages and to kick start future Modern Foreign Languages planning. Thank you again NE Festival of Languages for all your hard work."

Jackie Lombard, Teacher
Wingate Primary School, Durham

Festival films - case studies

Five short films were produced with Allies Group and B7 videographers to showcase the Festival and provide examples of activities and events and their impact. These provide an accessible way to understand key elements of the Festival and a legacy for future Festivals.



Festival overview

Short film highlighting the evolution of the Festival, its purpose, content, reach and impact on children and young people

[Click here to watch](#)

Welcome to the Arab World event

Showcasing one of the Festival's world languages and cultures events - schools' workshops exploring Arabic culture, language and calligraphy

[Click here to watch](#)

Languages and Careers in Football

Futbol Lingo schools' workshops demonstrating the importance of speaking languages for a wide range of careers in football and other sectors

[Click here to watch](#)

Spanish Apprentice Tourism Challenge

A languages and careers event, with Year 10 pupils developing a presentation and pitch in Spanish to promote Bishop Auckland to the Spanish market

[Click here to watch](#)

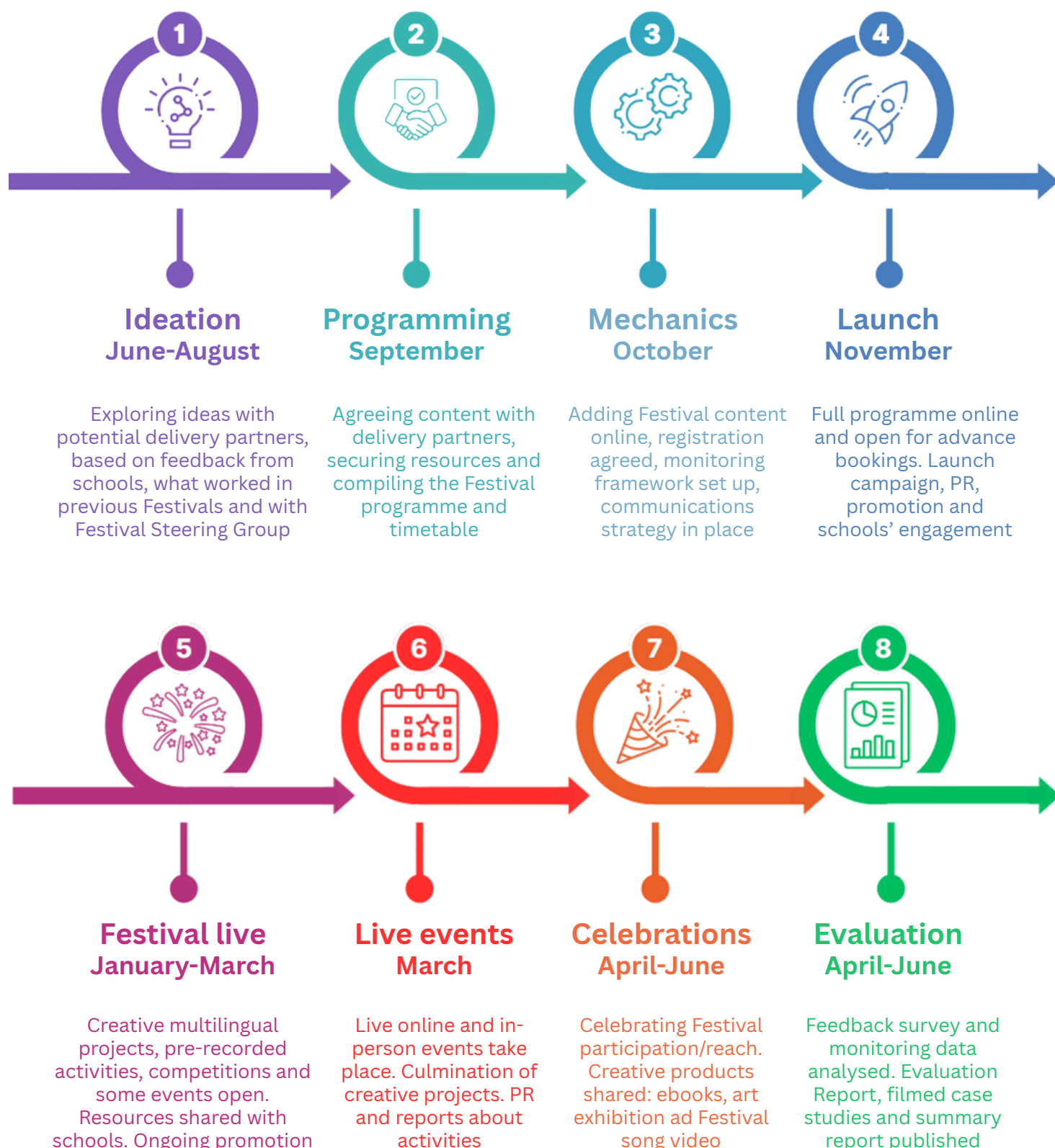
Creative Multilingual Projects

Showcasing the creativity of children and young people in the region expressing themselves through music, art and writing in many languages

[Click here to watch](#)

Festival timeline

Design, development, delivery and evaluation of the 2025 Festival was over a 12 month period from June 2024. The well-established partnership model and process, coordinated by International Newcastle, built on experience gained from four previous festivals. The extension of the timeline, with advance planning and the programme launching in mid-November, contributed to the Festival's success, giving schools longer to plan and engage.



Festival partners

Local, regional, national and international partners were central to the co-creation, delivery and promotion of a diverse, high-quality, free programme of language and cultural activities. New in 2025: funding for coordination, four commissions, communications and evaluation from the North East Combined Authority strengthened capacity and content; also professional PR/media partners supported the wider promotion of the Festival and produced five filmed case studies.



The Festival was part-funded by:



Festival communications partners:



Festival programme

The Festival programme celebrated the diversity of languages and cultures in the North East and its connections to the world. It was designed to inspire children and young people's learning, raise aspirations, promote inclusion and widen perspectives around future education and career opportunities. It provided a wide range of high quality, age-appropriate, interactive activities, resources and events delivered free of charge to schools in the region between January and March 2025. A UK programme was also offered (webinars and free resources).



Four creative multilingual projects (January-March)

- Large scale participation creative projects with teaching resources
- Using art, singing and writing to enable children and young people to express themselves in their home languages or languages they learn
- Promoting celebration of languages and cultures within schools to build confidence, promote inclusion and inspire future learning
- Certificates for all schools taking part in each project
- Creative products: public art exhibition, digital anthologies of writing, a compilation video of children's performances of the Festival Song



Pre-recorded workshop activities (January to March)

- Engaging children in different languages and cultures through quizzes, puppet shows, language lessons, games, songs and films
- With teaching resources to enable them to be delivered at convenient times in schools, community schools and youth groups
- Encouraging creativity, learning about each other, promoting multicultural learning, supporting inclusion and tolerance



Live online and in-person events (March)

- World languages and cultures immersive, in-person events to increase understanding, connections, inclusion and inspire learning
- Languages and careers events to widen perspectives, broaden horizons and raise awareness of the opportunities available through language learning, encouraging take up of GCSE language options
- University on campus experiences with staff and students to break down barriers, raise aspirations and promote progression



North East Schools' Crêpe Competition (January-February)

- The competition was open to schools in the North East CA area only
- It was delivered with a teaching resource pack by La Petite Crêperie
- Children designed their own unique crêpe and described it in French
- Two schools won a crêpe workshop at Newcastle University's ilab



Other language celebrations, competitions and resources

- The Festival programme promoted a range of national language competitions, freely available interactive resources and activities, as well as links to wider support around languages and cultures
- Raising awareness and promoting engagement widens opportunities for children and young people and schools to benefit from them



North East Festival of Languages

8 January to 31 March 2025

Celebrate the diverse languages and cultures of the North East and our connections to the world!

FREE events, activities and resources January to March 2025 for children and young people in schools, community schools and groups

Registration open

Click on the links to find out more



Creative multilingual projects (Jan-March)

- Festival song What a Wonderful World (ends 24th March)
- Mother Tongue Other Tongue writing (ends 24th March)
- Weaving Friendship art project (ends 21st March)
- Language Calligrams Celebration (ends 28th March)

Special events and NE competition

- La Petite Crêperie Competition for North East Schools (8th Jan-14th Feb, with winners event on 7th March)
- Love Your Mother Language Day in Newcastle (24th February)
- Spanish Day for Teachers - primary, secondary (8th March)

Pre-recorded/online activities (Jan-March)

- French puppet shows for early years/primary (Jan-March)
- Yorùbá workshops (7-11yrs): Language, Culture, Expression (Feb-Mar)
- Multilingual digital stories made by and for children (Jan-March)
- Lingotot language activities for young learners (Feb-March)
- Exploring and celebrating indigenous African languages workshops for 5-16 year olds (Jan-March)
- Fun with Japanese interactive activities for 5-11 year olds (Jan-Mar)
- French, German & Spanish Escape Room Challenges for 11-14 yrs
- Secret Agents Language Challenge for 11-16 yrs
- Lara's language journeys - European and regional minority languages

World languages and cultures events (March)

- Games and stories at the Multilingual Library (flexible March)
- A Level Spanish films and teacher guides (March)
- Bengali day in Newcastle (3rd March)
- #LetAfghanGirlsLearn! Webinar for 14-18 year olds (3rd March)
- Yorùbá language & culture workshops (4, 11, 18, 25th March)
- Welcome to China events (11,12,13, 18, 19, 20th March)
- Welcome to the Arab World (10th March)
- Experience Japan with The Japan Society (14th March)
- Primary German online with Goethe Institut (3rd & 7th March)
- Spanish language and culture with ENACT (20th March)
- Language Treasures at Great North Museum (20th, 24th March and teacher-led activities flexible throughout March)
- Arabic language learning with team games (22nd March)
- Bangla Day in Sunderland (25th March)
- Mini Olympics - world sports and languages (27th March)
- Welcome to Germany and the German Speaking World (27th)
- Welcome to Japan Day at Durham University and Oriental Museum (28th March)

Languages and Careers: Secondary

- German Careers Roadshow at Durham University (29th Jan)
- Spanish language and careers webinar (4th March)
- The Spanish Apprentice Y10 Tourism Challenge (5th March)
- Modern Languages in the Working World webinar (6th March)
- Futbol Lingo languages and careers webinar (12th March)
- Where can languages take you? Webinar (18th March)
- Futbol Lingo workshops in Newcastle (26th March)
- Languages and careers resources
- How Languages Changed my Life stories

University language experiences: Secondary

- Language Student Experience at Northumbria Uni (Jan-Mar)
- Language & culture tasters with Newcastle Uni LRC (March)
- Language Student Immersion at Durham Uni (mid Feb-mid March)
- Y12 language activities at Northumbria Uni (12th March)
- German A Level film & literature day Newcastle Uni (21st March)
- Chinese documentary film screening at Newcastle Uni Chinese Independent Film Archive (21st and 28th March)

Language competitions and celebrations

- JaLaChamp (Japanese) primary and secondary (opens November 2024 to 4th Feb for Speech and 4th March for Video)
- Celebrate Speaking! National festival of speaking languages (1st to 28th February 2025)
- Joutes oratoires lycéennes French debating competition for 6th forms (Regional to February, final in March)
- International Mother Language Day - celebrate with Festival activities (21st February 2025)
- French Pop Video Competition (Register by 28th February and submit entries by 9th May 2025)
- Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators (Registration open October, competition 3rd Feb-28th March)
- World Speech Day Japan (register 30 Nov, event 22nd March 2025)

Language resources and support

- ENACT Around the World Club free education pack for NE schools
- Languages resources: German, French, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese
- British Council Around the World education packs for UK schools
- British Council languages support for schools
- National Consortium for Languages Education CPD resources
- The Languages Gateway resources and information
- Association for Language Learning resources and support

SCAN THE CODE TO FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED



<https://expressyourselfne.com>

Creative multilingual projects

The Festival's four creative multilingual projects embraced the creativity and diversity of North East children and young people. Inclusive singing, writing and art activities enabled them to express themselves in their home languages, languages they learn or are interested in. They created opportunities to explore and celebrate the diverse backgrounds, languages and heritage of the school community and to build a sense of inclusion, understanding and belonging.

With resource packs for teachers, these projects collectively involved 18,088 children and young people from 185 North East schools from January to March 2025. All schools received a certificate for participating in each project. The products created help demonstrate the value of these activities, provide a lasting Festival legacy and showcase of children's creativity.



Festival Song Video - What a Wonderful World

Compilation video of children and young people performing the Festival song in different languages. 7,465 children and young people from 61 schools took part in singing, signing or playing the song.

[Click here to watch the Festival song video](#)



Mother Tongue Other Tongue Anthology

Selected poems in 35 languages from children and young people writing in their home language or a language they learn, with some audio recordings of children reading their poems. 2,300 children from 37 schools took part.

[Click here to read the digital anthology](#)



Weaving Friendship and Friendship Trees

Public exhibition of Friendship Trees created from children's colourful paper weavings with messages of friendship, love and kindness in different languages. 6,669 children from 60 NE and international schools took part.

[Click here to view the project photobook](#)



Language Calligrams Celebration ebooks

Children created images using words in different languages relating to the subject. Selected entries are included in two ebooks. 1,620 children aged 7-11 from 27 schools took part.

[Click here to view the 7-9 year olds Calligrams ebook](#)

[Click here to read the 9-11 year olds Calligrams ebook](#)



"It was a fantastic way for children to learn a language already spoken by children in our year group. One of my children was very confident in teaching the others how to pronounce the words and lead the singing practices with me. It was a great confidence booster for him. We also have children with hearing impairments so the other year group did the BSL which they really enjoyed."

Bev Wilenius, Teacher
Welbeck Academy, Newcastle



"The children absolutely loved these projects, we love the positive messages of kindness and friendship and they felt so proud of themselves being able to write and create in another language that they just started learning this year. The display in the Civic Centre looks absolutely gorgeous!"

Emma Kemp, Teacher
St. Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Newcastle

"We really enjoyed it and the final artwork looks fantastic!"

Clare Crow, Teacher
Greenhaugh Primary School, Northumberland

"Thanks to this experience students were engaged learning about different languages around the world. The idea of connecting cultures and messages in other languages about friendships triggered the motivation into learning another language. They absolutely loved the project and we will definitely participate in further projects you organise. Thank you for the opportunity and for inspiring our students!"

Jessica Garcia Avila
St Bede's Catholic School and Byron 6th Form, Durham

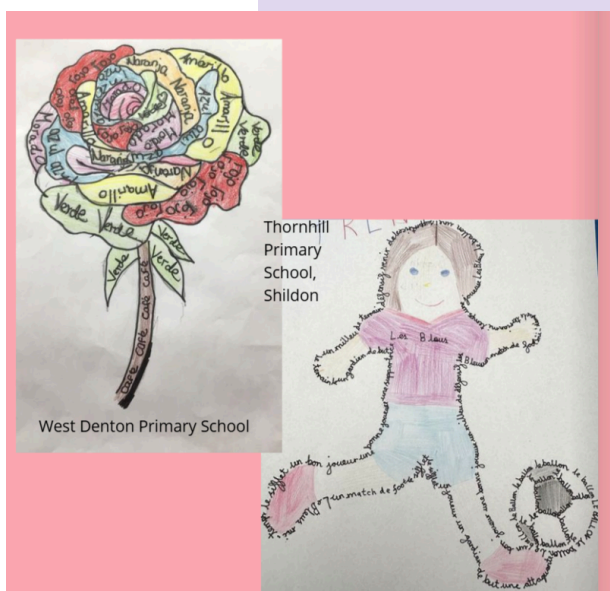


"Pupils enjoyed Calligrams, we set this as a homework challenge in home languages and also in our languages lessons in school, as part of the MFL curriculum."

Anthony Kennedy, Head Teacher
English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Newcastle

"Just amazing responses from the children and adults when they took part in these activities."

Rashda Salamat, EMTAS, North Tyneside



"It was particularly lovely to celebrate our small Polish community in school, learning What a Wonderful World in Polish. The KS2 children were really proud to learn part of the song in French, too. The Calligrams competition was wonderful too, as I really saw how keen the children were to have a go at a completely different language. Engagement was great!"

Katy Decube, Teacher
St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Newcastle

Languages and careers activities

Languages and careers events and activities have become an important part of the Festival. Secondaries are keen to have opportunities which engage and inspire pupils to progress with languages and understand the benefits of learning languages for their future careers. In 2025, the Festival hosted two in-person events focussed on languages and careers with Futbol Lingo and the Auckland Project for North East schools (both were filmed as Festival case studies), as well as four webinars open to all UK schools. There was a recommendation to include careers activities for primary schools in future.

For all of these activities, the message was clear to pupils - from the superpower of speaking different languages and understanding other cultures, to the importance of taking qualifications to at least GCSE level - languages open doors to opportunities.



148 young people from 8 North East schools attended Futbol Lingo sessions at Northumbria University Sport Central. They explored the spectrum of careers in football, which open up with language skills. Teams competed in a world cup bidding round, representing different countries and languages and also enjoyed a practical football session in Spanish.



Teams of Year 10 pupils from 8 North East schools competed in the Spanish Apprentice Tourism Challenge. Researching Bishop Auckland's cultural offer, they worked with Durham University language students to develop a presentation to promote the town to the Spanish market. They pitched in Spanish to a panel of experts. Cardinal Hume High School from Gateshead won.

48,186 children and young people from 256 UK schools took part in careers webinars



32,041: Where can languages take you (British Council)



8,024: Spanish language & careers (Spanish Embassy)



5,269: Languages & careers in football (Futbol Lingo)



2,852: Modern languages in the working world (Sanako)



Inspiring a generation of linguists



Widening perspectives



Broadening horizons



Influencing education choices



Encouraging progression

The webinars were delivered by Futbol Lingo, David Binns from Sanako UK, British Council (with guest speakers) and the Spanish Embassy Education Department. Many schools attended more than one webinar and the flexibility of having recordings for two of these was appreciated by schools.

The webinar speakers shared their experiences and inspired young people about how languages can open up a world of opportunities – from travel, friendships, to interpersonal skills and intercultural awareness, broadening horizons and widening future education and career choices.

Languages and careers activities



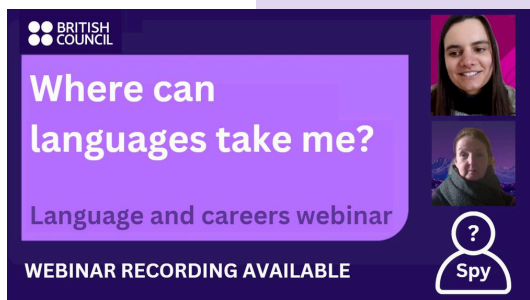
"We learned about how everyday things, such as languages, can bring a better future for yourself. Languages are important because they can build relationships wherever you go and you can talk to people and have connections with others."

Lina Gharib, Pupil, Kenton School, Newcastle



"I really love football and being able to incorporate languages into it, is really exciting for me... I really enjoyed how it showed us how languages can be used in jobs and how me learning a language at school can really help me in the future."

Tom Richardson, Pupil, RGS, Newcastle



"Futbol Lingo really hits the spot when it comes to opening the eyes of KS3 students to the value of language learning! I can tell them as many times as I like but they really believe it when it's backed up by Pierce and his experience."

Laura Howliston, Teacher

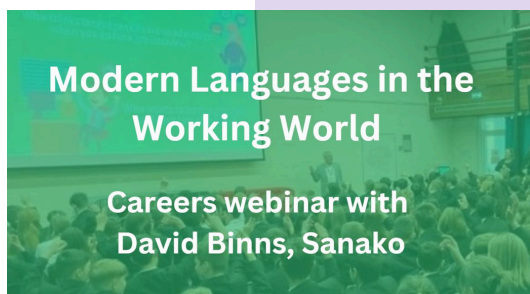
Teesdale School, Barnard Castle, County Durham



"Once again, these webinars were really interesting and engaged our students. We use the Futbol Lingo with our Year 8 students and the British Council webinar with Year 9 who are taking their GCSE options. The events were easy to access and the materials/booklets that go with them help students to get the best out of the experience."

Janet Stephenson, Teacher

King James I Academy, Bishop Auckland



"We delivered the recording to our Year 10 cohort. We used mini whiteboards to encourage the interaction of our students with the resources. Students found the session both informative and engaging. Thank you!"

Claire McKenna, Teacher

Gosforth Academy, Newcastle



"Pupils saw how languages can be used outside of the classroom and enjoyed the opportunity of doing something a little different to the set curriculum."

Rachel Said, Teacher

Chantry Middle School, Morpeth, Northumberland

"Our year 10 absolutely loved the experience at Bishop Auckland. The activities and the experience in general was challenging and inspiring for them. They came back full of motivation for Spanish and confident about their presentations skills. A wonderful experience. Thank you for allowing our students to participate in such a fantastic, inspiring project."

Jessica Garcia Avila, Teacher

St Bede's Catholic School and Byron Sixth Form, Durham

Webinar recordings and new online events

Webinars were an effective way of enabling more pupils to participate in activities, especially as they were open to any UK schools. Teaching packs and pupil booklets/exercises were provided to schools in advance for 6 of the 7 webinars.

Of the seven webinars, there were recordings of five, to provide flexibility for schools who were not able to join the live events. Two languages and careers webinars had recordings available afterwards (Spanish Embassy and British Council) and two did not, as they are private companies who would normally charge for webinars, as part of their business model (Sanako and Futbol Lingo).

There were also recordings of two special events, introduced for the first time in 2025 - Primary German Online (2 webinars) and the Let Afghan Girls Learn webinar. All recordings, apart from British Council's were hosted on the Festival vimeo platform and links sent out to all teachers who registered immediately after the live webinars. British Council sent out the link to their webinar.

4,604 14-18 year olds from 16 NE & UK schools joined the 'Let Afghan Girls Learn' webinar

Four girls from Afghanistan spoke to 14-18 year olds from North East and UK schools in a special webinar to raise awareness and call for action to support girls' education in Afghanistan. They shared their personal stories, challenges, hopes and ambitions.

The webinar was supported by The Maiden Factor and the Women's Rights Network Afghanistan. A recording was shared. Some schools found it difficult to engage with, as speakers could not be shown on screen (for their own safety) and some felt it was too long.



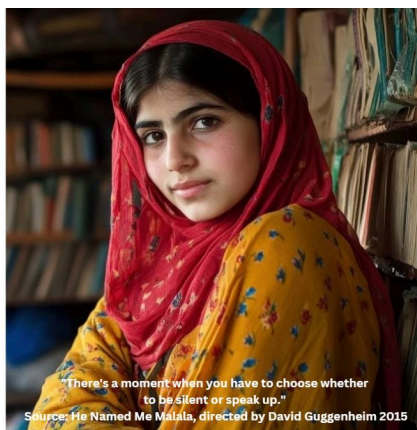
Let Afghan Girls Learn!

Girls from Afghanistan talk about how they have lost their right to education, their hopes and ambitions and how UK young people and schools can help

Education resources

Webinar recording 3rd March 2025

Recommended for 14-18 year olds



"Thank you for the allowing our school to participate in last week's online talk on Afghan girls and their lack of education. The pupils and I found it highly informative!"

William Mayne, Teacher
Kingswood Secondary Academy, Corby

2,210 children from 12 NE and UK schools joined in Primary German webinars

Goethe Institut offered two webinars for primary pupils. Pupils learned how to greet each other, sing greetings songs in German and learn basic German words through this interactive session. Participating schools were sent prizes, as well as links to more resources to support German language learning, including German clubs, song videos, lessons and teacher guides.

9.30am-10.30am

3rd & 7th March



PRIMARY
German
ONLINE

Who are your teachers?



Felix



Franzi



Frau
Devons

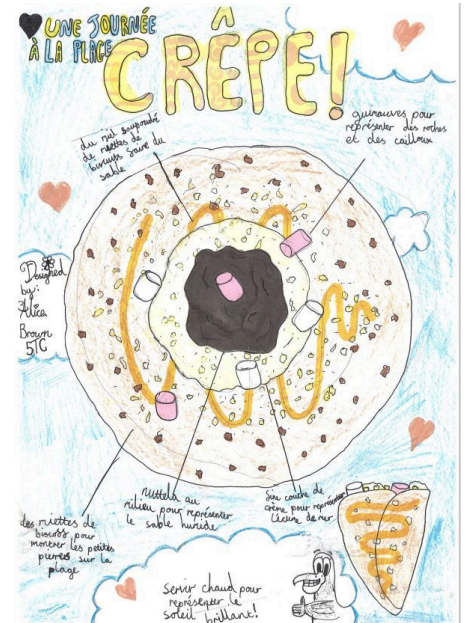


Frau
Whittle



La Petite Crêperie Schools' Competition

3,479 children from 33 North East primary and middle schools took part in the competition. Children designed their own unique crêpe and described it in French. This combined learning French with a practical application, as well as the excitement of a competition. Two winning designs were chosen (Hexham Middle, Northumberland and Marden Bridge, North Tyneside) and groups of 30 children attended a special winners' crêpe workshop with La Petite Crêperie at Newcastle University's ilab.



"Our Year 7 and 8 classes really enjoyed the Crepe competition and we had a lot of very creative designs. We have extended the competition further and have selected the 10 best designs in the school - those students will create their crepes in school with help from the Food Department."

Janet Stephenson, Teacher
King James I Academy, Bishop Auckland



"Year 8 pupils really enjoyed designing their products and we were delighted to see two commendations for pupils from our school."

Rachel Said, Teacher
Chantry Middle School, Morpeth, Northumberland

"Excellent. Winning group enjoyed the Crepe workshop. Thank you!!!"

Chris Armstrong, Teacher
Hexham Middle School, Northumberland

"Children aged 7-11 really enjoyed this challenge. It was creative and developed language skills."

Helen Giles, teacher
Broadway Junior School, Sunderland

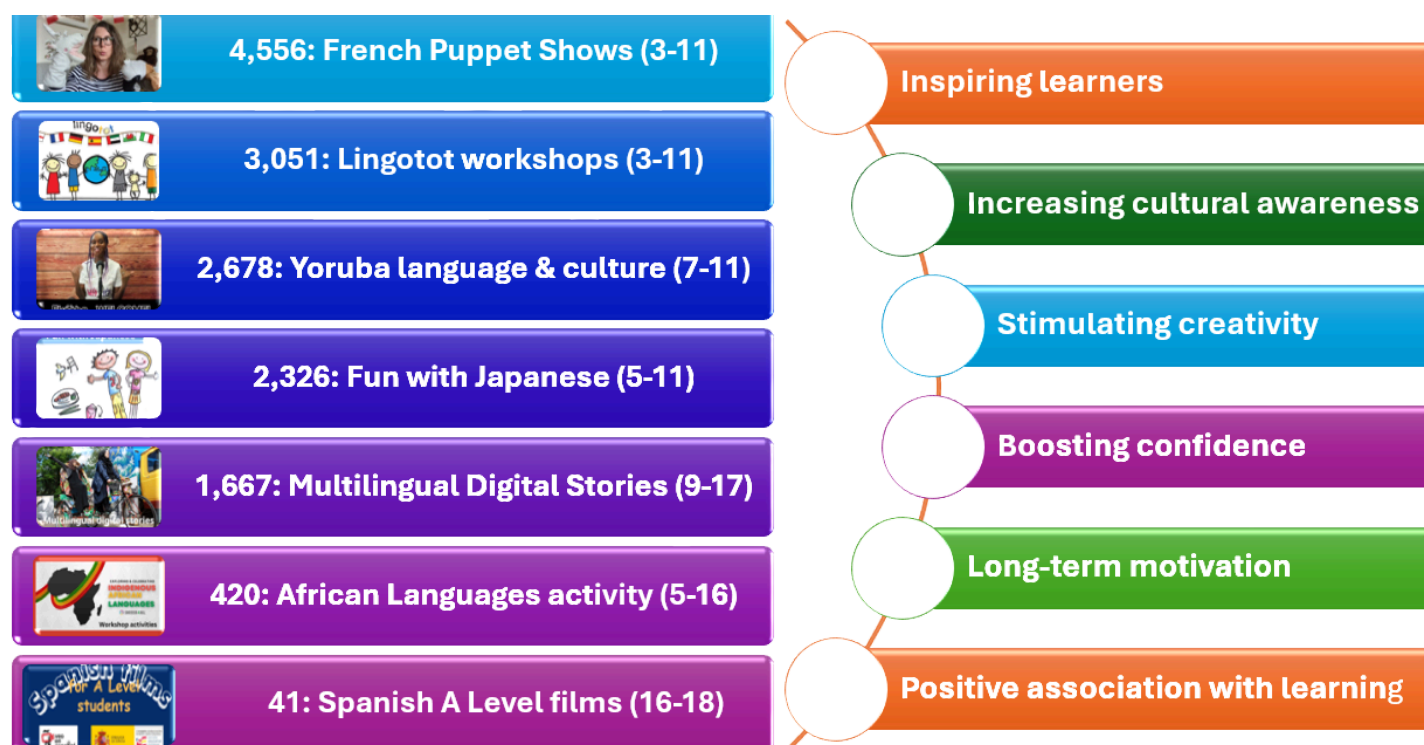


Pre-recorded language and culture activities

The Festival offered a range of pre-recorded activities with teaching packs, which could be delivered anytime from January to March, providing flexibility for schools. They provided insights into different languages and cultures across the world. Some were focussed on younger age groups, while others ranged up to Key Stage 5.

Three Yoruba language and culture workshops with videos and teaching resources were commissioned from Kayine Education for the Festival through the North East Combined Authority funding. The remainder were arranged with new and existing partners.

14,739 children and young people from 117 NE schools accessed the activities



"We focused on African Languages to celebrate the cultural background of our pupils. We followed the presentation and adapted some activities. Children shared their memories of Africa, we learnt different phrases in African languages, we talked about cuisine and tried to write our names using another alphabet. It was a great experience. The children enjoyed the session."

Iva Plhakova, Teacher
Atkinson Road Primary Academy, Newcastle

"My class took part in the Yoruba workshop and thoroughly enjoyed the storytelling and the songs. This inspired them to design their own magic drums!"

Caroylyn Taylor, Teacher
South Street Primary School, Gateshead

"Our younger pupils particularly enjoyed the pre-recorded puppet shows!"

Laura Murphy, Teacher
Framwellgate Moor Primary School, Gateshead

"My Year 12 class really enjoyed the experience of doing a film project. It was a nice break from their A level topics and gave them an insight into Spanish cinemea and history."

Jennifer Dowson, Teacher
St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy, Bedlington, Northumberland

World languages and cultures events

The Festival offered a wide range of in-person events around world languages and cultures. These have a particular impact on those taking part, as they are immersive, engaging experiences outside school premises and a chance to meet different cultural communities.

Events, many with multiple sessions, were delivered by community organisations, cultural institutions, universities and people from a range of backgrounds. They opened young people's minds to their cultures and languages and inspired them. They included Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, African and Bengali themed events, to Spanish, German and multilingual offers. There were also events on university campuses, for many children and young people this was their first university experience. These ranged from cultural workshops to events aimed at A level language students.

2,411 children and young people from 95 NE schools attended in-person events



World languages and cultures events



"I would like to speak Arabic if I go on holiday somewhere. It would be good to have a conversation with someone or even if I wanted to have a future job, it would be good to talk to someone who doesn't speak English, I'll be able to understand them and they will be able to understand me."

Jack Wood, Pupil, Easington Academy, Co. Durham



"Two fantastic events (Welcome to the Arab World) where our pupils were thoroughly engaged and learned lots about other cultures and languages. Excellent for our pupils who speak and write in Arabic to be able to share this with their friends."

Anthony Kennedy, Head Teacher
English Martyrs Catholic Primary, Newcastle



"Children thoroughly enjoyed the session (Welcome to the Arab World) and gained a lot from it."

Zoë Brown, Teacher
Blaydon West Primary School, Gateshead

"Our children love this event (Welcome to Germany) and are always really keen to learn more on returning to school....perhaps an on line follow up session?"

Jackie Lombard, Teacher
Wingate Primary School, Wingate, Durham



"Children came back from these trips (Mini-Olympics) with energy and excitement, sharing readily what they had done"

Rachel Dangerfield, Teacher
Broadwood Primary School, Newcastle

"Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the mini-Olympics. Thank you!"

Chris Armstrong, Teacher
Hexham Middle School, Northumberland

"Our students loved both Futbol Lingo and ENACT."

Gemma Neale, Teacher
Excelsior Academy, Newcastle



"This was the second year in a row we attended this event (Y12 language experience at Northumbria University) and it was fantastic. We hope to go again next year."

George Johnstone, Teacher
King Edward VI School, Morpeth, Northumberland

"It (Welcome to China) was a super experience and the students engaged well in a range of activities."

Ingrid Mitchell, Teacher
Bellingham Middle School, Northumberland

Additional benefits



Schools participating in any Festival activity automatically qualified for British Council's International School Award (ISA) Foundation Certificate, without having to apply online.

267 schools new to the Festival in 2025 were eligible for the ISA Foundation Certificate and British Council issued all those, who did not already have the award, with a certificate.

This arrangement was negotiated by Newcastle City Council and International Newcastle with British Council's ISA team for Festival 2024 and was repeated in 2025.

It is a key additional benefit and incentive for schools to take part in the Festival. This also supports efforts to embed internationalism across school communities and maximise benefits for pupils.

For those schools already involved with the ISA, participating in a range of Festival activities contributes to their efforts to progress through the International School Award levels and apply for Intermediate Level, Accreditation or Reaccreditation.



Promoting Schools of Sanctuary engagement was a key part of the Festival ethos, seeking to strengthen engagement and offer enrichment activities which support this work in schools.

Schools were encouraged to use Festival activities to support multilingualism, intercultural awareness and internationalism as part of their Schools of Sanctuary work.

Briefings were provided for schools on the range of Festival activities which could support Schools of Sanctuary work, including all four creative multilingual projects, the in-person world languages and cultures events, as well as the pre-recorded language and culture activities. Opportunities were promoted through regional schools' networks, UK and North East Schools of Sanctuary organisations.

In addition, UNESCO's International Mother Language Day (21st February) was promoted alongside multilingual activities and resources which could be used by schools, as well as Festival family events.



Events, activities and resources available to UK schools



Although most of the activities in the Festival were for North East schools, all seven webinars were made available for UK participation and the Festival also promoted the free resources and competitions available to any UK schools.

38,854 children and young people from 175 schools (163 were new to the Festival and eligible for the ISA) participated. The majority were secondary schools taking part in language and careers webinars, as well as the Afghan Girls and Primary German Online events.

Acknowledgements



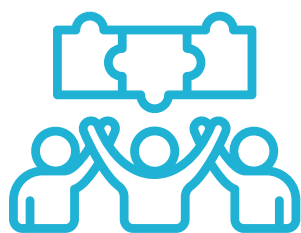
The evaluation was made possible through funding from the North East Combined Authority, which also provided core funding for Festival coordination, communications and commissions. We are grateful for the support provided by North East Mayor Kim McGuinness and her staff.



Thank you to all the children and young people, schools and teachers who participated in the Festival. We are also grateful to the teachers who responded to the feedback survey, providing invaluable insights into how the activities were received, what worked well and what can be improved in future.



We are grateful to all our delivery partners, who provided a wealth of enriching activities for the Festival and who shared participation data to enable an accurate understanding of engagement across age ranges and geography. In addition, we thank our Festival communications partners, Allies Group, for promoting the Festival and B7 for the five filmed case studies, providing insight and legacy.



Thank you to the members of the Festival Steering Group, who have supported the Festival Coordinator in designing, promoting and delivering the Festival and with developing the evaluation. Special thanks to Sarah Edgar (Newcastle City Council) for supporting monitoring and evaluation, managing the Festival grant and liaising closely with the Festival Co-ordinator on all aspects of the Festival.

Festival links



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Festival Co-ordinator Declan Baharini



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North East
Festival of Languages
8 January to 31 March 2025

