

# National Theatre

## MINISTER STEPHANIE PEACOCK VISITS LOCAL SCHOOL DURING NATIONAL THEATRE WORKSHOP ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO SHARE THEIR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

TUESDAY 24 MARCH 2026



For images, click [here](#)

Last Monday, the Jewellery Quarter Academy, located in Birmingham and part of the CORE Education Trust, welcomed Ceremonials Minister Stephanie Peacock as they took part in the National Theatre's *The Next Morning* schools programme.

Forming part of the government's celebrations to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War, *The Next Morning* is a nationwide project exploring how memories of the war are passed down through generations. Inspired by Gareth Southgate's 'Dear England' open letter, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) funded initiative encourages over 8,000 young people across the country to reflect on their own place in history and share their hopes for themselves, the country, and for young people 80 years from now.

During the workshop, Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils at the Jewellery Quarter Academy were joined by Minister Peacock as they explored themes of identity, legacy, resilience and community through spoken-word activities. The session ended in them writing

their own letters of hope and aspiration, empowering them to contribute to a national conversation about the world they want to build. These letters were then presented to their classmates as well as the Minister.

The National Theatre is visiting four local schools across Birmingham as part of the nationwide programme to deliver creative workshops from NT artists and provide free classroom and assembly resources to encourage students' oracy and sense of belonging. Thousands of these letters will be collected into a time capsule, capturing young people's perspectives in 2026 which will be made available for VE and VJ Day commemorations taking place in May.

So far, the letters written as part of the school engagement programme by young people have called for unity, wanting to embrace diversity in their communities, and more resources to improve their prospects in their local areas.

Delivered as part of the nationwide tour of James Graham's award-winning play *Dear England*, and with support from Birmingham Hippodrome, *The Next Morning* school programme is designed to inspire creativity and deepen students' understanding of how our shared history continues to influence both the present and the future. A film of the same title featuring Julian Glover, Joseph Mydell and Siân Phillips was released last year asking what the end of the war means in a world shaped by its aftermath.

Kate Varah, Executive Director and Co-Chief Executive, said *"The Next Morning schools programme has allowed us to meet thousands of young people in communities across England. Thanks to the generous support from DCMS, they have reflected on their shared history, and shared their hopes, concerns and ambitions for the world they are growing up in. At a time of increased anxiety for young people, this programme offered a creative space for them to come together, talk openly and explore issues that are most important to them. By putting them at the heart of the creative process, the workshops help young people to express themselves and engage with the world around them."*

Ceremonials Minister, Stephanie Peacock, said *"Last year we came together as a country to mark 80 years since VE and VJ Day, likely the last significant anniversary where living veterans will be present for us to thank for the sacrifices made by that great war-time generation. As living memory fades into history, it's important to remember what happened. As part of the 80 year anniversary, the National Theatre has been working with schools to do that through spoken-word activities exploring identity, nationality, community and ambitions for the future. I was pleased to attend this latest workshop, number 80 of 82, that the National Theatre has now held with children across the county."*

Jamie Henshaw, Head Teacher at Jewellery Quarter Academy, said *"It was a real privilege for Jewellery Quarter Academy to work with the National Theatre on the*

*Dear England project, our students really enjoyed attending the performance and then having the opportunity to take part in a workshop to explore some of the themes from the play further only enhanced the students experience further and gave them a real insight into the creative process. It was our honour to welcome the Minister Stephanie Peacock MP to JQA to watch the workshop and to see our students putting their performance skills into practice. Performing Arts is a key part of our curriculum and the skills and confidence our students develop from these opportunities is of real benefit to them. We hope that we can continue to work with the National Theatre and be a part of future projects.”*

For more information about *The Next Morning* project and to watch the film, visit the [National Theatre website](#).

**ENDS**

### **Notes to the Editors**

Images from Stephanie Peacock, Minister for Sport, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth, visit to National Theatre *The Next Morning* workshop at the Jewellery Quarter Academy [here](#). Images from the *Dear England* tour [here](#).

For more information, interviews and press visits, please contact Orla Bentley at [obentley@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:obentley@nationaltheatre.org.uk)

### **About the National Theatre**

The National Theatre makes theatre that entertains and inspires using its creativity, expertise and unique reach. We tell big stories in bold ways, offering the widest access to high quality theatre to millions of audience members across the UK and around the world – on our own stages, on tour, in schools, on cinema screens and streaming at home.

We bring the world to the National Theatre and take the National Theatre to the world through reimagined classic stories meeting fresh, contemporary voices. As part of our mission to celebrate and platform bold voices in British theatre, the National Theatre proudly hosts a dynamic group of Resident Companies, offering a platform for collaboration, growth, and innovation.

Through touring our work to local theatres, schools and through our nationwide education and community programmes, we are active in every local authority in the UK. We invest in talent and innovation on stage and off, taking seriously our role as the nation's theatre. We work with hundreds of schools and communities across the UK to fire imagination and inspire creativity. The National Theatre Skills Centre supports thousands of young people every year to develop skills and pathways for careers in theatre.

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