

20th February 2020

RT Hon Gavin Williamson MP,
The Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State,

Music Education Hub Funding

We are writing to you as the two Subject Associations for Music, who are committed to ensuring that every child, irrespective of background, has access to music education.

We are delighted by the Government's commitment to music education, in particular the recent formal announcement of £80m funding for music education hubs for 2020/21. However, further to our letter in August 2019, we would like to highlight some of the significant challenges music education hubs face going forward.

You will know from our letter (dated 29 August 2019) that the current level of funding for music education hubs is not in line with the rate of inflation. Based on Bank of England's inflation calculator and a grant allocation of £82m (the level of funding in 2011/12) we calculated that a figure of at least £100m per year was needed to maintain Music Education Hubs' vital work. The small in-year increase for 2019/20 is of course welcome, but, based on the Bank of England's Retail Price Index Inflation rate of 2.5%, next year the Hub grant total should have been nearer £80m excluding NYMO and pension funding. The current figure of £76.1m is not enough to deliver quality music education provision to a growing school population, retain a quality workforce and combat reductions in funding from local authorities.

The School Census shows that the total number of pupils has increased by over 488,000 in the last six years – an increase of nearly 6%. Music Education Hub funding has remained relatively static for four years, while at the same time the number of pupils we aim to educate has grown. The per-pupil per year amount has dropped from £8.93 in the 2015/16 financial year to £8.63 for the 2020/21 allocation. In total this amounts to over £2.6m less funding across the country for Music Education Hubs by comparison to 2015/16.

Music Education Hubs cannot provide an ongoing quality provision without inflation-linked, maintained 'per pupil' funding.

In the introduction to the call for evidence (for the refresh of the National Plan for Music Education), the Government recognised that studying music is not a privilege. The Schools Minister also said that all children, regardless of their background, should get the opportunity to play musical instruments, learn to sing and learn how to read and write music in the classroom. If the Government truly believes in the importance of access for all children and young people to an enriched music education which complements the national curriculum with instrumental learning, singing, performance and progression opportunities individually and in ensembles, funding levels for Music Education Hubs must keep pace with increased costs and a growing school population.

To finish we would like to provide a quote we have received from the leader of a Music Education Hub in the North of England who explained:

“Pre-Hubs, there was a budget of £84m for Music Services on top of which, Local Councils often chipped in as well... over the last 10 years, the national allocation has reduced..... and our Local Council has taken away the whole of the £300k grant which used to enable us to have much more of a presence in schools and provide a much more inclusive service. And yet we are being asked to do more. I understand that there are pressures everywhere, [but] our £11,300 cut throws our knife edge budget into a negative spiral with no knowledge of what future years will bring!”

We look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Yours sincerely

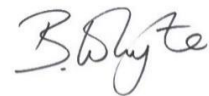
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