

## ENSURING THE FUTURE OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

**“Music brings a school to life! Music has a positive impact socially and academically, as well as on mental health and wellbeing.”** HEADTEACHER, BIRKWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

The **UNESCO Seoul Agreement of 2010** called on all nations to understand and promote the essential value of arts education in improving the quality of education<sup>1</sup>. In the UK successive governments have stated that the arts, and music in particular, should be part of every school’s curriculum. This is not just because of its intrinsic value as a subject of study, but also in recognition of its role in supporting wider academic achievement, teaching soft skills, supporting pupil health and wellbeing<sup>2</sup>, having long-term cognitive benefits<sup>3</sup>. Musical learning will develop the creativity our future workforce will need<sup>4</sup> in a world where AI will have a stronger role to play, and with the UK music industry worth over £6.7bn to the economy<sup>5</sup> and employing over 210,000 people, music education is a facilitator to social mobility<sup>6</sup>.



However, developing musical knowledge and skill involves not only learning within the classroom, but also input from a diverse, skilled workforce of music leaders and instrumental/vocal tutors; experience of live music concerts; and access to instruments, spaces and performance platforms.

Funding for education and the arts in the UK is devolved. Similarly to the other three nations, England actively allocates additional funding beyond that given to schools to provide a broader universal instrumental and vocal offer recognising the subject’s value in supporting childhood development and aiming to address ongoing inequitable provision. However, **government policy and investment is currently insufficient to enable the music education sector to ensure all children and young people benefit from musical learning.**

The UK Association for Music Education – Music Mark, its membership and partners are therefore advocating for all political parties to commit to supporting the following six goals during the next parliamentary term:

- Government investment must be sustained and keep pace with both its ambition and inflation
- Priority must be placed on the recruitment and retention of classroom music teachers
- Music Education must be understood, valued and financially supported by stakeholders in all schools
- Instrumental & Vocal Teachers must be recognised, valued and an integrated part of the education workforce
- There must be a universal understanding that music education does not start at 5 or finish at 18
- Government must work with the Commercial Music Industry to co-invest in musical learning

**“Music education is important for me as it is a way for me to express myself. I can share my passions and interests through music and it is an important part of my identity.”**

A YOUNG PERSON FROM LONDON YOUTH FOLK ENSEMBLE

### **Government investment must be sustained and keep pace with both its ambition and inflation.**

A meaningful music education for all children and young people needs **sustained realistic investment**. Music education organisations are being tasked with increasing opportunities, ensuring equity of access and supporting progression across a diverse range of genres and musical styles. However Government investment is allocated on one-year cycles and remains frozen year on year. This does not enable long-term planning, which impacts quality and reach, especially when pupil numbers continue to increase. With significant rises to operating costs and a reduction in other funding streams such as from Local Authorities (30% less support in 2021/22 from 2012/13), access to musical learning opportunities are being cut. Inevitably families are being charged higher fees for remaining provision, resulting in reduced engagement<sup>7</sup>. If further government funding is not available in the short to medium term, Music Hubs must be given a mandate to prioritise the most vulnerable to exclusion instead of being expected to offer blanket provision

### **Music Education must be understood, valued and supported by stakeholders in all schools.**

It is not enough to say that music is part of the National Curriculum when academies and free schools are exempt from that National Curriculum. Music should be recognised, valued and financially supported both because it is an academically rigorous subject of study and for its wider worth to the school community. Music is unique as a means of expressing and celebrating our own identities and research clearly identifies it as a vital part of young people's lives – something which makes them feel worthwhile and helps them to explore their emotions<sup>8</sup>. Whilst national bodies such as the Music Subject Associations, can advocate for music, Government needs to do more itself to highlight the value of musical learning to school 'gatekeepers'; to expect all schools to deliver the National Curriculum; celebrate schools where music is excellent; and make it impossible for Ofsted to rate a school as 'outstanding' if there is no music provision within that school.

### **There must be a universal understanding that music education does not start at 5 or finish at 18.**

As recognised in the National Plan for Music Education (2022) it is vital that music is available as part of early childhood provision and post 18 education. Singing and music making support many areas of early childhood development<sup>9</sup>. Training for those working with pre-school children needs to be widely available. On leaving school, young people may enter the music industry via routes such as apprenticeships and internships. However, a wide range of industry-backed HE and FE courses must remain available to help populate a booming and diverse industry<sup>10</sup>. Funding to support developments in these two areas must be found in addition to that available for 5-18yrs provision.

### **Priority must be placed on the recruitment and retention of classroom music teachers.**

Bursaries to support students on teacher training courses in music must remain. However, more emphasis on music in Initial Teacher Training for primary school teachers is also needed, with evidence from Music Mark members indicating that it is the subject teachers are least confident to teach. Generalist teachers must be supported to identify as musicians, regardless of their background, to ensure the subject can flourish within schools. School leaders need to ensure that all teachers, and particularly those who are not music specialists, have access to ongoing professional development opportunities to provide a music curriculum which supports pupils to become more musical. The recent Ofsted report suggested that teachers are unable to be released to take advantage of training available<sup>11</sup>.



### **Instrumental & Vocal Teachers must be recognised, valued and an integrated part of the education workforce.**

Over 9,200 people are involved in the delivery of the National Plan for Music Education in England, beyond the school workforce, employed or contracted by organisations in Music Hub partnerships<sup>12</sup>. Many of these educators have recognised teaching qualifications and a significant number are contracted on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions, with access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). In 2023 both the teacher's pay increase (6.5%) and the requirement to further increase to employers' TPS contributions (to 28.6%) have been above budget estimates. Support has been given to schools to cover these increases but not those employing instrumental and vocal teachers<sup>13</sup> who work in and beyond schools. These imposed increases are having a crippling effect on music education providers. Without support for these uncontrollable costs, the Music Hub programme will be undermined through further redundancies, leading a de-professionalised workforce on poorer contract terms and conditions.

## Government must work with the Commercial Music Industry to co-invest in musical learning.

The government need to open a dialogue with commercial music industry giants, philanthropists and wider business leaders to find ways to encourage and reward them to support grassroots opportunities for musical learning and development. This will not only help with financing an equitable, diverse and inclusive music education for children and young people across the country, but should also help make connections which can support career pathways, including training and apprenticeships, to ensure the ongoing financial and employment success of the music industry.

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### Some additional notes:

Currently in England:

- The government's Department for Education (DfE) 2023/24 allocation of funding for Music Education Hubs is **£76.1m**<sup>14</sup>
  - This allocation has been at a **standstill since 2019** and is lower than the 2010/11 allocation.
  - With over 9m children in the school population<sup>15</sup> that **funding equates to c.£8.45 per pupil per year.**
  - **19,008 schools** engaged with Music Education Hubs in 2021/22
  - **792,000 children** (9.7% of the school population) were involved in Whole Class Ensemble Tuition in 2021/22 of which 68% were receiving lessons for the first time.
  - Between 2016 and 2022 **over 2.7 million students** had their first experience of playing a musical instrument as part of whole class ensemble tuition.
  - Pre-pandemic the Music Education Hubs provided over **17,000 ensembles** for pupils to participate in
  - In 2021/22 Music Hubs have raised **an additional £1.80** for every £1.00 of DfE funding to support delivery
  - Between 2012/13 to 2021/22 Music Hubs levered an additional **£1.387bn** of funding into the ecology<sup>16</sup>.
  - The DfE have allocated capital funding of £25m<sup>17</sup> from 2024-26, to purchase musical instruments, including adaptive instruments for children with additional needs.
  - The DfE also funds a scholarship programme (the **Music and Dance Scheme**) and co-funds (with Arts Council England) a diverse group of **National Youth Music Organisations**<sup>18</sup> such as the National Youth Orchestra.
  - Other funding for musical learning in England includes allocations from **Arts Council England's** treasury and lottery funds, such as c.£9m of lottery funding given to the charity **Youth Music.**
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### Citations

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First photo courtesy of English Folk Dance and Song Society