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23rd November 2023

Dear Mr Hinds

Delivering the Government's National Plan for Music Education

The UK Association for Music Education – Music Mark, is an Arts Council England Investment Support Organisation (IPSO). It represents all the current Music Education Hubs across England. On their behalf we are writing to you, as you start your new role as the Schools Minister. We wish to offer our support in meeting the Government's ambitions, as set out in the National Plan for Music Education 2022, whilst highlighting the challenges the sector currently faces.

The new Plan is valued in that it builds on the successes and learning from the first (2012) National Plan, and the DfE's Model Music Curriculum published in 2021. Music Mark's membership appreciates the Government's continued recognition of 'The Power of Music to Change Lives', and its ongoing investment in a network of Music Education Hubs. We also welcomed your commitment to distribute capital funding next year, which will help to restock instrument libraries, and support fully inclusive musical learning.

However, there are still barriers to engagement and, sadly, a significant one of these is financial. To realise the many ambitions of the National Plan, we need to recognise the impact of rising costs on our network of music educators and their ability to maintain and expand quality provision, support progression, and ensure pathways into our world class music industries (which contribute significantly to UK Plc¹).

A recent survey² of Music Education Hub Lead Organisations, and their partners, highlighted that rising costs are crippling our music education providers: staff salary and pension increases, energy prices, plus all the associated costs of delivering a world-class music education. To balance the books, cuts have been made and/or charges have increased for lessons, ensemble opportunities and concerts. These challenges are reversing significant gains made over the past 11 years, threatening our ability to 'level up'.

We all want a great music education for every child, and we welcome the increased role for schools in the new National Plan, but we also need to recognise that music is so much more than studying a curriculum. Music Hubs provide the extra level of provision, beyond that which is achievable by schools alone.

We want to avoid the gains of the last 11 years being lost. We would welcome the opportunity to engage with you to identify how Music Education Hubs can be supported, to meet the challenges, and reap the rewards, of the National Plan.

Music Mark looks forward to working with your civil servants as they, together with Arts Council England as the fundholder for the Music Education Grant, work to realise the new National Plan for Music Education, ensuring that all children can experience 'The Power of Music to Change Lives'.

Yours sincerely

Bridget Whyte
Chief Executive

Peter Smalley
Chair of Trustees

¹ <https://www.ukmusic.org/research-reports/this-is-music-2023/>

² <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/news/were-losing-both-schools-and-parents-the-cost-of-music-education/>