



The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
20 Great Smith St
London
SW1P 3BT

21 October 2020

Dear Secretary of State for Education

We are writing together to express our concern about reports of the complete removal of postgraduate bursaries for Initial Teacher Training in Music.

We appreciate the financial strain that the country is under at present. However, our schools are tasked with delivering a broad and balanced curriculum, of giving our children the best possible life chances, and outstanding music education in schools is intrinsic to enabling this.

Schools are the only places where children and young people are guaranteed to receive music education - it is a statutory requirement until the end of Year 9 – and so it is vital that music lessons are well taught, accessible and meaningful. The surest way of achieving this is through recruiting and retaining outstanding music teachers.

We welcome the government's belief in the power of music in schools. Music is the only subject to have a National Plan, and we look forward to the publication of the refreshed plan as well as the Model Music Curriculum. These are necessary because the musical experience of children in schools across the UK is disparate. The ISM's State of the Nation report, published last year, highlighted that music is no longer taught across the three years of Key Stage 3 in 50% of state-funded secondary schools, with some schools teaching music as part of a carousel, due to staff shortage. This in turn has led to an alarming decline in the numbers of students being able to take GCSE Music, of 20% since 2015; more concerning still is the significant drop in entries for A Level Music, of 38% since 2010, making it the fastest disappearing subject at A Level. As you are well aware, there are many areas of the country where young people are not able to study Music A Level.

All of us together must act to arrest this decline and ensure that all children have the music education to which they are entitled.

Unless urgent action is taken with teacher recruitment, we are concerned that music in schools will only be available to the schools fortunate enough to employ a music teacher out of an ever decreasing pool. It could disappear entirely from many schools.

In schools, the single biggest influencer on children and young people's musicianship is the music teacher. Outstanding music teachers form outstanding music departments. And where there is an outstanding music department, the school itself is outstanding. The impact of an outstanding music teacher, therefore, goes beyond a single music lesson to school communities at large.

The need to attract the finest musicians, representing the socio-economic and ethnic diversity of the country, to work as music teachers, is the greatest it has ever been.

Government targets for teacher recruitment have been missed for the past seven years. This should concern all of us, regardless of political beliefs or affiliations.

We urge you to rethink your decision, and to reinstate bursaries for music teacher trainees as you have afforded other STEM subjects. We also offer the services of our organisations to help the government promote music teaching, which we believe to be one of the most rewarding jobs possible.

Yours sincerely,



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