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# The Future of the National Plan for Music Education

A Report on the Consultation of Music Mark members  
October 2018

## Introduction

Between January 2018 and August 2018, Music Mark coordinated a consultation of its membership about the future of the National Plan for Music Education (NPME). Music Mark membership includes 95% of the Music Education Hubs, over 4,500 schools, key music educationalists, a growing number of national and regional music education organisations, corporate music companies and the wider sector. The purpose of the consultation was to enable those at the local level of activity the opportunity to provide the DfE with clear messages and solutions for a new National Plan for Music Education from 2020 onwards. It was an opportunity to hear directly the voices of those who have been at the heart of delivering the current plan.

The consultation focussed on:

1. The hub
2. The relationship of the plan to the National Curriculum (NC)
3. The workforce
4. Whole Class Ensemble Teaching (WCET)
5. Progression and pathways
6. The development of a culture hub

## Summary and Recommendations

The consultation elicited a wide and diverse range of responses. The rationale or logic behind the responses is based on the experiences and working practices specific to the hub or hubs within which the person worked. Therefore, as a collection, the responses reflect a diverse range of opinions that reflect the diversity of Music Education Hubs, and their implementation of the concept. Broadly speaking, each hub has developed operational activity to meet the needs of the NPME as it understands them whilst striving to meeting the needs of its local young people, schools and community, within as robust a business plan as it can.

## Overall Recommendations

The National Plan for Music Education 2020 should develop/build on the 2012 National Plan for Music Education taking into account what Music Hubs have learnt and the changing context in which each hub finds itself.

Key messages can be summarised as follows:

1. **Music Education Hubs are working.** The lead hub partner should continue to be in receipt of funding for the NPME. None of the funding should be devolved to schools or any other organisation
2. **Issue a copy of the NPME to all schools and governing bodies in the country.**
3. **Strengthen the Music Education Hub commitment to partnership.** The Music Education hubs should be committed to both sharing musical skills and knowledge within and across their musical communities and professional groups, and committed to developing musical skills and knowledge through training.
4. **Clarify the relationships between the National Curriculum and NPME.** If necessary replace the core activities in the NPME with composing, performing and listening/understanding for each young person and a statement that ensures the music hub will support and partner all schools in the provision of each of the three activities at each stage of learning. A school is responsible for its curriculum.
5. **Let each Music Education Hub be locally accountable for its NPME** e.g. instrumental teaching, WCET and ensembles as appropriate to the local needs, and within the national commitment to safety, diversity, inclusion and musical quality for all children from 3yrs of age to 18yrs of age
6. **Make a clear statement about SEND and inclusion**
7. **Change the reporting and accountability framework from numbers of children** to include: -  
Presenting success and challenges in all areas of the NPME activity in developing the local vision.  
An identification of and statement that explains value for money

## The National Plan for Music Education

Launched in 2012, the NPME is both aspirational and visionary

*Great music education is a partnership between classroom teachers, specialist teachers, professional performers and a host of other organisations, including those from the arts, charity and voluntary sectors. For this reason, the creation of a National Plan is necessary to help us to bring together all of this expertise in a focussed way for the benefit of children and young people across the country.*

*This is the first time that a National Plan for Music Education has set out a central vision for schools, arts and education organisations to drive excellence in music education*

Focussing on key areas of music education, although with a noticeable lack of reference to children with learning difficulties, the NPME is a parallel document to the National Curriculum. It is non-statutory. Terms and activities referred to are without definition and, more specifically, it does not impose or suggest a structure or process of implementation. The NPME *provides a flexible template for high quality music provision throughout a pupil's education*, the template has been adapted by each community of music educators, lead hub organisations, who were allocated the task, along with the task of interpreting what is expected of them.

The NPME came with financial commitment to its vision, the Music Education Hub grant. Schools remained responsible for funding the delivery of the national curriculum and the hub grant, awarded to the lead organisation, enabled music making beyond the responsibility of a school. This includes the opportunity for children and young people to develop their music making through a wider range of instruments, styles and performance opportunities.

The development of children's music-making and the development of their musical passion could now be supported by the partnerships between schools, music hubs and the community.

### The Hub

*Hubs will provide opportunities that reach beyond school boundaries and draw-in the expertise of a range of education and arts partners.*

**Does Hub Working work? Has it enabled partnership working to thrive?  
Has that partnership working truly benefitted the children and young people?**

The lead organisation responses to this question was one of the most unified of all the responses. There was a clear 'yes' that hubs are working albeit with some desired tweaks. The broad points of agreement were:

- The number of partnerships has increased

- The number of opportunities for music making in and beyond school had increased
- The breadth of opportunities for music making in and beyond school had increased
- Greater sharing of professional expertise
- The ability to 'deliver' to more children than before the creation of the hub.

Throughout the responses by other members of hubs to other questions however, the following challenges and frustrations were referred to which are related to the work of the hub:

- Hubs have led to more outcomes for children not always better outcomes.
- There appears to be no accountability for schools as partners to commit to the hub
- There appears to be no consistent support from Ofsted about keeping schools to account over supporting the NMPE and therefore hub work.
- Lead hub organisations and some Arts Council managers are confused between the hub being a concept of partnership and the hub requiring an identified structure or model.
- Partners are also perceived as business rivals, some believing they should access funds
- Hubs have to demonstrate a successful working business model. Lead hub finances shape employment and business practices, set trading prices and fundamentally raise a key frustration: With a finite amount of money, what level of musical breadth and depth of opportunity and experiences can hubs truly offer to the 8.2 million children and young people between the ages of 5 and 18 in England?
- There is excessive administration
- The future plan MUST HAVE TEETH, it needs to call schools to account

### **The Relationship of the Plan to the National Curriculum (NC)**

*Schools make their own decisions about how they teach music .....*

*Every child can expect curriculum advice and support to schools for the workforce including continuing professional development available from most hubs.*

**Are we beginning to see delivery of the DfE funded elements of National Plan for Music Education replacing the Music National Curriculum? Is that OK?**

All the respondents who confirmed that some primary schools have successfully embedded whole class instrumental teaching (WCET) into their curriculum were pleased that the schools had.

Overall responses on the fuller implications of this issue were divided. Some felt strongly that having a NC and a NPME is confusing for schools' senior leadership teams and most people not directly involved with music education in schools.

Examples of these responses suggested:

- The NPME needs to be clarified in relation to the NC for Music, this would be helped by a more clearly defined content in the National Curriculum for Music. Sometimes expressed as 'too woolly'
- The NPME and the NC could be merged into one clear document if both documents had more specific content
- The National Curriculum has changed and it's a good time to align it with NPME
- Rural schools, small schools would value hub/service to provide support. BUT schools need to know that they have to pay for this from their curriculum budget.
- The NPME could be re-written and Core Activities replaced by composing, performing and listening/understanding for each young person.
- The NPME should lay out what good music provision in schools should look like
- It's dangerous to isolate musical instrumental teaching from music education
- Training primary teachers to teach music and /or delivering continuous CPD should be a core part of the NPME

By contrast others felt:

- Schools are responsible for their curriculum and always should be
- Blurring of the boundaries between the school budget and NPME budget will demand specific definition of the curriculum (including the current ensemble and additional extra-curriculum provision)
- It is perfectly possible for schools to be leading their school music curriculum and be supported by their Music Education Hub
- Music Education Hubs should be there to augment, assist with and add value to a strong school offer
- Music Education Hubs can offer instrumental tuition, inspirational experiences, wide range of genres, non-formal education, extra-curricular experiences, world music and combined arts projects as required and appropriate for individual schools
- Until NPME is mandatory the question is of no consequence
- We see our role as helping schools to understand the benefits of music and the arts so that they will want to invest in it
- Connecting the NPME and the NC requires a definition of the curriculum
- If Music Education Hubs are to have a role in the curriculum the role should be made statutory.
- Ofsted have changed their specific foci and may not concern themselves with music in school
- Currently some schools are all about the data and their examination results
- Academisation has had a negative impact on the music/arts in some school

## **The Workforce**

*The music education workforce is fundamental to ensuring all pupils experience high quality music teaching, both in and out of school. Alongside school-to-*

*school support, hubs will provide opportunities for continuing professional development and strengthening leadership practice*

**Should we simply create a workforce to deliver ALL music in schools? Would this raise quality?**

Responses to this question were mostly of the nature that it would not be possible because:

- There the workforce is not out there and not interested enough to train
- We need appropriately trained teachers
- Schools were currently driven by initiatives that did not prioritise or possibly even include music
- Without QTS or a possible basic entry level e.g. grade 5, there would be no agreed standard for teacher entry
- CPD didn't really reach the teachers they wanted to reach
- Schools don't release teachers for Music CPD
- Need to EMPOWER teachers in schools – educate and support

This could be because the responders are tied to the minutiae of the everyday, however the following points were also received:

- Composing.....Most music teachers (schools) come down a performing route. Not many are principally composers. Yet, composition is significant part of curriculum and GCSE. Teachers don't have the composing skills. CPD is vital in this area and perhaps more significant than other areas.
- Many more inhabitants of music classrooms are now from a music tech background. An emerging workforce who do music production but don't play and instrument or composition skills. They compose by experimentation and this is how pupils are composing too.

### **Whole Class Ensemble Teaching (WCET)**

*Hubs provide opportunities for all pupils to learn instruments from specialist instrumental music teachers as part of a whole-class ensemble in and/or out of school.*

Here there were two questions under discussion:

**The government decides to withdraw all funding from music hubs and services previously given for WCET, and instead give it direct to primary schools to spend on music education of any sort they wish. What will this do to your provision?**

**And**

**Whole Class Instrumental Tuition (WCET) has been going for 10 years, has it delivered what it set out to do? Where next?**

Both of these questions elicited the most responses overall and was the area that the respondents felt the strongest about. It was interesting that some referred to 'traditional' WCET, possibly implying how it had become embedded in our music education culture.

A significant majority of responses were **not** in favour of devolving funds directly to schools mainly for the following reasons:

- Lead hub organisations unanimously agreed it would impact directly and detrimentally on their business plan if the schools did not buy back. This would have an impact upon employment. Additionally, there is a fear that schools may not use the money for music.
- WCET is an entitlement and not an offer
- Music Education Hubs will lose their strategic overview
- Music Education Hubs will lose quality control of delivery
- It seems an odd thing to do if we are to believe the lack of musical expertise in primary schools.
- I am a firm believer in the principles of the WCET programme, and the benefits for ALL children. I think it goes hand in hand with the music curriculum and covers all the attainment targets on a very regular basis.

One comment noted that sustainable models of WCET, i.e. models that empower class teachers to deliver the sessions, would survive and thrive, thus ensuring a long-lasting legacy.

Overall the responses to where WCET should go in the next 10 years were mixed. This area of the NPME is seen by many as successful, often embedded within the school's curriculum.

Positive responses included:

- My most rewarding experiences as a teacher of music for over 30 years have been delivering a well-planned wider opportunities programme
- Out of whole class teaching has grown a pedagogy and technology that was previously unimaginable
- Much more potential...best is yet to come?!
- We now have better resources and better trained staff (plus support for aims and objectives)
- Integration is REALLY important! Link WCET with rest of school offer.
- Availability of progression routes should drive the nature of the WCET offer.
- WCET should definitely continue
- WCET in small groups has so much to offer intervention work

However, for others, points were made with respect to:

- My most frustrating experience as a teacher of music has been meeting new pupils who have no enthusiasm to pursue instrumental tuition when it is offered because their wider opportunities experience has put them off.

- It has become PPA cover, rather than schools being on board with what we are trying to achieve. What is our role?
- There must be commitment from the school to support the learning in subsequent years
- It would be better if it was linked to instrumental lessons
- Schools should be more committed to the purpose of WCET
- There is a need to develop connections between primary and secondary classroom-based music
- Are the whole class lessons 'Curriculum' music lessons or 'Instrumental' lessons?
- Traditional WCET seems to all be about performance with little composing and analysing as favoured by the national curriculum.

## Progression and Pathways

*A mixed model of first access for all and progression routes to the highest level.*

**How can we collectively ensure ALL young people can access opportunities and progression pathways (including into the profession)?**

**Are local authority-based ensembles the solution or are there other options to ensure ALL young people access opportunities?**

The questions assumed that everybody involved wanted to offer all young people access, opportunities and pathways. Some felt progression was still viewed too narrowly through conventional musical pathways:

- The concept of progression must be more diverse than it has been before. An upturned pyramid is a better image of what a holistic progressive music education for all should look like.
- The linear / traditional pathway of WCET, small group lesson, ensembles, grades, etc. is fine for some pupils but not for most. What about the rest?
- Learning to play an instrument (including voice) is important in its own right with its own possibility for progression. It must not only be seen as a 'follow on' from whole class instrumental teaching.
- The number of instrumental lessons has reduced since WCET has grown.
- Every child having the opportunity to learn an instrument does not have to be achieved exclusively through whole class teaching - many children take up lessons without having had a whole class experience.
- Musical excellence takes many forms. It's not just about a pathway towards a career in music. It's about musically engaged adults as listeners, concert goers, musically enriched people.
- Progression isn't about grades and crude measurements it's about a much wider concept. It is about breadth of experience and the opportunity to progress as a rich-quality musician.



- Early years and foundation stage should be included in hub work even if it's not funded by the DfE grant.

Some responses were based around why it was not possible to find out if all young people can access opportunities and pathways:

- Schools won't submit the required information
- Until schools are made accountable for music in school through Ofsted

Some KS3 teachers were concerned with the reducing opportunities for young people to take GCSE and GCE music pathways in school and the implications of the music education hub running such courses.

No responses ensured that ALL young people can access opportunities and progression pathways but there were some good ideas:

- Ask the young people
- Create a dedicated committee dedicated to the *vulnerable and hard to reach*
- Calling upon support from local business and the community such as Rotary clubs and local sponsorship in order to offer and to support young people into pathways.

### Responses specific to Key Stage 3 and 4

- Some school-based music teachers are not really aware of the NPME, in one authority only 25% of secondary music teachers had read the document.
- A huge band ethos at KS3 with many pupils playing does not guarantee KS4 running in Year 10 if the school option block does not allow it: The senior team are actively blocking a pathway for young people
- The impact of WCET at KS3 is almost irrelevant
- There is a need to develop connections between primary and secondary classroom-based music
- Secondary schools should provide similar provision to their feeder primary schools
- Need more connections and promotion to the industry to attract AS/A level students.

### The development of Cultural Education Hubs

**There is a growing tendency within the corridors of the DfE and ACE to talk about 'Music and Cultural Education' should there be a National Plan for Cultural Education?  
Should this be in addition or instead of a National Plan for Music Education?  
How involved in Local Cultural Education development should Music hubs be?**

- Our partnership working is based on talking to young people to find out their aspirations as well as their needs and evidencing the benefits of cultural learning to attract additional funding. These extend to well-being, mental health, learning through the arts, self-esteem, self-confidence, communication, team work...

There were simultaneously:

- Fears that such a move would dilute music hub funding
- A cultural education hub could swallow music education
- NPME should be a stand-alone document, alongside cultural plan.
- We are not ready for a NP for Cultural education
- Music hubs could support a spotlight on culture if they are successful

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This report is based on reports from the following Music Mark and Music Mark Member meetings/discussions:

- Music Mark Spring Summit 01:03:18
- The Report: *MM2020 Initial Discussions*
- *NPME post 2020* Sound Storm team thoughts
- Black Country Instrumental Teachers conference (May 2018)
- Additional Black Country Feedback
- South West Summer regional meeting
- South East Summer regional meeting
- East Midlands Summer regional meeting
- West Midlands Summer regional Meeting
- Yorkshire and Humberside Summer regional meeting
- *NMPE Feedback from Staff July 2018* –a Music Service consultation of secondary heads
- Music Mark Summer Summit (June 2018)
- Two Music Mark Members' meetings Summer 2018 (London and Sheffield)
- Tweets and social media

***Music Mark is grateful to all those who contributed to the discussions and especially to Maureen Hanke (Music Mark Trustee) for collating the responses and writing this report.***