



2023-0026189NGPO

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister for Schools

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Ms Alice Barnard
Chief Executive, Edge Foundation
By email: abarnard@edge.co.uk

Ms Deborah Annetts
Chief Executive, Independent Society of Musicians
By email: deborah@ism.org

8 November 2023

Dear Ms Barnard and Ms Annetts,

Thank you for your letter of 19 July, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding cultural education. I am replying as the Minister for Schools, and I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding. I would be grateful if you would share this response with your co-signatories.

All state funded schools are required to teach a broad and balanced, knowledge rich curriculum which encompasses the arts. Alongside drama as part of the English curriculum and dance as part of the physical education curriculum, music, art and design, and design and technology (D&T) remain important pillars of the National Curriculum introduced in 2014. This is also reflected in the reformed GCSEs in music, art and design, D&T, dance, drama and film studies, which were introduced for first teaching from 2016.

The opportunity to study these subjects is vital for all children and young people. The Government is committed to the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of GCSE subjects for the majority of pupils because this is the best preparation for a pupil's post 16 education. The EBacc was designed with the intention of being limited in size, in order to allow pupils to study other subjects, such as music, art and design, and D&T.

As you are aware, two Key Stage 4 performance measures, Progress 8 and Attainment 8, measure success in eight subjects. This includes English and mathematics, three other EBacc subjects and three open subjects from approved qualifications. The open subjects provide scope for pupils to study any GCSE, including in the arts and D&T, and a wide range of technical awards from a list approved by the Department. This incorporates technical awards in music, the arts and media, and graded music examinations from grades 6 to 8. Over the past five years between 2019 and 2023, around half of pupils have taken at least one approved arts qualification, which includes a GCSE, technical award or graded music examination from grade 6. This has remained broadly stable, as have D&T GCSE entries.

The Department has committed to continue to invest £115 million per annum until 2025 in music, arts and heritage programmes. The Government also published a refreshed National Plan for Music Education (NPME) last year. The NPME builds on the Model Music Curriculum and sets out a vision for music education, in which all children and young people should be taught to sing, play an instrument and create music together. They should also have the opportunity to progress their musical interests and talent, including to a professional level. Since September, all schools are expected to teach music to 5 to 14 year olds for at least an hour a week, as well as providing instrumental tuition, choirs and ensembles outside the classroom. Schools will be supported by a reformed Music Hubs programme and £25 million of additional capital funding for musical instruments.

With regard to trainee teachers, the Department recently announced new tax free bursaries of £10,000 in music and art and design for 2024/25. We will also continue to offer bursaries of £25,000 in D&T over the same period.

I agree that the creative industries contribute substantially to the country's economy. The Government has also published the Creative Industries Sector Vision in June, which will see this contribution grow by an extra £50 billion while creating a million extra jobs by 2030. Further information can be found at: tinyurl.com/2znw8Ywx. The Department has also announced that a second Brit School will open in Bradford, establishing a new hub for creative talent in the north of England. The school will specialise in dance, music and theatre and will inspire a new generation of young people.

In contributing to this vision, the Department will seek to further support arts subjects through the development of the Cultural Education Plan, to articulate and highlight the importance of high quality cultural education in schools. This will promote the social value of cultural and creative education, outline and support career progression pathways, address skills gaps, and tackle disparities in opportunity and outcome.

The best schools in the country combine a high quality cultural education with excellence in core academic subjects. As a result, the Department remains committed to ensuring that all pupils have access to both.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Gibb', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister for Schools