



Education Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From Mr Robin Walker MP, Chair

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Minister of State for Schools
Department for Education

23 May 2024

Dear Damian,

I am writing to you following the Committee's evidence session on Music Hubs on 21 May 2024. The Committee questioned three panels of witnesses on the ongoing reforms to Music Hubs, including representatives of organisations leading Music Hubs, national sector bodies, and the Schools Minister.

Reduction in numbers of Music Hubs

The Committee heard that the reduction in numbers of Music Hubs is likely to bring some benefits, but that there is a lack of clear evidence or rationale underpinning the reforms, and it is not clear how the Department intends to assess their impact. Some witnesses felt that the process had been poorly managed and had taken up a lot of staff time which could otherwise have been spent delivering outcomes for children and young people.

Witnesses explained that, while some Hub areas have been working in partnership for many years, others are further behind and will take more time to develop the collaborative working needed. For these areas, a five-month timeframe to set up the new Hubs may pose challenges. In particular, many felt that there should be a more flexible approach to the start date for new Hubs and allow more time to areas which have further to go to develop partnership working.

1. Please could you set out in more detail the evidence underpinning the reforms, their likely benefits, and what steps you will take to increase flexibility as to the expected start date for new Hubs?

Funding and the capital grant for musical instruments

Witnesses were positive overall about the ambitions set out in the National Plan for Music Education, but stated that the level of funding available is not enough to deliver the plan. The Committee heard that funding has remained flat for the past few years while the numbers of children have increased, meaning that Hubs are increasingly having to reduce staff numbers and rely on higher parent fees to maintain provision.

The £25 million capital grant for musical instruments is welcome in the sector, but we heard that there are problems with the way it is administered which is limiting its usefulness. In particular, we heard concerns that the fund cannot be spent on repairing, maintaining or adapting instruments; that instruments can only be purchased from providers listed via a portal; and that some Hubs are receiving more funding than they need.



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2. Please could you set out the steps you are taking to ensure that music education is adequately funded and that funding increases in line with inflation? Regarding the capital grant for music instruments, could you set out how the Department could increase the flexibility on how the funding can be used to ensure that it is as useful as possible?

Teachers' Pension Scheme

We were deeply concerned to hear that the removal of support from non-local-authority-based Hubs for employer contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme has resulted in Hubs exiting the scheme, with 1,100 teachers potentially affected. Witnesses explained that consultations on leaving the scheme are currently ongoing and that urgent action is needed to support Hubs to stay in the scheme.

3. Please could you set out the steps the Department will take to support all Music Hubs with the increased cost of employer contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme?

The Committee looks forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Robin Walker MP
Chair of the Education Committee