

Independent Society of Musicians – Written evidence (EDU0083)

The Independent Society of Musicians (ISM) is the UK's largest non-union representative body for musicians. Founded in 1882, the ISM supports over 11,000 members across the UK and Ireland, including many music teachers. As a subject association for music, we supply a range of music education materials and have published several reports into the state of music education in the UK. We also provide the secretariat for the APPG for Music Education. The ISM is a financially independent, not-for-profit organisation with no political affiliation.

1. Summary

A high-quality arts education at secondary level is a crucial part of the talent pipeline that feeds the UK's creative industries. The creative industries contribute £116 billion per annum to the UK economy and are a vital part of the country's soft power internationally. Subjects such as music, drama and art also teach young people a range of skills that will help them to achieve successful careers in the 21st-century economy, as well as benefiting them culturally and in terms of well-being.

However, arts subjects are in serious decline in English state secondary schools. This is due to government policies that have steadily undermined music and other arts subjects since 2010. These have been guided by a focus on teaching knowledge rather than skills and the belief that academic subjects are more important than arts subjects.

Particular damage has been done by two state secondary accountability measures introduced since 2010: the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and Progress 8 (used to calculate school league tables). These measures aim to ensure that all pupils study a broad range of 'core' academic subjects. However, they have increased inequality of access to arts subjects by creating a two-tier system, where EBacc subjects are prioritised in terms of funding and curriculum hours, and subjects such as music are relegated to second-class status.

A significant decline in education funding since 2010 also means that schools have less money to spend on arts subjects. Research including the ISM's own

2021 report, [Music: A subject in peril](#) shows a widening gulf between arts provision in state and independent schools.

The decline in arts education is contributing to the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention in the arts. The [National Foundation for Education Research](#) (NFER) predicts that nine of out 17 secondary subjects, including music, drama and art, are expected to be 20% or more below the DfE’s teacher recruitment targets for the 2023/24 academic year.

The ISM believes that every child is entitled to a broad and balanced education that includes high-quality arts provision. We are calling for a review and reform of accountability measures and more funding for arts education to restore the status of arts subjects in our schools.

2. Impact of state secondary accountability measures: EBacc and Progress 8

The EBacc is a suite of subjects that pupils are encouraged to study at GCSE: English, maths, a science, history or geography, and a foreign language. It was introduced in 2010 by Michael Gove (then Education Secretary) and was based on the 1904 Secondary Regulations and the Russell Group of universities’ list of facilitating subjects. The government has a [target of 90% of pupils](#) taking the full EBacc by 2025.

[Progress 8](#), introduced in 2016, measures the progress that pupils make between the end of primary school and their GCSEs. It is calculated from their top 8 GCSE results but is heavily weighted towards EBacc subjects. Progress 8 scores are the basis of school league tables.

The combined effect of the EBacc and Progress 8 has been to narrow the curriculum, focusing education away from arts subjects in secondary schools. There has been a stark decline in both uptake and provision of arts subjects in English schools since they were introduced:

- Since the introduction of the EBacc [GCSE arts entries have fallen by 40%](#) in England:

GCSE Subject	2010	2016	2022	% change

				(2010-22)
Art & Design	172,504	183,085	191,852	11%
Design & Technology	270,401	185,279	77,531	-71%
Drama	81,592	72,286	53,185	-35%
Media/Film/TV Studies	63,808	55,228	31,247	-51%
Music	46,045	45,990	33,793	-27%
Performing/Expressive Arts	23,505	18,676	8,133	-65%
Total	673,739	560,544	404,009	-40%

Data from the Joint Council for Qualifications

- [GCSE entries for EBacc subjects](#) grew strongly from 70.4% in 2015 (the year before Progress 8 was introduced) to 81.4% in 2019.
- An early [Ipsos Mori poll](#) revealed that 27% of schools cut arts courses as a direct result of the EBacc's implementation.
- The number of arts teachers has fallen: the Cultural Learning Alliance has found a [23% drop in the total number of teachers for arts subjects](#) between 2010 and 2021.
- [3 in 5 teaching hours](#) in secondary schools are now spent on EBacc subjects.
- Research by [Ofsted](#) found that around half of schools had moved to a shorter, two-year Key Stage 3 (KS3, which covers Years 7-9) model, resulting in the marginalisation of arts subjects.

Without reform of these accountability measures the decline of arts subjects will continue at secondary level, with the risk that some will disappear from the curriculum altogether.

3. Funding

Data from the [Institute of Fiscal Studies](#) shows that real-term education spending per-pupil fell 9% between 2009 and 2019, representing the largest cut

in over 40 years. Despite an additional £7.1 billion allocated to schools through to the end of the current academic year, the per-pupil spending for the year is still 1-2% lower in real terms than in 2009-10.

The ISM's research for *Music: A subject in peril?* found that 61% of respondents' music department budgets were considered insufficient. Music teachers reported low per-pupil spending and significant budget cuts. Many teachers told us they raised additional funds through concerts or paid for items themselves.

The report also revealed a wide gap between budgets for music departments in different schools. The mean yearly budget in maintained schools was £1,865; in academies and free schools it was £2,152; and in independent schools £9,917.

4. Teacher recruitment and retention

There is a growing crisis in the recruitment of specialist music and other arts teachers, with schools including leading Multi-Academy Trusts reporting that they are struggling to fill music teacher vacancies:

- DfE recruitment targets for music have been missed for nine out of the last ten years.
- The government's [ITE census for 2022/23](#) shows that only 64% of the target for music trainees was met for the current academic year (a fall from 2021, when 72% of the target was met).
- The [scrapping of training bursaries](#) for secondary arts subjects in 2021 has contributed to the problem. [Research by the NREF](#) demonstrates the impact of bursaries on application rates. Analysis by the [TES magazine](#) shows that music is among the subjects hit hardest by the teacher trainee shortage.

[Research from Durham University](#) suggests that a supportive working environment is a key factor in the retention of teachers, outweighing factors such as pay. Retention of arts teachers has been negatively impacted by the following:

- The prioritisation of EBacc subjects in schools means that arts teachers can now struggle to advocate for curriculum time and funding for their subject. Respondents to the ISM's *Music: A subject in peril?* survey told

us: *'Music is seen as unimportant in school at KS3 due to the EBacc.'*
Another said: *'...the EBacc agenda was promoted by SLT and government through schools: demoted arts to second class choice.'*

- The reduction in curriculum time for arts subjects at secondary level has increased the number of single-teacher music departments, leading to isolation, particularly if they also lack CPD opportunities. This was a clear concern in the ISM's *Music: A subject in peril?*, which reported: *'Ongoing support through CPD to develop confidence and skills was also a feature of responses, alongside a recognition that teachers in single-person departments also needed support.'*
- Music and drama teachers often do not receive additional pay for extra-curricular activities, or for the time required to plan and deliver concerts and other performances.

The crisis in teacher recruitment and retention is harming the government's own ambitions for education. For example, the refreshed [National Plan for Music Education](#) states that all schools should deliver one hour of curriculum music per week, but with the current shortfall in teachers, it is hard to see how this ambition can be realised.

Importance of music and arts subjects

The creative industries are a vital part of the UK economy, contributing [£115.9 billion in 2019](#), 5.9% of the UK economy, and employing 2.2 million people. However, the importance of creative education goes beyond the talent pipeline. Arts subjects teach many of the skills that businesses seek in employees:

- [The Curve Group](#), a leading talent management agency has said: *'Employees with an arts degree have developed more quickly in their roles from the start. They have discipline, confidence and can accept criticism.'*
- A [major survey of businesses](#) by Kingston University in 2022 showed that the ability to communicate, analyse, adapt, problem solve and think creatively are the key skills that businesses want from their employees.
- With the rise of AI, which could threaten [nearly half of all jobs](#), a creative education is becoming ever-more important for future employment.

Arts subjects enhance understanding of other subjects such as maths and English:

- [Research by the University of Kansas](#) showed that students in schools with high-quality music education scored around 22% higher in English and 20% higher in maths than schools with low-quality music programmes, regardless of socio-economic disparities.
- Sue Hallam's [The Power of Music](#) highlights the positive impact access to high-quality classroom music education has on listening skills, awareness of phonetics, literacy and special reasoning which supports the development of certain mathematical skills.

It is widely agreed that the arts support the overall wellbeing of young people, including [Arts Council England research](#) and [British Council research](#).

The ISM also emphasises the value of studying music and other arts subjects for their own sake. All young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, deserve a well-rounded and culturally rich education. However, if current trends continue, we risk arts education becoming the preserve of the privileged few.

5. Calls for reform

The ISM has long campaigned for the reform of secondary accountability measures. In 2012 we launched the [Bacc for the Future](#) campaign, which called for the EBacc to have an arts pillar. It was supported by 218 organisations and nearly 40,000 individuals.

In February 2023 we launched a follow-up campaign in partnership with Edge Foundation, [Save Our Subjects](#), focusing on reform of Progress 8. It is supported by organisations across the education and arts sectors, including the teaching unions the NEU and NASUWT, subject associations for music, art, drama, dance, and design and technology, and other organisations including the Design Council, Best for Britain and Parentkind.

The case for reforming accountability measures and prioritising arts education has also been made by the Times Education Commission and many other influential bodies:

- The Lords' Communications and Digital Committee's recent report, [At risk: our creative future](#), warns: *'Employers are increasingly calling for a blend of creative and digital skills. This interdisciplinary approach needs to be encouraged at school. Yet there are too few incentives for students to study a combination of creative and STEM subjects.'*
- The Lords' Youth Unemployment Committee 2021 report, [Skills for every young person](#), recommends reforming Progress 8: *'We were overwhelmingly told that the EBacc and Progress 8... are limiting schools' and colleges' abilities to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that includes subjects beyond their scope. This is creating a gulf between what is taught in schools and colleges, the subjects many young people want to study, and the skills the economy demands.'*
- The Pearson qualifications body recommended in 2022 that government should: *'Adapt the Ebacc and Progress 8 measures to allow schools to provide a more tailored, high-quality curriculum.'* [Future of Qualifications and Assessment in England](#)
- The 2023 [Arts in Schools report](#) highlights the damage done by accountability measures and calls for *'a relevant, inclusive, broad and balanced curriculum that makes explicit the distinct value of the arts.'*

Other major bodies have signalled a change in direction in education policy and an understanding of the importance of teaching creativity and creative thinking in schools:

- The 2019 [Durham Commission report](#) on Creativity and Education, argues that we need a fresh approach to teaching for creativity in schools.
- PISA recently introduced a [Creative Thinking Assessment](#), stating that *'Creative thinking can help students adapt to a constantly and rapidly changing world.'*
- The Russell Group has [scrapped its list of facilitating subjects](#) from the guidance provided to young people, saying that the list had been 'misinterpreted'.
- A new report from the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre, [The State of Creativity](#), found that *'creativity seems to have been all but*

expunged from the school curriculum in England' and states that it is time *'to prioritise creative education.'*

- The new [Welsh school curriculum](#) has Expressive Arts as one of its six pillars.

6. Recommendations

The ISM's *Save Our Subjects* campaign calls for urgent government action to restore the status of arts education at secondary level:

- Review the impact of accountability measures on arts subjects at secondary level.
- Reform the Progress 8 accountability measure, giving young people more freedom of choice at GCSE level.
- Deliver the Arts Pupil Premium promised in the 2019 Conservative election manifesto.

The ISM is also urging government action on the teacher retention and recruitment crisis:

- Restore the teacher training bursary for all arts subjects.
- Make Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses available for all arts subjects.
- Reverse cuts to Higher Education arts courses to allow students to access the undergraduate courses which will allow them to pursue post-graduate teacher training in arts subjects.

2 May 2023