

APPG FOR MUSIC EDUCATION 25 MAY 2021 MINUTES

Parliamentarians present: Lord Black (Co-Chair), Kate Green MP, Richard Thompson MP, Simon Baynes MP, David Warburton MP, Lord Aberdare, Earl of Clancarty, Baroness Nicholson

Apologies: Dame Diana Johnson MP, Lord Watson, Baroness Finlay, Lord Puttnam, Lord Cormack, Lord Clement-Jones, Lord Hall of Birkenhead, Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, John Nicolson MP

Presentations covered reversing the damage caused by COVID-19 to the delivery of music education, reflections on the Model Music Curriculum and ways to develop meaningful strategies to decolonise music education, as well as music technology. Presentations were delivered by:

- **Dr Jodie Underhill**, Research Associate, Incorporated Society of Musicians
- **Kevin Rogers**, music education specialist
- **Professor Nathan Holder**, music education consultant
- **David Ward**, managing director of Technology in Music Education (TIME)

Main Business - speeches

The attending parliamentarians were joined by members of the music education sector.

1. **Welcome** – Lord Black in this role as Co - Chair

Chair and Registered Contact: Diana Johnson MP sends apologies

2. **Music Education and the continued impact of COVID-19 by Dr Jodie Underhill**

Dr Jodie Underhill opened the discussion by speaking about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on music provision in schools. Dr Underhill presented the findings of the recent ISM report, 'The heart of the school is missing'. The report, published at the end of 2020, revealed the worrying decline of music education in maintained schools across the UK since the pandemic.

Dr Underhill presented the key statistics of the report, captured by surveying over 1,300 music teachers across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. She reported that almost 10% of primary and secondary schools were not teaching class music at all, even though it is a curriculum requirement. A further 68% of primary school and 39% of secondary school teachers stated that music provision is being reduced.

In addition, Dr Underhill noted the challenge that music teachers were experiencing in relation to accessing specialist classrooms for delivery of lessons, and that the guidance on teaching music in schools was published very last minute, before the start of the 2020/21 academic year.

Dr Underhill noted that the report found that 16% of secondary school music teachers have had no access to specialist music classrooms and a third of music classrooms have been repurposed for other lessons.

Dr Underhill concluded by highlighting the very real impact that the pandemic has had on the health and wellbeing of teachers and students alike, and the need to be aware of this issue as class teaching now begins to resume in full.

Questions from attendees

Lord Black - Given the survey was conducted last year, what is the picture now? Dr Underhill noted that the picture is still unclear, but anecdotally, some of the issues such as access to specialist music classrooms, is still prevalent.

Sophie Dunn, Live Music Now - Did you collect information on the impact of COVID on music in special schools? Dr Underhill noted that the survey was open to all types of school, across all 4 nations of the UK, and the response rate was good, with over 1300 respondents. 2% of respondents were from special schools.

Professor Tony Harris, ICMP – Has there been a negative impact on take up at GCSE and beyond? Dr Underhill responded that this was not the case directly due to the pandemic with other factors at play, and added when results are made available in the summer it will be possible to analyse the uptake.

Sarah Hennesy, Orff Society UK – In what ways can we ensure music in schools is prioritised given the emphasis on STEM subjects? Dr Underhill answered by noting that from the research, there was an overriding sense of frustration among respondents who weren't able to return to music teaching since the pandemic started. Some respondents reported that in their schools, STEM subjects had been further prioritised over other subjects since March 2020. Dr Underhill added that although the guidance on teaching music in August 2020 was welcome, it was published too late to adopt in some schools.

Reflections on the Model Music Curriculum and the future of resources for teachers by Kevin Rogers

Kevin Rogers, music education specialist, spoke next on the Model Music Curriculum. He began by offering context to the report in respect to the government's recent music education framework and wider policies and initiatives. He noted that the provision of music education in schools has been adversely impacted by the unintended consequences of several policies such as the EBacc and Progress 8 and the increase in academies at secondary level in England that do not have to follow the national curriculum.

Mr Rogers noted that the Model Music Curriculum is not statutory and is a guide. While the publication of the Model Music Curriculum has raised awareness of music education and generated important debate about curriculum design, Mr Rogers noted that music teachers need additional support if they are to deliver a well-resourced and balanced curriculum. He suggested that there is a need to provide a complete curriculum framework through a refreshed National Plan for Music Education and stressed that this should be designed by the wider music education community before publication.

Questions from attendees

Lord Black - What could a headteacher best do right now to re-energise music in their schools? Mr Rogers responded by recommending they talk to their music teachers to ask them what help they need and find out what the priority is. He also suggested headteachers read the introduction of the model curriculum and connect with local music hubs to re-energise music in schools.

Lord Aberdare – What is the status of the Model Music Curriculum, and is it purely advisory? Mr Rogers confirmed that it was an advisory document and that it has no statutory status.

Mimi Doulton, Action for Children's Arts – How do we tackle the issue of workforce development? Mr Rogers suggested that due to the way in which teachers get their initial training, the content of initial training and the way the curriculum is arranged, music teachers do not always have the expertise they might need.

Richard Jones, Doctoral Researcher - Is there a chance to reach parity [in England] for free instrumental teaching now that it has been promised in Scotland? Mr Rogers said he would be surprised if this policy was adopted in England.

3. The applications of technology in music education by David Ward

David Ward gave a brief presentation on the application of music technology in the delivery of music education. He spoke on the potential of music technology to increase access for all ages, gender and cultures. Mr Ward noted that Music Technology is invaluable in community group hubs, music therapy and disabled groups.

4. Decolonising music education by Professor Nathan Holder

Professor Nathan Holder spoke on the importance of critically engaging with the music curriculum and its colonial past. Professor Holder noted that on the anniversary of George Floyd's murder, the idea that colonialism is a thing of the past runs counter to the ripple effects that are still felt today, and music education is not excluded from this.

Professor Holder spoke to the dominance of a white, Western European, and American knowledge base and history in both the curriculum and outlook within music education. He went on to consider the need to challenge this dominance to address the issue of underrepresentation in both educational resources and music education spaces.

Professor Holder emphasised the need to listen to the accounts of marginalised groups who remain unrepresented in large parts of music education. He suggested that to begin the process of decolonising music education, we need to ask questions about what we are teaching, who are we learning about, and how this music was made and created. By critically examining what is being taught, we can move towards a pedagogy that promotes social justice and representation.

Professor Holder drew on his own experience in music education and underrepresentation in the music education workforce. He noted that in the Model Music Curriculum there is very little discussion on the language used within the document. He spoke about the idea of 'African' music, and the way this homogenises the whole continent by condensing musical traditions. In addressing the Model Music Curriculum, he noted the inclusion of a song called '5 little monkeys', that was later removed from the Model Music Curriculum resource list. With its origins in blackface minstrel shows and colonial past, Professor Holder suggested that if the language and resources we teach such as this go unchallenged, it can be harmful.

Questions from attendees

Lord Black - How best can teachers start engaging in this important work? Professor Holder responded by saying it was important for staff teams to examine what they are teaching and read about decolonising the curriculum to help them learn. He suggested that understanding lived experience will trump theoretical understanding.

Rachel Barnes, Camden Music Service – What three short actions can be done to make an impact? Professor Holder responded by encouraging changes to the makeup of workforces and ask government to change the language on decolonisation. In addition, Professor Holder encouraged people to listen and learn from others using a multitude of resources.

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Kevin Rogers - Is it better to explore these contexts briefly (and over-simplify them), than to avoid them altogether in case we get it 'wrong'? In response, professor Holder suggested that we should be challenging where the information we teach is coming from and from whom. He suggests that we ask if the curriculum is relevant or up to date as possible.

Mimi Doulton- Should we be linking up with other curriculum areas to decolonise? Professor Holder responded by suggesting that this would be useful as music is a very flexible subject and can incorporate English and History for example and can be incorporated into every lesson that is delivered.

Professor Holder was asked about cross sector collaboration to address these issues. He responded by encouraging action, and noted that as well as talking, the greatest impact can be made through action.

Lizzie Crump, Cultural Learning Alliance mentioned work being done to address the lack of diversity in the creative industries education. Round table meetings are being held by members of the global majority to make changes. For example, curating different texts which exam boards set for GCSE subjects, meaning that teachers can choose from a wider range of resources.

5. Concluding remarks from John Robinson, Head of Legal, ISM

John Robinson concluded by emphasising the need to listen, reflect critically and act to achieve change the sector is calling for. Mr Robinson talked of the commitment and passion of everyone who had spoken. Mr Robinson reiterated that there are challenges for the sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including how do we mitigate the damage to music education by the pandemic. Mr Robinson concluded by encouraging a commitment to inclusion and to widening diversity. Mr Robinson noted that opportunities to implement meaningful change must not be missed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.