

In last Friday's edition of *The Times*, Richard Morrison wrote that "the power of music needs to be properly unleashed in every school, not just for the privileged few". I'm sure that all of us here share this belief – with passion.

Ofsted's Music research review (published last year) rightly remarked that "across the country, there are schools whose quality of music education is world-leading and, in some cases, reaches professional standards"; running alongside this, the ISM's recent report, 'A subject in peril', detailed just now by Jodie, highlighted the grim reality of a steady neglect of curricular and co-curricular music in so many schools. Such inequality is indefensible.

Action is needed – from all of us. Whether we are a classroom teacher, a vocal/instrumental teacher, a Head of Department, a School Head, a governor, CEO of a MAT, Hub leader, academic, performer (whether amateur or professional), musical organisation, musical charity, decision-maker in local, regional or national government, in or out of office... everyone has skin in the game of music education, and we need to work together in partnership, putting aside small differences, for the greater good of our children and our country.

The refreshed National Plan for Music Education is important for the sector because it refocuses our attention on schools, and in particular (a) what all children have a right to experience in schools, (b) how schools can develop their music provision and (c) the crucial role that partnerships play in making this happen.

I'm here today, as a music teacher, to talk about the schools element of the Plan, and the practical steps that be taken to improve music provision in schools.

It's been necessary to articulate in the Plan key characteristics of good music education that we believe should be seen in all schools. The reason for doing this should be clear – the steady decline over time in some schools' music provision has created a vacuum of experience in school decision-makers (and I have to say in some music teachers) about what good music education looks like – and, importantly, what it sounds like. I've yet to meet a Headteacher who doesn't want music thriving in their school. The issue is... hardly any of them have experienced this themselves (more often than not, they've experienced poor music education) ... so, we need to help them understand its VALUE.

Taking the first point – the Plan details seven key features of high-quality music education. Surely, all children should have a right to experience these at school:

- Timetabled curriculum music of at least one hour each week of the school year for Key Stages 1-3.
- Access to lessons across a range of instruments, and voice.
- A school choir and/or vocal ensemble.
- A school ensemble/band/group.
- Space for rehearsals and individual practice.
- A termly school performance.
- Opportunity to enjoy live performance at least once a year.

I'd like to highlight briefly points 5 and 6:

Practice is the single biggest factor in making progress as a musician. Statistics suggest that around 150 hours are needed to make progress from one grade to another (regardless of whether one takes exams). A year's worth of 30-minute 1:1 lessons at school is 15 hours. So, that ratio of teaching to individual work is not seen in the lives of young people until, maybe, they go to university and read an Arts subject. Schools must facilitate this by allowing students to practise / rehearse after lessons; also by developing a rich co-curricular offer (which also contribute towards those 150 hours) – this is detailed in the plan, including suggesting that this a worthwhile use of PP money.

And termly concerts... The reason for school concerts is not to observe the musical progress of individual students – that's assessment and reporting! The reason we hold concerts in school is for students, staff and families to experience music as a vital element in public culture. We nurture our cultural heritage of live performances, gigs and concerts by modelling this in schools. In so doing, we contribute to the further development of community.

How can this be achieved? First of all, through embedding musical leadership. This means a designated music lead, ideally a music specialist, in primary schools, and a Head of Music in secondary schools. These teachers must be part of the school's leadership structure – indeed, at DRET, we are appointing Directors of Music who are paid on the leadership scale and are given time to develop the vital co-curricular and enrichment programmes. Leading music in a school is a whole school and whole community, outward-facing role. Understanding the value of school music in this way and giving time to musical leadership is crucial in enabling music to flourish.

I'm thrilled that the model of music in schools from Kevin Rogers and Hampshire Music Service is included in the Plan. In my 31 years as music teacher, I've found this to be the most helpful articulation of how music works in schools, and how school budgets need to address all three areas.

It's good news, too, that schools should have a Music Development Plan. Many do already, of course – and those are the schools where the music provision is being ever nourished and re-created, as they respond to the new intake of pupils every year. The case studies in the Plan throw the spotlight on some of the many primary, secondary and special schools in the country that are developing a rich, inclusive musical culture, in some cases from scratch, funded by the government's general annual grant. The plan shows how the emergence of multi-academy trusts over the past decade – in which schools working together in partnership – should be (and in many cases, is) a powerful vehicle in developing music provision across schools. And the greater integration of schools within music hubs, with lead schools appointed for CPD, has enormous potential for the sharing of good practice and resources. This diagram from the Plan clearly illustrates the 'wraparound' musical care that schools, MATs, Hubs and the country at large should provide for every child.

Now, a reality check. This can't happen overnight. Just as a musical performance doesn't miraculously materialise out of nowhere. Musicians practise and rehearse – we also constantly observe and learn from each other. Conductors begin a sequence of rehearsals already knowing the score and imagining how that score translates into sound in their head. They have, for want of a better word, a Plan... They then nurture the musicians with whom they are working, harnessing their innate musicality and individual character, and the performance results from that journey of rehearsal – of mutual listening and steady evolution.

This intensely musical process – and it is a process, of mutual encouragement rather than hitting offenders with sticks - is what we're asking to happen with the National Plan. The post-Covid campaign of the ISM, Music Mark and MTA, #CanDoMusic, was instrumental in enabling schools to

help each other bring back music (dare one say in advance of Paul's presentation, returning the music) by sharing pictures and videos of school music-making on social media. We heard from hundreds of schools how the opportunity to see what was happening in other schools enabled them to rebuild their own provision far quicker – after all, when something is seen to work well in one school, another school will want to join in. Momentum built quickly.

This kind of grass roots momentum, led by schools, is what I hope will happen as a result of the Plan. Already, there are MATs building communities of schools, built around the principle of sharing good practice and good resources, and being able to use their scale to develop opportunities that would be difficult for a single school to provide – in our case at DRET, our partnerships between schools are further augmented by our partnerships with seven music hubs, and with organisations such as the Voices Foundation, Royal Opera House, Gabrieli Roar, Nevill Holt Opera, Sing Up and MusicFirst. In turn, MATs share their journeys with other MATs and standalone schools. In my own Trust, the 34 primary and secondary schools are at different stages of their musical journey – some have a Director of Music leading a department with outstanding instrumental teachers and ensemble leaders from the local hub, together with a Musician in Residence and Music Department Manager; others, extraordinarily, only began to offer music as a curriculum subject a few years ago. The visibility of the first type of school has been of huge significance in developing the second type. The most common question I'm now asked by headteachers is "how do I get music in my school to be like Quay Academy or Malcolm Arnold Academy"? And I'm now able to give answers. Developing music in schools shouldn't be a mystery.

In conclusion, therefore, we need to demystify how to do music in schools. This Plan certainly helps with this – and it calls on all of us to help. Don't have a go at your school and do nothing – offer your support! I'm more optimistic about the future for music in schools than I have been for years because – at last – we have in the Plan a "handbook" for how to develop school music provision.

And by all of us developing a shared understanding of the value of music education, explaining why, showing how and sharing – collectively, we can unleash the tremendous power of music in schools.