

**1 March 2022**

Many thanks for making time to come to the first meeting of the APPG for music education in 2022.

The Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) is the UK's professional body for musicians. We are also a subject association for music. Since 1882, we have been dedicated to promoting the importance of music and supporting those who work in the music profession. **We support over 11,000 members across the UK and Ireland** many of whom work in music education.

Just last week I was asked to speak at a round table on the subject, 'Whatever happened to ... Music and expressive arts'. As I pulled the speech together there was so much to cover from a policy perspective but also the impact of Covid on the arts and in particular music in schools during the last 2 years.

At the ISM we saw the impact of Covid with music teachers seeking advice on a daily basis as to what they could or could not do in schools. At the last meeting of the APPG, we shared with you the results of our research covering the whole of the UK focusing on the impact of Covid 19 on music education. Published in December 2020, the ISM report *The Heart of the school is missing: Music education in the COVID-19 crisis* collated over 1300 responses across the UK music teaching profession working in schools.

Our survey findings revealed the detrimental impact that COVID-19 has had on music education. All aspects of music education were being affected – curriculum entitlement, singing in schools, practical music making, extra-curricular activities, instrumental learning and examinations.

As a direct result of the pandemic, music provision was reduced in 68% of responding primary schools and 39% of secondary schools. Extra-curricular activities were no longer taking place in 72% of primary schools and 66% of primary schools in the 2020/21 academic year. Most shocking was the fact that almost 10% of primary and secondary schools were teaching no class music at all.

This crisis affected teachers as well as pupils. It is clear from these results that teachers were working incredibly hard, showing immense creativity constantly

adapting resources to provide continuous access to music for young people. But this extraordinary commitment came at a cost. Our findings also found that music teachers' health and well-being was being negatively impacted by the changes they were experiencing in the delivery of classroom and extra-curricular music and the amount of support they had received from their schools.

At about the same time as Covid was beginning to spread two years ago the Government ran a call for evidence from 9 February 2020 to 13 March 2020 'on music education to inform proposals for a refreshed national plan for music education.'<sup>i</sup> There are various statements in the documents and on the website which I am not going to go into in detail, but the total effect was that the purpose of the call for evidence right from the start was a bit muddled. Despite the DfE's claims in the supporting document that views were being sought on how the NPME should be revised, the Call for Evidence contains no such questions.

On 6 August 2021, the Government finally published its report on the Call for Evidence.<sup>ii</sup> The report revealed that not much has changed since the NPME was first introduced. Over a third of respondents (36%) said the Call for Evidence was the first time they'd heard of the NPME and the same number said it had been ineffective in meeting the Government's vision since 2012. Although reviews of Music Education Hubs were more positive, concerns were also raised about the challenges they face, including budget restrictions and a lack of awareness of their role. While hubs can play an extremely positive role in extending music provision this must supplement high-quality school-based music lessons, not come at its expense.

The postcode lottery of instrumental provision is still very much in evidence, the cost of learning an instrument is still a barrier and other subjects in schools are being prioritised over music, leading to a limited number of opportunities and a lack of specialist teachers.

The Department for Education report on the Call for Evidence on the NPME also found that *'For those young people who wanted to study a music qualification but were not able to, a number of them said that they felt under pressure to choose other subjects instead or that music was not available as a GCSE or A-level option at their school.'*<sup>iii</sup>

The ISM in its role of a subject association has been deeply concerned about the way there has been so little consultation with the workforce as regards the contents of the refreshed National Plan. The Call for Evidence in 2020 did not ask respondents their views on how the Plan should be refreshed, ignoring the wealth of experience and suggestions at their disposal from both the classroom and peripatetic music workforce.

We have raised these concerns with the DfE because we do not believe that the refreshed NPME should be imposed on the workforce. There must be meaningful consultation. The DfE has said that there is no need for consultation because the Call for Evidence did precisely that but this is simply not the case.

Accordingly, the ISM created a survey aimed at music teachers working in primary and secondary schools and also as peris to examine the current music education provision in English schools (both curricular and extra-curricular) alongside ideas for what should be included in the refreshed Plan. Over 500 primary, secondary and peripatetic music teachers from all types of settings responded to the ISM's survey. The survey ran from 16 November 2021 to 10 January 2022.

The findings showed that unfortunately inequality in music education in England, which the NPME was meant to address, still exists – in classroom and instrumental provision, in funding, in Senior Leadership support and in the type of school pupils attend.

The results of the survey show that school-based music education provision varies greatly, with some schools offering the bare minimum and others offering a wealth of both classroom and extra-curricular experiences. It is clear that COVID-19 is still having a negative effect on some musical activities, mostly within primary settings, with extra-curricular ensembles and choirs still not having resumed in some schools. In secondary schools, teachers reported that the Key Stage 3 (KS3) curriculum continues to be narrowed, mostly in academies, either through placing music on a carousel or rota system with other subjects, or through a shortened, two-year KS3.

Classroom teachers reported struggling with a lack of funding for their departments, often having to raise additional funds through concerts in order to provide equipment

and resources for their students and in some cases paying for smaller items like drumsticks themselves. Some of the comments are simply heart-breaking.

Our survey data showed that departmental mean budgets for the year for music were £1865 in maintained schools, in academies and free schools it was **£2152** and in independent schools, **£9917**. These budgets usually have to cover departmental spending for the entire year. For example, when my colleague Dr Jodie Underhill was teaching her budget (around £1500 for a school of around 650 pupils, 11-16) would have to cover all photocopying, stationary (including everything for wall displays), instruments, sundries like leads, headphones, guitar strings and drumsticks, instrument repairs, IT equipment and software, any textbooks, recording equipment, amps, microphones, workshops or visiting musicians.

Overall, **61%** of respondents said that their budget was insufficient. However, there was a stark difference between the responses from state schoolteachers and independent school teachers. **67%** of teachers working in academies and free schools and **57%** of teachers working in maintained schools said their budget was insufficient compared to just **40%** of teachers working in independent schools. Teachers reported low per-pupil spending and significant budget cuts, which they felt was limiting the learning of pupils and stifling department growth. A lack of CPD funding was also highlighted, with teachers looking at alternative routes such as training to be examiners.

These are some of the quotes from classroom music teachers:

*“Annual budget works out at £3.79 per student studying music...”*

*“It works out at less than £1 per student in the school.”*

*“We train to be examiners to save on CPD costs.”*

A large number of teachers told us that they raised additional funds through concerts or paid for items themselves. This was often to supplement budgets which only covered basic costs such as stationery. Many teachers don't receive additional pay for extra-curricular activities or for the time required to plan and deliver concerts. In

these cases, they are essentially working for free to raise additional money for their departments.

*“We rely on fundraising at concerts and events...”*

*“I raise some money from concerts and I buy a lot of resources myself.”*

*“Until recently we supplemented our budget through concert funds. This has recently been removed and we will no longer see the benefit of ticket/raffle proceeds.”*

*“I repair as many instruments as possible at no cost.”*

*“I struggle to maintain aged resources and have to pay for strings, leads, sticks etc with my own money.”*

Many music departments did not have an allocated budget. In these cases, teachers had to request or bid for funding to cover what was needed.

*“We no longer have a budget but are required to bid for things we need.”*

*“Budget not really given. Asked to put in orders in the hope they will be accepted. Always having to justify every little thing even if reason is obvious. Long wait times for processing.”*

Teachers also expressed frustration regarding a lack of investment in IT and the associated costs for updated equipment and software as well as not being able to offer a full range of opportunities for their pupils. Many teachers reported a desire to buy in workshops or visits from professional musicians but their budget did not allow for this.

*“...[the budget] doesn't cover paying for cultural workshops, educational visits, visiting musicians etc.”*

*“I'd love to invite people to lead workshops but that is too costly.”*

Teachers also told us overwhelmingly that accountability measures such as the EBacc and Progress 8 have caused harm to music education, both in relation to KS3 provision, KS4 subject uptake and also post-16 options.

Peripatetic instrumental and vocal teachers echoed the experiences of their classroom colleagues in both primary and secondary schools. They noted mixed

provision and opportunities in primary schools including the long-term impact that COVID-19 has had, and the narrowing of the curriculum and impact of accountability measures in secondary schools. Reduced uptake of GCSE, A Level and vocational music qualifications had also led to a reduction in the number of pupils taking instrumental lessons which was directly impacting on their income.

We have also heard concerns from hubs on the latest document to come out of ACE “The Relationship between Arts Council England and Music Education Hubs 2022-2023” which is 42 pages long and ramps up the reporting requirements on hubs from April. This document appeared two weeks ago. In particular we are concerned that although many hubs are still in recovery mode after the pandemic, none of them as far as we are aware have yet had their allocations from the DfE for the year that starts in one month’s time. The level of reporting which is now being expected seems to be incredibly onerous and disproportionate. And yet hubs still don’t know what their budgets are.

In relation to the NPME, our survey findings show that the majority of music teachers in our sample had not responded to the Government’s call for evidence in 2020 because they were not aware of it. Of those who had read the subsequent *Report on the Call for Evidence*, most did not think it was an accurate reflection of what is currently happening in music education in the maintained sector.

Close on 100% of those who responded to the ISM’s survey thought that music teachers should be consulted on the draft refreshed NPME before it is finalised. Teachers shared their thoughts on how the Plan should be refreshed and what they would like to see covered within it – a question that was not asked in the Government’s Call for Evidence or of the wider music teacher community during the process of refreshing the Plan.

Themes which emerged from the data include increased, ring-fenced funding for music departments and instrumental and vocal tuition, reform of accountability measures, higher subject profile and a more inclusive and diverse curriculum. Teachers also wanted the new plan to be fully representative of Early Years, Post-18 and SEND provision and to be realistic to deliver, recognising the differences which exist between schools, funding and resources.

The ISM survey shows what needs to happen if we are to improve the current state of music education. I do not understand why the DfE are still claiming that the call for evidence was a consultation when it so obviously was not. There is nothing to fear from consulting with the music teacher workforce. From our data 99% music teachers want to be consulted. This is the opportunity to build better links with the music teacher community, for the DfE to demonstrate that they value the music teacher workforce and to learn from their knowledge and experience.

We have asked the DfE repeatedly to consult with the workforce on the refreshed Plan. Let's hope that they will reconsider their position urgently.

Whilst we are facing an unprecedented crisis in music education, COVID-19 also provides us with a pivotal moment for reflection and an opportunity to reset education policy. We have a potential opening in which to build a curriculum which puts young people's needs first, championing creative learning in addition to science, technology, English and Maths (STEM) and addressing the needs of young people in the post-COVID-19 world. It also offers the opportunity to revisit the nature and purpose of assessments to ensure young people are fully equipped for the future.

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<sup>i</sup> Department for Education (2020) *Music education: call for evidence*

<https://www.gov.uk/Government/consultations/music-education-call-for-evidence>

<sup>ii</sup> Department for Education (2021) *Music education – Report on the call for evidence conducted February – March 2020*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1006059/Report\\_on\\_the\\_call\\_for\\_evidence\\_on\\_music\\_education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006059/Report_on_the_call_for_evidence_on_music_education.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid