

FABIAN POLICY REPORT



CHILDREN  
& THE ARTS

Musicians'  
Union



# PRIMARY COLOURS

*The decline of arts education in primary  
schools and how it can be reversed*

*By Ben Cooper*

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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report reviews the importance of arts education in primary schools, presents new Fabian Society research on the state of current provision and makes policy recommendations for improvements in the future. The remit of the report is England only.

The Fabian Society used a number of research methods to reach our conclusions. At the start of the research, we held a stakeholder roundtable. This brought together parliamentarians, academics, and representatives from the creative industries to identify influential factors affecting the provision of arts education in schools. An advisory panel of politicians, trade unionists and practitioners was formed following the roundtable, which then provided guidance and expertise throughout the research process. Separately the Fabian Society also interviewed key experts during the course of the project.

To gather a picture of provision across the country, the Fabian Society commissioned YouGov to survey 401 primary school teachers across Great Britain, including 348 teachers in England. The survey was carried out online and sent to members of YouGov's panel. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17th and 24th July 2018. We asked seven questions on the quality and quantity of arts provision in their school; the support, experience and resources they possess to provide arts education, and school visits to art institutions.

The Fabian Society also conducted a separate qualitative survey of arts providers who work with primary schools and of schools themselves, with 53 participating across the country. We asked participants why they believed arts education is important, to tell us about the challenges they face in delivering this provision, and about their views on the steps policymakers can take to improve access to arts and ensure high-quality arts education for primary age children. Where an organisation is quoted but not named, the participant has requested to remain anonymous.



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**Ben Cooper**, Researcher, Fabian Society



Children & the Arts is a national children's charity tackling inequality through sustained arts experiences. The charity believes that every child has the right to a rich and inspiring creative education and that no pupil's experiences should be limited by the circumstances of their birth. Founded by HRH The Prince of Wales, Children & the Arts works with arts venues across the UK to reach children in communities and hospices who are missing out on creative and cultural experiences. Since 2006, the charity has given half a million children unique arts experiences and has created more than 6,000 partnerships with schools in the most deprived areas of the UK.



The Musicians' Union represents more than 30,000 musicians working in all sectors of the music business. We offer a range of services for self-employed professional and student musicians of all ages, including £2000 instrument/equipment insurance, £10m public liability insurance, contract advice, careers guidance, legal help, and experts on hand. As a trade union, we negotiate with all the major employers in the industry and lobby government. For more information, visit theMU.org.

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# Executive summary

There has been a dramatic decline in both the quantity and quality of arts education in primary schools in England. Teachers believe they do not have the resources and skills to deliver lessons containing art and design, music, drama and dance, and they feel that their school does not prioritise learning in these areas. This narrowing of access risks widening existing inequalities in access to the arts and limits the horizons of young people.

## The importance of arts provision in primary schools

There are four key arguments for providing high quality arts education in primary schools:

- **Cognitive development:** Arts education supports cognitive development in children, improving English, language acquisition, and maths. Evidence shows that children are more willing to apply themselves in all subjects and engage in independent learning if arts education is a prominent part of the school day.
- **Overcoming inequalities:** Inequalities in education and attainment resulting from childhood disadvantage can be overcome through arts education. Engagement with the arts can help disadvantaged children catch up with their middle-income peers and close the vocabulary gap that opens up at an early age.
- **Building confidence and expanding horizons:** Arts education can support personal development, help children develop the confidence to adapt in an ever-changing world and give them the ambition to aim for a career in Britain's booming creative industries.



## This narrowing of access risks widening existing inequalities in access to the arts and limits the horizons of young people

- **Social cohesion:** Arts education in primary schools helps children to appreciate diversity and realise how much they share with each other.

## Accessibility of arts education in primary schools

Our YouGov survey of teachers and the Fabian Society survey of arts providers reveals a dramatic decline in the provision of arts education in primary schools.

- **A decline in quantity:** Two-thirds of teachers in England (68 per cent) say arts provision in their primary school

has decreased since 2010, with just 7 per cent saying there is more.

- **A decline in quality:** Almost half (49 per cent) of surveyed teachers in England say the quality of arts provision in their primary school has worsened since 2010, with just 14 per cent believing it has improved.
- **A lack of support and resources:** A majority of teachers in England (56 per cent) do not believe they have access to the resources and support to deliver a high-quality arts education. There is also regional disparity in the support and resources teachers believe they can access. Primary school teachers in northern England are 16 percentage points more likely to feel there is a lack of resources and support compared to teachers in the east of England.
- **A lack of skills and experience:** In England, nearly half of teachers (45 per cent) also believe they do not have the skills and experience needed to provide a high-quality arts education, compared to 32 percent who say they do.
- **Not enough emphasis on arts:** A majority of teachers in England (59 per cent) believe their school does not give enough emphasis to the arts, with only 37 per cent believing their school gives the right amount of emphasis and 3 per cent thinking their school gives too much.
- **Reduced accessibility of arts outside of the classroom:** A majority of teachers in England (58 per cent) believe there are fewer out of school arts trips, compared to 2010, with just 5 per cent saying there has been an increase.

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## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the decline in access to the arts for primary age children in England, this report makes eight recommendations.

### 1. **New support for cultural education partnerships with funding to support local, place-based, and accessible arts education in every community.**

The government should provide new annual funding to cultural education partnerships to enable better coordination and signposting of cultural education in the local area. This should include the establishment of a list of trusted artists to work in schools, to remove this burden from overstretched teachers.

### 2. **Increased and ringfenced school funding for arts education.**

The government should introduce an arts education premium for every primary school, to mirror the existing physical education and sport premium. This premium, initially worth £150m a year, could be used by schools to support pupil engagement with all forms of arts, and to support teachers in providing arts education.

### 3. **An arts specialist available for every primary school, with increased arts training for all teachers.**

The government should aim for every primary school to have the opportunity to employ a specialist arts teacher, consider programmes that enable artists to become specialist arts teachers in disadvantaged schools, and give the arts greater prominence in teacher training and continuing professional development.

### 4. **A greater priority for the arts in the national curriculum.**

Schools are required to provide a broad



and balanced curriculum, but the 'core' subjects are often prioritised to the exclusion of everything else. The national curriculum should make the importance of arts and cultural education more explicit, including by expanding the guidance given to schools for arts and music education, and creating new foundation subjects for drama and dance.

### 5. **No school should be judged 'outstanding' without high-quality arts and cultural education.**

No school should be judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted unless it offers high-quality arts education as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Ofsted's inspection guidelines should be amended to give greater prominence to the importance of arts education.

### 6. **Free music or singing lessons for every primary school child who wishes to learn.**

The government should provide the funding for every primary school child to have three years of music or singing lessons and a musical instrument to keep at home, if they

wish to learn. Local authorities should design this programme according to local needs, drawing on examples such as Newham's 'Every child a musician' programme.

### 7. **A more inclusive Artsmark.**

Arts Council England should consider eliminating or reducing the application fee for an Artsmark. The government should consider providing additional funding to support this.

### 8. **A free visit to a local arts institution for every primary school child every year.**

The government should provide funding to every school, so they can provide a free school trip to a local arts institution such as the theatre or an arts gallery for every child every year. No pupil would pay the entry fee or ticket price, nor the transport costs.

The Fabian Society estimates that the total cost of these recommendations will be approximately £590m, or 1.4 per cent of the English schools budget.

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# Introduction:

## The importance of arts provision in primary schools



**A**rts and culture matter for every child – and for society as a whole. As Sir Peter Bazalgette, former chair of Arts Council England, has said:

*“Life without the collective resources of our libraries, museums, theatres and galleries, or without the personal expression of literature, music and art, would be static and sterile – no creative arguments about the past, no diverse and stimulating present and no dreams of the future”.<sup>1</sup>*

Children need arts, argues Antony Gormley, sculptor and designer of the Angel of the North, “just as much as they need science, maths and English. It is not possible to become a fulfilled human being in this astonishing world without knowing what to imagine, make and do”. It is the absence of culture and arts from people’s lives, argues Darren Henley, chair of Arts Council England, when we are most able to understand

**Life seems diminished  
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to enjoy themselves**

its importance. “Life seems diminished when children [are] denied the chance to play – to be spontaneous, to have fun, and to enjoy themselves,” he argued.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of arts to individuals and society led Jennie Lee, arts minister in the Wilson government, to argue for it to occupy a central place in everyday life for children and adults. This could only happen, Lee argued, by embedding arts into the heart of the education system because “if children at an early age become accustomed to the idea of the arts as a part of everyday life, they are more likely to ... demand them [in adulthood]”.<sup>3</sup> Writer and broadcaster Melvyn Bragg concurs arguing it is essential “that children are

given encouragement and access [to arts] from an early age as possible”. As the 2012 Henley review on creative education in England stated “schools remain the single most important place where children learn about cultural education”.<sup>4</sup>

Outside of the primary school classroom, access to the arts is unequal. Evidence suggests that children of parents without educational qualifications are less likely to access extra-curricular activities than those with academic qualifications.<sup>5</sup> They are also less likely to experience culture as part of their home education or have parents who value publicly funded arts and heritage.<sup>6</sup> As The Young People’s Puppet Theatre, which teaches a wide range of creative arts in primary schools, told the Fabian Society, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, or who lack parental support, believe arts “isn’t something for them, or that it’s a nuisance rather than an opportunity, and so the children in most need miss out”.

Primary schools can shift this perception of arts as something to be avoided. One arts provider echoed the arguments of Jennie Lee and told us: “Early access to arts education [at primary school] helps cement the idea that art is for everyone and not just those with a disposable income”. Another arts provider said “access to a high-quality arts education is about equality. Many of our children and young people will not access the arts unless they encounter it at school”.

### Cognitive development

Participation in the arts can increase children’s academic performance, with improved attainment in literacy, maths, and language acquisition.<sup>7</sup> Earlsheaton Infant School in Dewsbury told the Fabian Society that “pupils are willing to apply themselves more rigorously to their English and maths studies because they enjoy the balanced and broad curriculum that we offer”. Integrating arts into other lessons reduces children’s boredom with the subject and increases interest in independent learning, even when pupils have previously described themselves as discouraged by learning. As one organisation told the Fabian Society, “working creatively allows pupils to question and test out ideas in a collaborative way and can be an effective approach to developing pupils’ skills and knowledge across all curriculum areas”.

### Overcoming inequalities

Arts education can close educational inequalities, preventing childhood disadvantage from becoming lifelong disadvantage. By the time they start school, disadvantaged children in the UK lag behind their middle-income counterparts by nearly one year in vocabulary.<sup>8</sup> One in three of the most disadvantaged children start primary school in England without the language skills they need.<sup>9</sup> Arts activities encourage language development for children. Studies show that music



Access to a high-quality arts education is about equality. Many of our children and young people will not access the arts unless they encounter it at school

training can be an effective strategy for enhancing reading abilities<sup>10</sup>, and that “music programmes may have value in helping to counteract the negative effects of low-socioeconomic status on child literacy development”.<sup>11</sup> Arts providers told the Fabian Society that access to arts activities lead to ‘improved writing skills’ and ‘supports children to express themselves’. It also has a ‘transformative impact on children’s attitudes and skills around independent reading and writing’.

### Building confidence and expanding horizons

Primary arts education is also important to the UK’s booming creative industries, which contribute over £100bn to the UK economy<sup>12</sup> and are a source of global ‘soft’ power for the country. The success of these industries now – and in the future – is dependent upon the strength and diversity of the ‘talent pipeline’. As the first access point to the arts for many children, primary schools can provide the inspiration and talent development needed for a career in the creative industries. As Arts Council England recognises “enabling all children and young people to access arts and cultural experiences will ensure the artists, makers [and] curators ... of the future represent the widest diversity of backgrounds”.<sup>13</sup>

Engaging with art and culture at school doesn’t just equip children with the skills needed for employment in the creative industries, it also prepares children for success in the future workforce. Michael McCabe, executive producer of *Wicked the musical*, contends “the benefits of studying the arts in education go far beyond those wishing to work within the cultural industries and can directly support and develop self-confidence, presentational skills, creativity and teamwork for students wishing to enter myriad professions”. Respondents to the Fabian Society survey of arts providers suggested that arts education can contribute to personal development, especially in self-confidence at school. One provider told the Fabian Society that arts can give children ‘confidence in one’s own ideas and opinions’. The Young People’s Puppet Theatre said they regularly see “children who are labelled as ‘difficult’ by teachers blossoming in our sessions, with improved behaviour as well as confidence”.

The 1999 Robinson Report placed arts in the broader context of culture and creativity. It argued that creative capacities are needed in all walks of life, including busi-

ness, science, and technology. In 2011, the United States' President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities argued that future economic success requires creative capacities to be developed amongst the workforce. It cited the argument of the National Center on Education and the Economy which argued a "nation's leadership in technology and innovation depends on a 'deep vein of creativity' and people who can ... write books, build furniture, make movies, and imagine new kinds of software that will capture people's imagination".<sup>14</sup>

With many jobs changing as a consequence of new technologies, the skills required in the future workplace are very different from those required by the past. The academic knowledge acquired through school and university provides only a part of the skills and abilities essential for the future labour market. Increasingly, 'soft' or 'human' skills are being prioritised by employers and are thus crucial. In 2016 Deloitte argued the UK would benefit from a workforce with technical skills balanced by more 'general purpose' skills such as creativity, social skills, problem-solving and emotional intelligence.<sup>15</sup> Arts education in primary schools can enable children to develop these crucial skills right from the start of their education. Square Circle Arts, a provider of teacher training in the arts in Yorkshire, told us that arts education gives children the skills needed to adapt to an ever-changing world. Another respondent concurred, arguing that access to arts education "teaches us how to work together, to develop creative responses, to develop resilience, confidence, express our opinions and views in a constructive way".

### Social cohesion

Arts education in primary school can also aid social cohesion, allowing all children to access culture together and on an equal footing. Space2, a Leeds-based organisa-



tion which works with primary schools to provide a range of arts activities, told the Fabian Society that arts activities help 'children to understand and celebrate diversity'. Art can be used in the classroom to bridge divides and realise shared experiences between different groups. As Jeanette Winterson, the award-winning writer, has said about music specifically:

*"In a world where success is measured by what you can buy, many children feel left out or shut out. Music is inclusive. Music works across culture, across class, across language. It seems to be hard wired into humans."*<sup>16</sup>

Feeling 'left out or shut out' is an increasingly common experience for many children: one in 10 five to 16-year olds have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem health, with half experiencing symptoms before the age of 14.<sup>17</sup> Participation in the arts contributes to good health, greater well-being, and higher self-esteem. For example, Matthew Byam Shaw, the producer of *The Crown*, has spoken on the importance of arts for children who use it 'to steady themselves from loneliness and anxiety'. He describes his experience of 'respite, mischief and a new expressive joy' when he first encountered *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

**Music is inclusive. Music works across culture, across class, across language. It seems to be hard wired into humans**

as a 9-year-old. As Artis argues, arts education, or the 'space to be creative each week' enables 'children to develop coping mechanisms for life in and out of school'. Simply put, 'art calms the mind', as one primary school told the Fabian Society.

The evidence is clear: the arts should be an essential part of every primary education. Art, music, design, drama and dance give children the space to learn new skills, improve their academic attainment, and potentially overcome the disadvantages they have faced. The arts can also bring children together and help them realise how much we all have in common. But despite all this, arts education in primary schools has been decimated in recent years and many young people are being left behind. This report reveals the devastating reality of arts education in English primary schools today, before making policy recommendations that give the arts the place they deserve in schools.



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# Chapter one:

## The quantity and quality of arts education in primary schools



In 2016 THE government’s white paper on culture recognised the importance of arts education in schools, arguing that “culture should be an essential part of every children’s education”.<sup>18</sup> Nicky Morgan, then the secretary of state for education, spoke of every young person having “the opportunity to discover how the arts can enrich their lives”.<sup>19</sup>

But concerns are widespread about the decline of arts education in state schools. Lord Black, a Conservative peer, argues that music education, for example, “rather than

it being the fundamental right of all children”, is “rapidly becoming the preserve of the privileged few at independent schools, as it dies out in the state sector”.<sup>20</sup> Lord Clancarty, a crossbench Peer, has warned:

*“There is a real danger ... that the arts will become a province only of the rich”.*

The two surveys conducted for this report – one of primary school teachers, the other of arts providers – supports these concerns and shows that the promise of

the 2016 white paper on culture has not become reality for primary school children across England. Teachers and primary arts providers report reduced provision in school-based and school-facilitated arts provision, and a reduction in the quality of the arts education that exists. They also report a lack of access to the support, resources, skills, and experience that they feel are needed to provide a high-quality arts education. For many pupils across England, access to high-quality arts education is increasingly limited.

### A decline in quantity

We asked primary school teachers about arts education and activity in primary schools they have worked in, and whether provision had increased or decreased since 2010. In England, two-thirds (68 per cent) said there is less arts provision in their primary school, compared to just 7 per cent who think there is more.

### A decline in quality

As with all subjects taught in school, the quality of arts education matters, especially with primary schools acting as the first and only access point to the arts for many children. Almost half (49 per cent) of English primary school teachers say that the quality of arts provision in the primary schools they have worked in has worsened since 2010, compared to 14 per cent who think it has improved.

### A lack of support and resources

Our YouGov survey also revealed that English primary school teachers do not feel they have the resources and support they need to deliver a high-quality arts education. Fifty six per cent of teachers disagreed with the statement: "I have access to all the resources and support I need to provide the children I teach with a high-quality education in the arts." Only 20 per cent believe they can access the resources required.

There is also significant regional disparity, with primary school teachers in the north 16 percentage points more likely to feel there is a lack of resources than teachers in the east of England. Primary teachers in London are also more likely to say they lack resources and support than average across England, with 65 per cent agreeing with the statement.

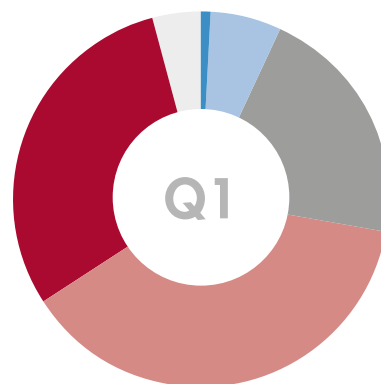
In England, schools are dealing with sharply constrained budgets, requiring substantial savings. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has stated that, while per pupil funding has been frozen in real terms, schools' costs have significantly outpaced

**FIGURE 1: A DECLINE IN QUANTITY**

For the following question, we would like you to think about the quantity of arts education and activities (eg music, dance, drama and visual art etc.) provided specifically in primary schools in the UK over the last eight years (ie. since July 2010).

Thinking about all the primary schools in the UK that you have taught in over the past eight years...

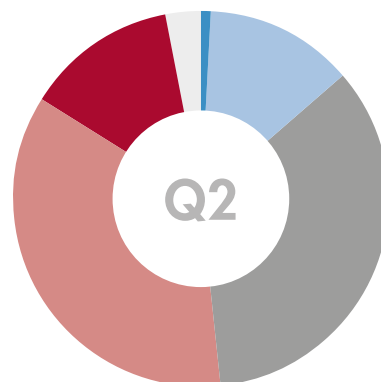
**To what extent, do you think there is more or less arts education and activity in primary schools in the UK nowadays compared to 2010 or has it stayed about the same?**



**FIGURE 2: A DECLINE IN QUALITY**

Still thinking about all the primary schools in the UK you have taught in over the past eight years (ie since July 2010)...

**To what extent, do you think that the overall quality of arts education and activities (e.g. music, dance, drama and visual arts) in primary schools nowadays is better or worse compared to 2010 or has it stayed about the same?**



inflation, adding pressure on school budgets.<sup>21</sup> The average primary school has lost £45,000 per year, and 60 per cent of state maintained primary schools have an expenditure that is greater than their income.<sup>22</sup> Despite the Chancellor promising £400m in the 2018 budget to help schools purchase ‘the little extras they need’, funding pressures remain for many.<sup>23</sup>

Subjects are treated differently when it comes to funding. PE provision has a large, ring-fenced budget due to government concerns about obesity. One school told us that this led to their PE co-ordinator having ten times as much as the arts co-ordinator’s unprotected budget. Teachers with responsibility for the arts are forced to fight for every penny of funding, rather than focusing on providing the best arts education possible. The impact of budgetary constraints means, as one teacher explained:

*“There is little money in school for PVA glue, paper and clay. I have to ration my resources extremely tightly and it limits what I can offer. For years we’ve only had a set of dirty, broken and worn out box of mismatched musical instruments”.*

### A lack of skills and experience

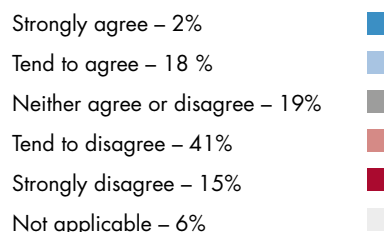
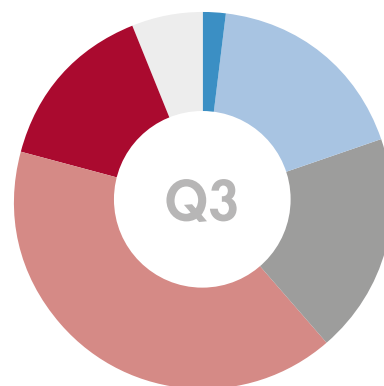
Nearly half (45 per cent) of primary teachers also say that they do not have the skills and experience needed to provide a high-quality arts education, compared to 32 per cent who say they do.

Part of the reason for this is that many primary school teachers who teach arts education are not specialists. Despite many schools relying on class teachers to teach arts education, they are provided with a very basic level of training in how to deliver arts education. Get It: The Power of Cultural Learning states “the arts and the wider concept of creative and cultural learning are often marginalised in initial teacher training and continuing professional development courses, especially for primary teachers”.<sup>24</sup> Earlyarts,

**FIGURE 3: A LACK OF SUPPORT AND RESOURCES**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

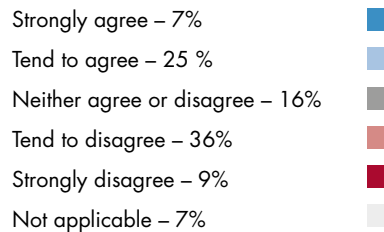
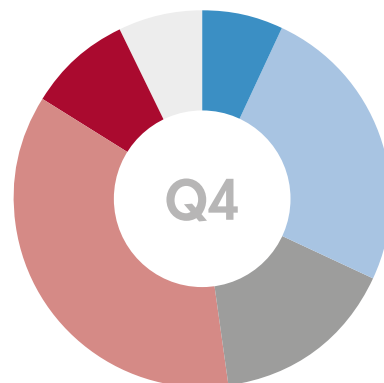
**I have access to all the resources and support I need to provide the children I teach a high quality education in the arts.**



**FIGURE 4: A LACK OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

**I have all the skills and experience I need to provide the children I teach a high quality education in the arts.**



which provides teacher training in creativity, argues that a lack of training in arts skills results in “low creative confidence and a disbelief in creativity as a legitimate teaching strategy”.

As one teacher from Gomersal Primary School told us: “Many trainee teachers only receive the bare minimum of 90 minutes training in how to teach and deliver arts subjects. A lot of teachers are unsure [of] how to teach these subjects”. The marginalisation of arts in initial teacher training places many schools at a disadvantage in developing the partnerships with cultural venues and organisations needed to provide high-quality arts education.<sup>25</sup>

### Not enough emphasis on arts

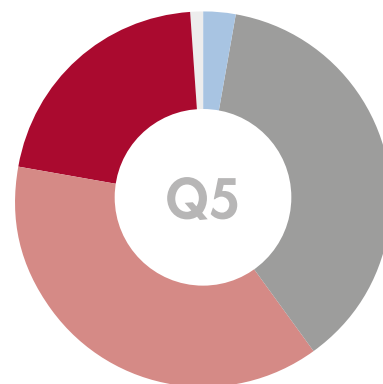
When asked about the priority their school gives to the arts, a majority of primary school teachers (59 per cent) believe their school does not give enough emphasis to the arts. Only 38 per cent of teachers believe their school gives about the right amount of emphasis, and just 3 per cent think there is too much emphasis on the arts. The YouGov survey defined emphasis as ‘giving special importance or value to’ arts education.

Many respondents to our survey of arts providers identified the lack of prominence afforded to arts within the English primary curriculum as a cause of the deprioritisation of arts within the school timetable. The primary curriculum is devoted almost in its entirety to the schools’ duties regarding the core subjects of English, maths and science, with scant attention paid to the arts – as well as humanities, languages and computing. The curriculum does not discuss any non-core subject until the 176th page. Of the 196 pages in the National Curriculum, just two are concerned with art and design, two with music, and zero with drama or dance independently, which are treated as part of English and PE respectively and not as subjects in their own right. This, as Robin Alexander, director of the Cam-

**FIGURE 5: NOT ENOUGH EMPHASIS ON ARTS**

Thinking specifically about the current primary school you work in...

**Do you think your school gives arts education and activities too much or too little emphasis or do you think they give it the right amount?**



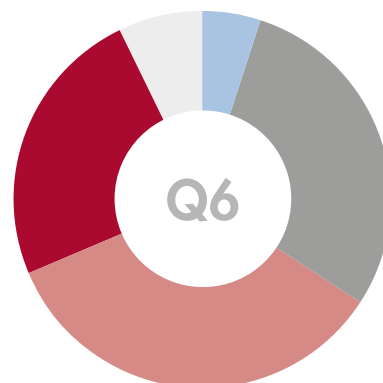
- Much too much – 0%
- Somewhat too much – 3%
- About the right amount – 37%
- Somewhat too little – 38%
- Much too little – 21%
- Don't know – 1%

**FIGURE 6: REDUCED ACCESSIBILITY OF ARTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

For the following question, please think about the total number of visits the schools you have taught at have made to arts institutions (eg this could be visits during or after school to places such as museums, galleries, theatres etc.).

Still thinking about all the primary schools in the UK you have taught in over the past eight years (ie since July 2010)...

**To what extent, do you think that there are more or fewer visits to arts institutions nowadays compared to 2010, or has it stayed about the same?**



- A great deal more – 0%
- Somewhat more – 5%
- About the same – 29%
- Somewhat fewer – 34%
- A great deal fewer – 24%
- Don't know – 7%

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bridge Primary Review, argues, sends 'a very clear message' about which subjects to prioritise.

The pressure of English, maths and science SATs in Year 6 create a challenge in providing access to the arts. As one arts provider told the Fabian Society: "We often encounter resistance from teachers and headteachers who see our work as a distraction from the English and maths lessons which are teaching exam material". One school told the Fabian Society:

*"Arts are often pushed from the timetable in favour of testing or core subject focus. It is hard to encourage teachers to take time to give children opportunities to try arts with no quantifiable outcome when time is so limited."*

### **Reduced accessibility of arts outside of the classroom**

Out of school arts trips enable schoolchildren to experience culture away from a classroom and art forms which cannot be provided by teachers alone. The YouGov survey of teachers revealed a significant decline in school visits made during or after school to arts institutions such as museums, galleries, and theatres. A majority (58 per cent) of teachers in England believe their school makes fewer out of school arts trips nowadays compared to 2010, with just 5 per cent saying there are more.

One arts provider identified 'reaching more rural and isolated schools across the country' as a significant challenge

in providing access to arts education for primary school children. As one arts provider told the Fabian Society, no matter how "fantastic our programmes are schools still face a huge financial barrier in visiting our sites, particularly with the cost of coaches being so high".

Our research supports the arguments made by Culture in the Coalfields, a report by John Mann MP published in 2018. Mann says that for communities with a lack of cultural amenities, particularly small towns and rural areas, the travel times and costs involved sometimes prove prohibitive for primary schools considering trips.<sup>26</sup>



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## Chapter two: Policy recommendations



The two Fabian Society surveys show that Jennie Lee’s vision of every child becoming “accustomed to the idea of the arts as a part of everyday life”<sup>27</sup> remains unfulfilled over 50 years later. While there are examples of best practice in the provision of primary arts education too many children are missing out.

The role of policy should be to reduce the diversity in provision and extend the best practice that does exist across England, so every child can access a high-quality arts education. Otherwise, the Warwick Commission into the future of arts and culture argues: “We are in danger of allowing a two-tier system in

which the most advantaged [socially and economically] are also the most advantaged in benefitting economically, socially, and personally from the full range of cultural and creative experiences”.<sup>28</sup>

As part of this research, the Fabian Society asked teachers about what would encourage their school to provide higher quality arts education and activities.<sup>29</sup> The three most popular options were extra money (45 per cent), more time dedicated to teaching arts (40 per cent), and a high priority for arts in the curriculum (39 per cent). The two surveys – of teachers and of arts providers – informed the recommendations set out in this chapter.

Both education and arts policy are devolved competencies in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. These recommendations have been developed with the devolved settlement in mind and will only affect English primary schools directly as a result. Nonetheless, many of these recommendations could widen access to arts education if implemented in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Fabian Society estimate that the cost of these recommendations is approximately £590m, or 1.4 per cent of the total English schools budget<sup>30</sup>, and costings are set out in appendix one.

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## **RECOMMENDATION 1: NEW SUPPORT FOR CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS WITH FUNDING TO SUPPORT LOCAL, PLACE-BASED, AND ACCESSIBLE ARTS EDUCATION IN EVERY COMMUNITY**

The content of the arts offer for primary schoolchildren across England should be diverse. As the 2016 culture white paper, put it: “Each of our communities has been shaped by a unique combination of landscapes and architecture, traditions and festivals, artisans and artists.”<sup>31</sup> Yet in many areas, this very diversity makes the local cultural offer fragmented and poorly coordinated, making it hard for children and young people to participate widely.

Across England, more than 50 cultural education partnerships (CEPs) have been established by Arts Council England. These partnerships seek to bring together an Arts Council ‘bridge organisation’, the local authority, music education hubs, voluntary and community organisations, and further and high education institutions. CEPs seek to add value to partners’ individual efforts, coordinate cultural provision and knowledge sharing. They can improve the delivery of cultural education by reducing fragmentation, increasing access to local cultural activities, and supporting improvements in the quality of provision.<sup>32</sup> The work of each CEP differs across the country because, as the cultural education partnerships (England) pilot study argues: “There is no single blueprint for a successful CEP: they need to be locally owned and responsive to local needs, assets and circumstances.”<sup>33</sup>

The pilot study found that they can ‘run on low resource, but not no resource’.<sup>34</sup> Partners in the Bristol CEP, one of the pilot study areas, found “contributing to the administration and coordination of the partnership time-consuming and burdensome”.<sup>35</sup> Funding for the

CEP would have enabled partners to prioritise investment and contributions to its work, argues the pilot study. Indeed, participants in the pilot study “questioned whether the existing funding streams available to support cultural education are suitable for partnership propositions”.<sup>36</sup>

The government should provide a small amount of annual funding, either directly to the CEPs or via Arts Council England, to support operational concerns in coordinating the partnership and support collaborative activities. This small amount of annual funding would allow every CEP to ensure the existing arts education offering is better sign-posted, truly coordinated, and inclusive in meeting the needs of every child in their local area. It could also ensure that a lack of operational funding is not a barrier to CEPs drawing up action plans or bidding for national funding to develop their cultural offer to children in the future.

CEPs should also attempt to reduce the confusion, uncertainty, and fear displayed by many schools when bringing in outside artists to deliver arts education. Some schools are not aware of the update service as part of the disclosure and barring service (DBS) which eliminates the

need for further checks. Others require photocopies of DBS checks, passports, and other forms of ID before allowing musicians<sup>37</sup> and other artists to teach. Not only are the latter an unnecessary inconvenience since DBS checks seek to offer a more flexible and less complicated set of checks, but they could infringe data protection. By bringing schools, musicians, and the local authority together, each CEP could work to establish a list of artists to work in schools. They could reduce school’s confusion and uncertainty surrounding DBS checks. CEPs could, if they wish, use these lists to ensure high standards of teaching from outside artists by sharing best practice or encouraging artists to engage with continuing professional development programmes. Examples of such include Trinity Laban’s music professionals programme.

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## RECOMMENDATION 2: INCREASED AND RINGFENCED SCHOOL FUNDING FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Providing additional funding for arts education was the most supported idea in our survey of teachers (45 per cent in favour), and most schools and primary arts providers in our survey cited funding for arts education as a priority for government. As our report shows, arts education lacks consistent and ringfenced funding unlike other subjects. This forces teachers to focus on securing resources, rather than coordinating and delivering high-quality provision.

The government should introduce ringfenced funding for arts education, as called for by the Cultural Learning Alliance and the Labour party at the last election. The funding model for arts education should be based on the PE and sports pupil premium. Initially this premium provided £150m annual funding to primary schools, or an average of nearly £9,000 per school, “to make additional sustainable improvements to the quality of physical education, physical activity and sport” offered.<sup>38</sup>

A similar amount of funding for an arts education premium should initially be provided by the government. Schools could use the funding to increase the engagement of all pupils in the arts, broaden the range of experiences pupils can participate in, and raise the profile of arts education across the school, increasing teachers’ confidence and skills in teaching arts. As the Cultural Learning Alliance argues, an arts education premium could be used by schools to “personalise their offer to the needs of their pupils, to the local community and to arts provision; both through extending horizons and offering access to things children already love”.<sup>39</sup> This could mean employing specialist arts teachers, supporting the professional



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development of existing teachers, or purchasing new equipment.

## RECOMMENDATION 3: AN ARTS SPECIALIST AVAILABLE FOR EVERY PRIMARY SCHOOL, WITH INCREASED ARTS TRAINING FOR ALL TEACHERS

The 2012 Henley review into creative education argued: “It is vital that the schools have teachers who recognise the importance of cultural education within their schools and have the training, experience and tools to teach it to a high level.”<sup>40</sup> Specialist arts teachers, as one arts provider told the Fabian Society, take “the pressure of planning and delivering arts-based sessions ... off teachers’ shoulders, but the children still benefit from access to the arts”. The government should commit to ensuring every primary school has the opportunity to employ a specialist arts teacher.

The government should also consider developing or supporting a programme that allows artists to train and become specialist arts teachers in disadvantaged primary schools, similar to Teach First.<sup>41</sup> Providing a specialist route into education for artists would bring expertise from the creative industries into schools and provide a stronger connection between the education system and arts organisations.

Improving the skills, experience, and confidence of non-specialist teachers should also be a priority, in order to create a workforce capable of delivering a high-quality arts education. The government and teacher training providers must ensure that teachers receive more than 90 minutes of training in arts education reported.

All teachers should be able to develop and reinforce “the skills and knowledge required to deliver the creative elements of the curriculum in areas where arts professionals (or resources) are not available”, as Earlyarts recommended. Specialist options for arts education should also be available in all primary-focused initial teacher training courses.



Supporting primary school teachers' continuing professional development should be a priority for CEPs. Bringing together teacher training providers, schools, and cultural organisations, CEPs should enable all primary teachers, whether specialist or not, to build links with the creative industries and local arts organisations.

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#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: A GREATER PRIORITY FOR THE ARTS IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

The national curriculum in England has long been perceived as a barrier to providing a high-quality arts education, and its reform was popular with the teachers and arts providers we surveyed. Schools have a duty to provide a “balanced and broadly-based curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school and of society”, as set out in the primary school national curriculum. But the core subjects receive most of the of the attention, to the exclusion of other subjects including the arts. The curriculum devotes more pages to stating what children should be able to spell in Year 1, than to arts education as a whole.

The National Society for Education in Art and Design has also suggested the breadth, depth and value of art and design is not reflected in the curriculum set out for primary schools. As a result, non-specialists will struggle to “determine how they will plan and teach the progression of skills required to give value to the subject”.<sup>42</sup> The national curriculum should provide greater clarity regarding what is expected of teachers and pupils at primary school for all arts subjects.

Exclusive references to fine arts such as painting, drawing and sculpture ignores other disciplines such as textiles, graphics, and photography which, as the National Society for Education in Art and Design argues, are integral for the creative industries and a vibrant economy. The curriculum should, as the Henley review in 2012, argued “give weight both to the new and the old, better to enable a greater understanding of the way in which culture has developed over time”.<sup>43</sup>

In the eyes of the curriculum dance and drama are seen as inferior to visual arts and music. They are categorised as sub-



**Schools have a duty to provide a “balanced and broadly-based curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school and of society”, as set out in the primary school national curriculum**

sidaries to PE and English respectively, not as fully-fledged subjects in their own right. The Henley review recommended consideration should also be given to making dance and drama standalone subjects, rather than component parts of other subjects. While the coalition government ignored this recommendation, the Conservative government should revisit its merits.

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## **RECOMMENDATION 5: NO SCHOOL SHOULD BE JUDGED 'OUTSTANDING' WITHOUT HIGH- QUALITY ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION**

Attendees at the Fabian Society roundtable identified Ofsted as a barrier to the provision of good arts education. Ofsted assesses primary schools on their work to meet the requirement to offer 'a balanced and broadly-based curriculum'. However, there is a widespread perception that Ofsted merely paid lip service to this requirement in the latest inspection framework. There has also been a failure to adequately define both how arts education will be measured, and the criteria for 'good' and 'outstanding' provision.<sup>44</sup>

On the basis of 'what gets measured gets taught', attendees to the roundtable called for Ofsted to provide greater clarity in their guidelines for all primary schools on the provision of arts education. Ofsted has recently announced it will take evidence of a 'rounded education' into account during inspection, but further explicit steps can be taken to promote access to arts education at primary school. Currently schools can be judged outstanding if "the school's thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their physical well-being enables pupils to thrive".<sup>45</sup> But the official definition of what this means gives scant

reference to art and music. This definition should be amended, and no school should be judged 'outstanding' unless it offers high-quality arts education as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, with high-quality arts education and cultural opportunities for all pupils. Inspections should be required to comment on the quality of arts education in their reports to schools, praise best practice for other schools to learn from, and highlight where practice can be improved.

Ofsted also issues guidance on how to spend pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. This guidance currently ignores how spending on arts education can lead to rising standards and broadened opportunities, which Ofsted identifies as important, despite the evidence being clear that it can do both. Ofsted should publish guidance on how pupil premium funding can be used effectively in supporting arts education, highlighting best practice and encouraging schools to innovate.

**No school should be judged 'outstanding' unless it offers high-quality arts education as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, with high-quality arts education and cultural opportunities for all pupils**

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## **RECOMMENDATION 6: FREE MUSIC LESSONS FOR EVERY PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD WHO WISHES TO LEARN**

The poorest children in the UK are less likely to learn how to play a musical instrument than their richer peers. Data from the Musicians' Union found that "families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, earning less than £28,000, are half as likely (19 per cent) to have a child learning an instrument" compared to "families who earn at least £48,000 (40 per cent)".<sup>46</sup> It also shows that over 40 per cent of low-income families say music lessons are beyond their household budgets. Unable to afford lessons, children from low-income families are more likely to teach themselves, missing out on the benefits of a specialised tutor.

Children from low income families are also less likely to benefit from active encouragement in learning a musical instrument from their parents. Low-income parents were half as likely (24 per cent) to say that wanting their child to learn a musical instrument was a reason for their child taking up lessons compared to high-income parents (48 per cent). As Hannah Abrahams, a child and educational psychologist contends: "Parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds often have so many additional stressors that accessing music may be low down on the priority list for their child."<sup>47</sup>

The evidence shows why primary schools are so important for music specifically and arts participation more generally. It also suggests that financial assistance, by reducing or eliminating the cost of lessons and the instrument, can play a part in enabling children from low-income backgrounds to access music lessons and instrument tuition. But it is not the whole answer. As Abrahams also argues: "It is the role of government and schools to nurture and encourage chil-





Financial constraints facing hubs, as well as cuts to schools and local authority budgets, have created significant fragmentation and inconsistency in music provision across the country

dren’s exploration of music as a powerful learning and social tool.<sup>48</sup> The data reinforces the importance of schools for access to music lessons for pupils: school encouragement was a reason behind learning an instrument for 41 per cent of pupils from low-income backgrounds.<sup>49</sup> There is, the Musicians’ Union states ‘a clear need for music provision in schools’.<sup>50</sup>

Currently the National Plan for Music Education asks music hubs, as organisations that bring together local authorities, schools, community organisations, and others to create joined-up music education in the local area, to ensure that all children have the chance to learn a

musical instrument. However financial constraints facing hubs, as well as cuts to schools and local authority budgets, have created significant fragmentation and inconsistency in music provision across the country.<sup>51</sup>

Many hubs rely on whole-class teaching in schools which has proven to be effective, but funding limitations mean many children will participate in just one year of free lessons. After that learning depends on parents making a financial contribution that many parents cannot afford, depriving the poorest children of lessons.<sup>52</sup>

The London Borough of Newham has implemented the largest music teaching programme in the country, providing thousands of music lessons a week to 10,000 children.<sup>53</sup> In Year 5, every child at a Newham primary school receives a free instrument and tuition for three years. Children can select from three instruments to learn and lessons take place in school once a week during term time. A lesson lasts for 30 minutes and takes place in groups of four.<sup>54</sup> This is a far smaller size of group than is provided by most music hubs which rely on whole-class teaching methods.

The government should provide ringfenced funding to every local authority in England to introduce a similar programme. While adapting the model to suit local needs and providing fair pay for music teachers, local authorities should be expected to provide every primary school child who wishes to learn, three years of music or singing lessons and a musical instrument on a long loan if necessary. Extending the Newham model to all local authorities would cost no more than £300m. However, considering economies of scale, the possibility of some children opting out, decisions by local authorities on class sizes, and instruments being loaned out to children rather than being kept, the funding required could be

around £220m.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:  
A MORE INCLUSIVE ARTSMARK**

The Artsmark, awarded by Arts Council England, “provides a clear framework for teachers and education professionals to plan, develop and evaluate their arts and cultural provision”.<sup>55</sup> Applications enable the school to receive support and resources to strengthen arts provision, and secure an award at the end of the process. Arts Council England states an Artsmark “introduces the joys of creating and performing and experiencing art to young people who may not otherwise be exposed to it” and is “strong evidence for how your school is meeting its spiritual, moral, social and cultural Ofsted requirements”.<sup>56</sup>

Analysis by Arts Council England found that just over 3,300 primary schools have an Artsmark, an increase of just 1 per cent in the proportion of schools engaged in the scheme between 2005 and 2015, despite £10m of investment and significant reform of the programme.<sup>57</sup> In 2017, the number of applications for the Artsmark declined to 918 from 1,512 applications a year before. The analysis also found that the majority of schools that had held an award in the past decided not to re-apply.

Arts Council England states an Artsmark “introduces the joys of creating and performing and experiencing art to young people who may not otherwise be exposed to it” and is “strong evidence for how your school is meeting its spiritual, moral, social and cultural Ofsted requirements”

This evidence indicates that schools are not engaging with the Artsmark. One reason is the cost of applying for an Artsmark: £500 for schools with more than 100 children and £250 for schools with less. At a time when schools are facing significant budgetary pressures, unable in many cases to provide some of the basics, this is a lot to find. One school told the Fabian Society that the award is not good value for money and the money would not help the school improve arts provision. “This money is better spent on the children,” the school argued, adding that the award was ‘just too expensive for the impact it would have’.

Arts Council England should consider reducing or removing the cost of making an application. The government should consider providing additional funding to Arts Council England to enable this.



## **RECOMMENDATION 8: A FREE VISIT TO A LOCAL CULTURAL INSTITUTION FOR EVERY PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD EVERY YEAR.**

Access to cultural institutions such as the theatre or art galleries is influenced by socio-economic status. The Warwick Commission found the wealthiest, better educated, and least ethnically diverse 8 per cent of the population is the most culturally engaged segment. Between 2012 and 2015, this 8 per cent of the population accounted for at least 28 per cent of live attendances to theatre, 28 per cent of visits to the visual arts, and 44 per cent of attendances to hear live music.<sup>58</sup>

Free access to national museums is an internationally recognised and admired policy for promoting culture, but it has not been transformational in widening participation. The Warwick Commission analysed visitor numbers to government-funded museums and found that higher socio-economic groups accounted for 6 times as many visits to museums as lower groups. The commission also revealed that visits by UK residents from low socioeconomic backgrounds decreased four times as much as visits from those from high socioeconomic backgrounds between 2008/09 and 2011/12. Participation in the arts therefore remains unequal, even when access to the arts is free. Alone, free access to cultural institution does not automatically lead to increased participation among disadvantaged groups.

Primary schools acting as the main access point to arts for many disadvantaged pupils, including free access to a cultural institution as part of school activities could reduce participation barriers more successfully than other policies that provide free access.

The government should provide funding to every school to give every child a free school trip to a local cultural



**The government should provide funding to every school to give every child a free school trip to a local cultural institution, whether that is the theatre, a museum or art gallery, or live music**

institution, whether that is the theatre, a museum or art gallery, or live music. This funding could be provided as additional component of the arts premium.

The entry fee or ticket price would be paid for, as would transport costs. The Fabian Society estimates the cost of providing one free trip for primary school pupils every year is £180m a year. Providing funding for travel will enable many rural or isolated primary schools to access arts institutions, something that our survey of teachers indicates they are struggling to provide.

Such funding would not only provide significant benefits to thousands of disadvantaged pupils who would be unable to access high-quality arts and culture elsewhere, it would also be advantageous to local cultural institutions. Many such bodies, in a period of constrained funding, have struggled to thrive. The 2017 Arts Index found that local authority investment in arts has fallen by nearly 40 per cent since 2008/09.<sup>59</sup> This free cultural visit would lead to millions of pounds being invested in local arts, providing the secure funding over a long period that many cultural institutions are looking for.

## APPENDIX: ANTICIPATED COSTS

Recommendation	Estimated cost	Notes
1: Funding for cultural education	£400,000	<p>Arts Council England has identified 50 cultural education partnerships across the country where there is the most chance for success. These CEPs would receive the first funding but the cost of the policy is expected to rise as more CEPs are established.</p> <p>We have assumed an annual funding allocation of £80,000 for operational duties to every CEP. This is the budget the mayor of London has provided annually to London Councils for the London Safeguarding Children Board since 2014/2015.</p>
2: Increased school funding for arts	£150m	<p>There are 16,766 primary schools in England.</p> <p>An arts premium of equal value to the PE and sports premium would initially be worth £150m.</p> <p>£150m divided by the number of primary schools equals £8,946 per school for arts education.</p>
6: Free music or singing lessons for every primary school child who wishes to learn	£220m	<p>The London Borough of Newham provides an estimated £2m a year for its Every Child a Musician programme.</p> <p>Local authorities should learn from this model – and provide fair pay for music teachers – but additional economies of scale, potential opt-outs for primary school children, and musical instrument long-term loans could reduce costs. One economy of scale could include a national purchasing body for musical instruments.</p> <p>It is, however, difficult to predict uptake and size of classes which would affect the cost of this recommendation.</p>
8: Free Cultural Visit for Every Child	£220m	<p>There are 4.7 million primary school age children in England.</p> <p>The estimated policy cost is based on the assumption that half of primary schools attend the local theatre and the other half attend a local attraction.</p> <p>The average theatre ticket price outside of London was £25.08 in 2017, according to UK Theatre. The average child ticket price for an attraction was £5.85 in 2017, according to Visit England.</p> <p>We have estimated the cost of coach hire to be around £600 a day, a generous estimate. Schools in London would not be paid for coach hire as all under-11s can travel on public transport in the capital free of charge.</p>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£590m</b>	

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