

22nd January 2019

To whom it may concern

We are writing this open letter to you in relation to the recent announcement from the Department for Education that a 'model curriculum for music' is to be prepared by an expert panel for release this summer.

You may be aware that the current National Curriculum for Music, published in 2013, was developed and consulted upon widely before it was introduced. This document underwent expert and comprehensive peer review from across the music education community before implementation, particularly benefitting from the pedagogic expertise of many teachers and those working in primary and secondary initial teacher education. It is deeply concerning that a model curriculum could be perceived as replacing the National Curriculum, thus ousting something that has been subject to a democratic process with one which has not.

To our knowledge, there is no research highlighting any issue with the National Curriculum for Music document or its content. Therefore, it is intriguing to hear that the Department for Education intends to introduce a 'model curriculum'. We ask you to share the research demonstrating that this proposed model curriculum is necessary. We are also keen to hear about any examples you have seen where producing a model curriculum of this sort has resulted in significant improvement in educational outcomes for pupils in music.

In order to support the implementation of the current National Curriculum, the Department for Education set up an Expert Subject Advisory Group for every subject, including music. As directed, this group was "*representative of a broad range of stakeholders from across the education sector*", bringing together expert teachers from across the spectrum of primary, secondary and special schools with pedagogic experts from higher education; specifically, including initial teacher educators and teachers with significant experience in teaching, assessment and curriculum development. We are curious as to why none of these people have been invited to contribute to this particular project.

We also note with some concern that the Department for Education has recently appointed a new 'independent panel of experts' to create this model curriculum and are concerned that the constitution of the group does not hold sufficient pedagogic knowledge to successfully complete this task in a way that will make a positive difference to music education in our state-funded schools. Music education in the curriculum is the responsibility of schools, not music education hubs; the expertise in this area lies with expert teachers and those working in initial teacher education and schools.

Finally, we have concerns about the obvious conflict of interest between panel members who work for music services or music education hubs – the very recipients of Arts Council England funding that is flowing from these initiatives, as well as others involved with Arts Council funded work. We would question their independence as well as the limitations in their pedagogical knowledge in this curriculum context.

In the interests of transparency, we are writing to ask you to supply further details about the way in which the panel members were selected and the criteria applied for their appointment.

Yours sincerely

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