

Introduction

This is a short response from the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee's Inquiry into *funding for and access to music education*.

The ISM is the professional body for musicians working in Wales and across the UK. We have close on 8,000 members working as composers, performers and educators and across all genres and musical backgrounds.

In addition to our individual membership, our corporate membership of over 150 music industry bodies includes specialist music schools, conservatoires, universities, publishers and exam boards. We provide expert, subject specific professional development for music educators and are members of the Council for Subject Associations, the Music Education Council, the British Copyright Council and the Creators' Rights Alliance.

1. What is music education

The committee's review should include i) performing, composing, creating, listening, reviewing and evaluating music and not just the learning of musical instruments, ii) the role of technology and music technology in music education, iii) access for pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, iv) music education across all ages and abilities including early years settings and post-statutory school-age and v) formal and informal music education. This is a non-exhaustive list of topics for consideration but includes some topics which are frequently omitted from formal reviews of music education.

2. Music education is valuable and valued

In addition to being valuable in and of itself, music education plays a significant role in promoting opportunity and improving attainment for pupils from all backgrounds:^{1,2,3,4,5}

¹ [The Power of Music, Professor Susan Hallam MBE, UCL Institute of Education](#)

² [Employability, Cardiff University: School of music](#)

³ [The Impact of Music on Language & Early Literacy Kindermusik's ABC Music & Me](#)

There are educational advantages for students with high levels of arts involvement and there is evidence that arts-engaged, low-income students tend to perform better than their peers.⁶ The Cultural Learning Alliance has highlighted an NELS: 88 cohort study which demonstrates that students from low-income families who study the arts including music at school are three times more likely to get a degree.⁷

Music is also highly valued by the public with 85% of British adults backing the statement that ‘music education must not become the preserve of those children whose families can afford to pay for music tuition.’

3. GCSE and A level music

We have substantial concerns about the delivery and status of music education in Wales at present both in and out of schools.

Uptake of GCSE music is falling.⁸

Wales	2010	2011	2013	2015	2016	Since 2015	Since 2010
Music	3,358	3,191	2,810	2,816	2,543	-9.69%	-24.27%
Cohort	37,072	36,088	36,617	34,004			
%	0.0906	0.0884	0.0767	0.0828			

Uptake of A-level music is falling.⁹

Wales	2010	2011	2013	2015	2016	Since 2015	Since 2010
Music	689	663	552	501	438	-12.57%	-36.43%

These figures are supported by independent research carried out by the ISM. The ISM sends certificates to schools with a high uptake of and attainment in GCSE music.

⁴ [Kelsey Talbert, Learning Literacy through Music, 2012](#)

⁵ [Department of Fundamental Neurosciences, University of Geneva, 20 January 2014](#)

⁶ [The Power of Music, Professor Susan Hallam MBE, UCL Institute of Education](#)

⁷ [Finding 3: Getting a degree, Cultural Learning Alliance](#)

⁸ [GCSEs, Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

⁹ [GCSEs, Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

This year, just two schools in Wales will receive a Gold Certificate (with more than 20% of their Year 11 population taking GCSE music and attaining an A*-C grade); these schools are Flint High School, Flintshire and Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, Powys. A further 13 schools had an uptake and attainment rate of 15% and 25 schools secured 10%. These figures are low compared to other states that use the GCSE model.

We recommend the committee contact schools with high uptake and performance in GCSE music to investigate how this is achieved and can share a comprehensive list with the committee.

4. Music service funding

There is no ring-fenced funding for music education – either to local authorities or to schools. Cuts to music services are being made across numerous local authorities.

We are aware of concerns in Bridgend, Cardiff, Powys and Rhondda Cynon Taf. In a context of reductions in local authority funding music services are not safe and access to music education becomes less accessible. This is particularly pronounced in rural areas where transport becomes an added cost.

In 2014 onwards the ISM ran a campaign called Protect Music Wales which focussed on cuts proposed by individual local authorities.

Some of the comments in response to the campaign are included in this paper:

‘Music education is essential. My daughter became a professional musician following an early start through the music service.’

‘Wales is a land that is known for it's music, and music makes a significant contribution to the well being and development of the children and young people of Wales. Music education makes this possible by widening horizons, building confidence, creating a sense of achievement and building skills. This should be available to everyone, no matter who they are or where they live.’

‘I am a proud valleys girl who's parents couldn't afford music tuition...but I was given the opportunity to sing and play an instrument in school which

were the happiest times of my school life. It truly gave me the confidence and social skills to enable me to do the job I do now, working in a children's hospice as a nurse.'

'Music talent should be accessible to all not just those who can afford it. Music is a skill that benefits many aspects of education including numeracy and literacy. Music education provides.'

'Music education is rapidly dying in Wales. This service is a necessity not a luxury.'

'We will no longer be a land of song and music if talent is not nurtured at grass roots.'

We will share more of these comments with the committee as requested.

We know access to music education is a problem, with the UK Government's Social Mobility Commission's *State of the nation* report published on Wednesday 26 November¹⁰ noting that '43 per cent of children whose mother had a postgraduate degree had music lessons, compared with just 6 per cent of children whose mother had no qualifications.'¹¹

5. Conclusion

It is more than 10 years since the last substantial report on music education by Estyn. We hear frequent reports from music teachers (who make up a proportion of our membership) that inspections focus heavily on languages and maths, with little focus on music. This in turn leads to schools prioritising these subjects over others. We recommend that Estyn be required to comment on music education in all its inspections.

In Scotland, total music funding equates to roughly £10.97 per pupil aged 5–19. If the equivalent level of funding were available in Wales, then the Government would have to contribute at least £5.96m per year in ring-fenced funding to local authorities and/or music services to support music education that should be going on in schools.

¹⁰ [State of the nation, Social Mobility Commission, Wednesday 16 November 2016](#)

¹¹ [Tanner, E., Callanan, M., Out of School Activities and the Education Gap, NatCen, February 2015](#)