

[News story: Funding boost for the arts to support talented pupils](#)

New funding to support talented music, drama and dance pupils to realise their potential and kick-start a career in the arts has been announced by the School Standards Minister Nick Gibb today (Tuesday 10 April). This is a further boost to the arts, which has already seen substantial investment in music hubs for the next two years.

Music, art and design, drama and dance are included in the national curriculum and compulsory in all maintained schools from the age of 5 to 14. The additional £96m takes the total level of support for music and arts programmes to £496 million since 2016. Many recipients of these funds have moved on to successful careers in the arts.

Award-winning actor and star of the Crown, Claire Foy said:

Without a Dance and Drama Award I would not have been able to train at The Oxford School of Drama. This scheme is vital in providing scholarships for a wide diversity of students to train at outstanding independent vocational schools.

The money will give pupils across the country access to a range of cultural opportunities including:

- Training at the world-famous Royal Ballet School in London;
- Film-making classes at the BFI Film Academy;
- Free opportunities to study art and design at their local college or university; and
- Visits to museums and galleries, using quality resources to support their classroom teaching.

The arts play an important part in the broad and balanced curriculum on offer for pupils, with almost half of all pupils choosing to take at least one arts GCSE last year through subjects such as music, dance, drama or art and design.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

The UK has a strong cultural heritage. We have always nurtured creative talent in this country and have a rich history of world famous musicians, actors and dancers.

For many, this journey starts at school, which is why it is important we support them from the beginning.

This funding will give more young people the opportunity to develop

their talents and help world-famous institutions discover the next generation's Billy Elliot.

Arts subjects are an important part of our broad and balanced curriculum, and thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers, academic standards are rising with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis said:

Our cultural and creative industries are a vital part of the economy and will play an increasingly important role as we build a Britain fit for the future. This £96 million investment will help young people across the country fulfil their artistic potential in our world-leading cultural and creative sectors.

Richard Russell, Chief Operating Officer, Arts Council England said:

We welcome this announcement of additional funding from the Department for Education, giving more pupils the opportunity to engage in cultural activities in and out of school and supporting the Arts Council's ambition of ensuring high quality cultural education exists for a broad and diverse range of young people.

Projects such as National Youth Dance Company, National Art and Design Saturday Clubs, and Museums and Schools Programme create fantastic opportunities for children from a diverse range of backgrounds to participate in a range of different activities, and allow them to discover and develop their talents.

Almost £90 million of combined funding will go to the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) and the Dance and Drama Awards (DaDa). These funds support the most talented pupils to attend prestigious arts institutions, such as the Royal Ballet School in London and Chetham's School of Music in Manchester.

Today, we are also announcing over £8 million to support a number of cultural education programmes. These give young people the chance to try their hand at film making with the British Film Institute, improve their skills with the National Youth Dance Company and explore different art materials at National Art and Design Saturday Clubs. This funding also gives pupils the chance to learn about the country's most famous historical sites with Historic England.

There is also a further boost for the 'In Harmony' projects in Liverpool, Lambeth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham, Leeds, Telford and Wrekin/Stoke-on-Trent. All will receive a share of £1 million to help them to continue to provide music education for disadvantaged pupils in their area. These projects aim to inspire and transform the lives of children and families in deprived communities through the power and discipline of ensemble music

making.

This funding is in addition to the £150 million already announced for Music Education Hubs in 2018-20 which will help them to support pupils to explore music and give them the opportunity to excel, regardless of their background. There are 120 Music Education Hubs around the country which have already helped over 660,000 young people to play a musical instrument.

Speech: The use of chemical weapons in Douma is an escalatory act.

Thank you Mr President.

And I thank the SRSG and Mr Markram for their briefings. And I thank him and through him all the UN teams on the ground for the important but incredibly difficult work that they do. As Steffan de Mistura said, this is an important Security Council session. My government shares the outrage that other colleagues have adequately described today. It is truly horrific to think of victims, families sheltering underground when the chlorine found them.

Mr President, it's the third time in five days that the Council has convened to discuss chemical weapons. This is dreadful in the true sense of that word. The Council should dread what we risk happening: that chemical weapons become a routine part of fighting. As a member of the P5, the UK believes that we have a particular responsibility to uphold the worldwide prohibition of the use of WMD. We agree with the Netherlands' Ambassador that the P5 has specific responsibilities.

Mr President, I believe that four members of the P5 do believe this, but there is one who does not. The Russian Ambassador referred to a resurgence of the cold war. This is not the cold war, Mr President. In the cold war there was not this flagrant disregard for the prohibitions that are universal on the use of WMD.

Mr President, the SRSG also referred to the risks of escalation and to international peace and security more broadly. We share his fears but it is the Syrian government, and its backers Iran and Russia, who are prolonging the fighting and risking regional and wider instability. There are real questions, Mr President, about what is happening in the T4 airbase with its foreign fighters and its mercenaries.

Mr President, we have been challenged today by our Russian colleague to say why we believe the attack was carried out by Syria and why we believe even that chemical weapons were used. The reasons, Mr President are as follows: The Joint Investigative Mechanism between 2014 and 2017, found six uses of chemical weapons. Two, it ascribed to Daesh for the use of mustard gas.

Three, it ascribed to the regime for the use of chlorine and one further use it ascribed to the Syrian regime for the use of sarin, and that is the attack we talked about in the Council just last week on Khan Sheikhoun and which led to the US strike, which we support, on al Shayrat. In addition as the French Ambassador said we have had reports of Russian and Syrian warnings before the CW attack took place and of a pattern of helicopters, MI8 HIP helicopters flying overhead and these are reports that have come from the ground, Mr President.

I have listened carefully to the Russian Ambassador's arguments. As I have just set out, we as the United Kingdom, believe that the Syrian regime is responsible for these latest attacks but there is one way to settle this Mr President, and this is to have an independent fact-finding mission, followed by an independent investigation. As we all know the fact-finding missions are there to determine whether chemical weapons have been used and if they have been used, what sort of chemical weapons. But it is only investigation that can determine who is responsible for their use and therefore start the path to accountability. I was very interested to hear the Russian offer that OPCW fact-finding mission could visit and would have the protection of Russian forces. Mr President, I believe that this is an offer worth perusing but it would of course be necessary for the OPCW mission to have complete freedom of action and freedom of access. That still leaves us, Mr President, with the question of who committed these atrocities and that is why we support the US text for a resolution and why we believe there is no legitimate reason not to support the call for this Council to set up an independent investigative mechanism. As I said before, Mr President, we have nothing to hide but it appears that Russia, and Syria, and their supporter Iran, do have something to fear.

Mr President, the Russian Ambassador singled out the UK, along with the US and France for some criticism so I would like to return to that. The responsibility for the cruelty in Syria belongs to Syria and its backers in Russia and Iran. The use of chemical weapons is an escalatory and a diabolical act. What Russia is trying to do, it strikes me, Mr President, is to turn the debate in this Council away from a discussion of the use of CW into a dispute between East and West, presenting itself as the victim. It is far too important, Mr President, to play games with the politics between East and West in respect of chemical weapons. Russia's crocodile tears for the people of Eastern Ghouta has an easy answer. It is to join us in a non-political attempt to get in humanitarian and protection workers from the UN to their job of looking after and mitigating the risk to civilians. Russia's concern at attribution for the use of CW also has an easy answer, Mr President, it is to join us in allowing the UN to set up an international investigative mechanism to pursue who is responsible. And I repeat here the two demands of my French colleague and I hope we will be able to make progress.

Mr President, I had not intended to address the Skripal case in Salisbury. But because my Russian colleague has done so I will address it today. He asked what were the similarities between Salisbury and Syria. I think it's important that I point out that the cases are different in the following

respects. There is a thorough investigation underway in Salisbury. There is no investigation underway in Syria. The British Government in Salisbury is seeking to protect its people, as is its duty. The Syrian government, on the contrary, Mr President, again as we have heard today, attacks and gasses its people. What the two do have in common though, and I am sorry to say, is Russia's refusal to assume P5 responsibilities to prevent the use of WMD and its reckless support for the use of WMD by its agents and by its allies.

Mr President, it is not us who want to alienate Russia, she alienates herself by not joining in the vast majority of this Council who want to find a non-polemical way through and address the use of CW against civilians in Syria. The Russian Ambassador mentioned friends of the United States. Mr President, my government and our people are proud to be a friend of the United States. We stand with everybody on this Council who wants to find a way through the CW problem to have a proper fact finding mission and to have proper investigation as the first step to bringing this dreadful conflict to a close.

Thank you Mr President.

[Speech: PM statement in Sweden: 9 April 2018](#)

Thank you very much, Prime Minister, for hosting me at Rosenbad today. I'm very pleased to be back in Sweden.

The historic ties, shared values and cooperation between our countries I think makes ours a truly special partnership.

As you say, today we have talked about the attack in Salisbury, the threat Russia poses to our shared security, wider European and international security issues, as well as our bilateral relationship, and the progress we have been making towards a Brexit deal.

But I'd like to begin by reiterating Britain's condemnation of the truly barbaric chemical attack in Douma, Syria.

Saturday's horrific attack against the people of Douma, among them a number of innocent children, was utterly reprehensible.

We are working closely with our allies to establish urgently the detail of what happened. If confirmed, this represents further evidence of the Assad regime's appalling cruelty against its own people, and total disregard for its legal obligations not to use these weapons.

This heinous attack follows a wider pattern of reckless behaviour in which

fundamental international norms on counter-proliferation and the use of chemical weapons have been wilfully violated.

Russia's vetoes at the UN have enabled the Assad regime to breach global rules, and removed mechanisms that allow us to investigate chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

So the international community must strengthen its resolve to deal with those responsible. Together with Sweden we have called an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council which will take place shortly.

And just as we must stand up against the use of chemical weapons in Syria and violations of the counter-proliferation agenda, so we must stand together in the wake of last month's nerve agent attack in Salisbury.

I'd like to thank you Prime Minister, for your solidarity, and for standing up for our shared values and our shared security.

Our case for Russian culpability is clear. No other country has a combination of the capability, the intent and the motive to carry out such an act.

Faced with the evidence, Russia provided no explanation, and even pointed the finger at Sweden in a preposterous effort to distract from the truth.

So these attempted murders represent another assault on our shared values and the international rules based system which upholds them.

Your swift condemnation of Russia was critical in helping reinforce western unity. The robust steps that you and others have taken in the past month demonstrate a clear recognition of the shared threat we face.

We have also discussed the bilateral security and defence relationship between our countries which remains strong, and our cooperation in this area continues to deepen as we look to bolster our European security and harden our defences in the face of the growing challenge from Russia, as well as wider threats to global security.

Sweden has contributed to international operations in Afghanistan and Libya, and your troops now play an active role alongside ours in UN peacekeeping operations and as part of the global coalition to defeat Daesh.

I welcome Sweden's decision to join the Joint Expeditionary Force, which has bolstered our ability to respond quickly together to emerging threats across the globe.

We also cooperate closely to fight terrorism. In recent years our nations have suffered callous attacks on our citizens by cowards who want to destroy our values and way of life. Indeed, Saturday marked one year on from a despicable act of terror here on the streets of Stockholm.

And as I said at the time, we will continue to stand together as we confront this shared threat.

Beyond security, our strong trade and investment relationship – which has grown between our countries over hundreds of years – continues to flourish.

There are a thousand Swedish companies in the UK and a similar number of British companies with a presence here in Sweden.

Our economic ties are one of the many reasons we are determined to maintain our close links with Sweden after Brexit. And today we have discussed the ambitious economic and security partnership we want to build.

We have also reflected on progress in the negotiations, and considered those elements that remain outstanding – including on issues relating to Northern Ireland.

Our shared interests will undoubtedly continue to align post-Brexit, and I have no intention of allowing our close and historic ties to weaken.

I want a future relationship of unprecedented breadth and depth with the EU, and with our European partners too.

And so I am absolutely committed to continuing to work with you in the years ahead, to build on our partnership and keep our people prosperous and safe.

Thank you.

[Press release: Foreign Office Minister visits Libya](#)



Alistair Burt, Minister for the Middle East, held talks in Libya with senior politicians on foreign policy, the economy and trade, and security and justice.

The Minister arrived in Libya on Sunday 8 April for a two day visit that included meetings with representatives from the Libyan Government of National Accord, civil society organisations working to empower Libyan women and combat human trafficking, as well as other senior politicians.

Mr Burt said:

The UK is a strong partner and friend of Libya. I look forward to continuing our closework on security, counter terrorism, reforming the economy and trade. I appreciated the opportunity to discuss complex migration issues and also matters relating to the legacy of years of terrorism.

Helping Libyans to break the political deadlock and build strong state institutions is in Britain's interests because this is the only way to help Libya re-establish control over its own borders and defeat terrorism for good.

This visit was the final stage of a three country trip that also included Paris for the Lebanon CEDRE donor conference and Tunisia.

Minister Burt reflects on his visit to Libya

[Minister for Middle East visits Tripoli, Libya](#)

Published 9 April 2018

[News story: Foreign Secretary call with U.S. counterpart on Syria: 9 April 2018](#)

The Foreign Secretary spoke to Acting US Secretary of State John Sullivan this afternoon about Saturday's devastating attack in Douma, Syria. This follows his [conversation](#) with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian this morning.

The Foreign Secretary and Acting Secretary of State agreed that, based on current media reports and from those on the ground, this attack bore hallmarks of previous chemical weapons attacks by the Asad regime. They reiterated their commitment to standing up for the Chemical Weapons Convention and to ensuring that those responsible for this horrific attack are held to account. They underlined the importance of the UK, the US, and France remaining in close touch.