

# Speech: Nick Gibb: the importance of high-quality arts education

It is a pleasure to be at the Music and Drama Education Exposition. This event offers teachers and organisations promoting music and drama education the opportunity to attend seminars, workshops and debates. And after the growth in popularity over the past 5 years, the exposition will be visiting Manchester in October, giving teachers from all over the country the opportunity to benefit from what the exposition has to offer.

Thanks to the likes of Pinewood Studios, the West End, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Britain is world leading when it comes to film, theatre and music. The arts contribute to the wealth of our nation, both culturally and financially.

As a child I was in the church and school choirs and began piano lessons at the age of 5; alas, ceasing piano lessons at the age of 6. But every day in school assemblies we were played a piece of classical music; we never knew the names of the pieces but it introduced us to the wonders of the best music ever written and from that I became a lifelong lover of classical music.

That's why I am keen for primary schools to become involved with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM)'s Classical 100. This free resource, designed specifically for primary schools in conjunction with Classic FM, Decca and primary teachers, can help introduce pupils to classical music. Since it was launched, over 3,000 English primary schools have registered to use the resource.

Last month I visited 2 schools in Birmingham to see Classical 100 in operation. I joined in with a class of year 3 children in Bournville Junior School playing Beethoven's Ode to Joy on bell plates and hand chimes.

It is important that all pupils are taught about and have the opportunity to participate in the arts. When I returned to the Department for Education in 2014 as Minister of State for School Reform, one of the first announcements I made was that funding for music education hubs would increase from £58 million in 2014 to 2015, to £75 million in 2015 to 2016. And in November last year I announced that [music education hubs would continue to receive £75 million every year until 2020](#).

That funding should support all pupils, whatever their background, whatever their family's income, and whatever particular special needs or disabilities they may have. No child should be excluded from music because their parents cannot afford to pay for lessons or an instrument, or because they have physical disabilities or other special needs.

Last week I met Stephen Hetherington, founder of the [One-Handed Musical Instrument Trust](#) and heard about the excellent work the trust is doing to remove the barriers to music faced by physically disabled people. This

includes a pilot, with the [Birmingham music education hub](#) and others, teaching children to play one handed recorders and specially adapted trumpets. I am delighted to see that Stephen is here today with colleagues from Birmingham City University and I urge you to find out more about their work and how it could help your pupils.

The Department also provides £29 million for the [Music and Dance Scheme](#), which ensures that exceptionally talented young musicians and dancers are able to fulfil their potential. The vast majority of pupils at the specialist schools like the Royal Ballet School and Yehudi Menuhin School receive means-tested support.

Similarly, the £13.5 million [Dance and Drama Award scheme](#) provides means-tested support for aspiring young dancers and actors, helping many young people on their way to careers in the performing arts.

The government provides funding for the national youth music ensembles such as the National Youth Orchestra and Youth Music Theatre UK. And we provide funding for In Harmony, an intensive orchestral experience focused on schools in some of the country's most deprived communities.

These specialist schemes are vital, but they do not reach everyone, which is why the government has focused on improving the quality of arts education in schools. Music and art and design are compulsory in the [national curriculum](#) from the age of 5 to 14. Dance is a compulsory part of the [PE curriculum](#) for 5- to 14-year-olds. And drama is a compulsory part of the [English curriculum](#) for 5- to 16-year-olds.

Following the review of the national curriculum, a greater emphasis was placed on teaching pupils the core knowledge and techniques underpinning these subjects:

- The new [art and design curriculum](#) has a stronger focus on the teaching of drawing from an early age and a new emphasis on knowing about the historical development of art through a greater emphasis on teaching about great artists and designers.
- The revised [programmes of study for music](#) place a greater focus on the historical development of music and listening to the work of great composers. For example, there is a new reference to pupils being taught to appreciate and understand a wide range of high quality live and recorded music in key stage 2.
- And, in the new [drama GCSE](#), pupils will study at least 1 play in depth and 2 extracts from a second contrasting play. This rigorous study of pieces of drama will be accompanied by participation in at least 2 performances.

And today, I can announce that the government has updated [content for the GCSE in drama](#) and [A level in drama and theatre studies](#). This update specifies that all pupils will now have the entitlement to experience live theatre, reaffirming the government's commitment to providing pupils with an enriching arts education. When studying for qualifications in drama, pupils should not be limited to watching a DVD or a peer performance; they should have the

opportunity to sit in the audience, experiencing a live performance.

The government is committed to ensuring that high-quality arts education is the entitlement of every single child. All pupils, whatever their background, should have access to the best that has been thought and said, including a secure grounding in the arts.

In 2010, the government inherited a school system where the curriculum had been stripped of the rich knowledge content that all children deserve to be taught. For our society to be socially just and socially mobile, all pupils must be endowed with the core knowledge needed to be culturally literate.

The government acted.

As well as ending the grade inflation that devalued the public's faith in exams and removing many so-called 'equivalent' qualifications, the government, through the introduction of the [EBacc](#), has placed greater emphasis on ensuring pupils are taught a core academic curriculum.

The government now publishes both the proportion of pupils entering and the proportion of pupils achieving a good pass in the 5 EBacc subjects: English, maths, a science, a humanity and a language. In 2010, just one-fifth of pupils were studying this combination of subjects. This has since risen to two-fifths, with the proportion of pupils entering the EBacc rising year on year.

Yesterday, I launched the [New Schools Network's report into the importance of the arts](#) – alongside Matthew Hancock, Minister of State for digital and culture policy. The report examined the relationship between arts education and the EBacc.

Despite the success of the EBacc in ensuring greater numbers of pupils are now taking the combination of subjects that facilitate pupils pursuing any post-16 path they should choose – including attending one of the country's world-leading universities – the policy has consistently come in for criticism.

This report puts to rest the tired and inaccurate criticisms of the EBacc policy, a policy which is designed to make this country more meritocratic. In fact, a recent [Sutton Trust report](#) found that schools enthusiastically adapting their curriculum to enter more pupils into EBacc subjects were more likely to achieve good English and maths GCSEs and go on to take A level or equivalent level 3 qualifications, as compared to a set of schools with similar characteristics. Additionally, the pupil premium gap closed slightly more in these schools compared with schools with similar pupil intakes.

But a particularly damaging criticism of the policy is that it is driving the arts out of education. This is not true, as the report makes clear. The EBacc was deliberately restricted to 5 subject areas to ensure that pupils could take the EBacc and still pursue a number of other subjects, including arts subjects. Data suggests that on average pupils in state-funded schools enter 9 GCSE subjects which count in the performance tables – rising to 10 for

pupils with higher prior attainment – leaving ample room for pupils to study a number of arts subjects alongside the EBacc. The proportion of pupils in state funded schools taking at least 1 arts subject has increased from 45.8% in 2011 (when the EBacc was announced) to 48.0% in 2016.

But the report is correct that the government must do more to extol the importance of a high-quality arts education. The government's vision for arts education is encapsulated in 2 words: equity and quality. And this vision must be backed up by concrete action.

That is why I am here to speak today: to express my gratitude to you for what you do for arts education in this country, and to offer you my support as you help to ensure all pupils – whatever their background – receive the high quality music and arts education they deserve.

Thank you.

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## **Press release: Fishing cheats land big fines in court in Middlesex**

Anglers had penalties of over £450 each imposed at Uxbridge Magistrates Court on 6 February 2017 for fishing illegally, without an Environment Agency rod licence.

Adam Younie 26 of Haverhill, John Tibbs 46 of Romford, and Steve Sullivan 48 were caught fishing without a licence by Environment Agency fisheries enforcement officers at Thorney Weir lakes, West Drayton, Middlesex. Each were fined £300 (with £127 costs and £30 victim surcharge) when an Environment Agency annual licence at the time, cost just £27.

All anglers failed to appear in court. Environment Agency Fisheries Team Leader, Richard Tyner said:

We check licences across all fisheries in Hertfordshire and Essex, and work in partnership with fishery owners and the police to detect and deter fisheries crime. People who don't buy a licence are cheating other anglers and the future of the sport. The Environment Agency relies on the income from rod licence sales to continue the important work we do to protect fish stocks, improve fisheries and encourage more people to take up fishing.

If you are caught fishing without a rod licence you risk a criminal conviction and a fine up to £2,500. There is no excuse. Annual rod licences for trout and coarse fishing remain at £5 for 12 to 16 year olds, £18 for

senior and disabled concessions and £27 for non-concessions. Children under 12 can fish for free. Licences are easy to buy from the Post Office website or by phone on 03448 005 386 prior to fishing. Anglers should always ensure they have permission to fish at a fishery and check Environment Agency byelaws.

Last year, Environment Agency officers checked more than 62,000 licences and prosecuted more than 1,900 licence cheats. Between them, they were ordered to pay fines and costs in excess of £600,000. To help crack down on unlicensed fishing, the Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal activity by calling 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Money raised from rod licence sales is reinvested in the environment, including; a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers, protecting stocks from illegal fishing, fish restocking, invasive species eradication, and working with partners to encourage people to take-up fishing for the first time.

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## [Economy Secretary visits set of big budget US drama](#)

Ken Skates visited the set of TNT's Will, a high end drama series based on the early life of William Shakespeare and met members of the cast and production team.

Will is being filmed largely in Pontyclun's Dragon Studios and is due to broadcast in the US this summer with UK dates to follow. It boasts the largest budget and highest spend of any production shot in Wales to date.

Will is the latest in a growing list of US productions to be filmed in Wales and follows other high profile productions such as Da Vinci's Demons, The Bastard Executioner and The Collection.

It is anticipated that the production, which has been backed by Welsh Government finance, will generate around £18m spend into the local economy.

The first series of Will was commissioned following the success of an initial pilot programme filmed in London. Following support from the Welsh Government the production company decided to undertake a significant proportion of filming and production of the first series of Will in Wales.

Speaking after his visit, Ken Skates said:

"I was so pleased to be able to visit the set of Will, which really is an impressive and quality production with the highest

budget of any film or programme to be in Wales so far.

“The scale of the project is resulting in the largest local spend related to TV and film production even seen in Wales which is great news for the local economy and a real coup for the Welsh film and TV sector more broadly.

“We are continuing to work hard to attract high end drama to Wales with a specific focus on the lucrative US market and the probability of repeat series.

“I know the Will production will act as another great endorsement for what Wales can offer the film and TV industry, in terms of our location, expertise and talent. I am delighted that Welsh Government has been able to play a decisive role in bringing this investment to Wales.”

Ninth Floor UK Productions Limited – the company behind the series – will be based at Dragon Studio in Pontyclun for nine months of the year with location shooting in and around South Wales as well as London.

Executive Producer Alison Owen said:

“Filming at Dragon International Film Studios has provided many advantages for the production – using Dragon’s four stages and its extensive backlot, we have been able to create a whole world in one place.

“The streets of Shakespeare’s London spread out on the backlot, whilst the huge Theatre takes up one whole stage, additional interior sets complete the show’s universe. Other breath-taking exterior locations are a stone’s throw away, giving scope and breadth to the show’s visual landscape.

“The close proximity of so many locations has given us an ease and efficiency enabling us to be ambitious with our show, giving us terrific ‘bang for our buck’ and putting the budget on the screen. With access to the experienced Welsh crew based in the area, in Cardiff and Swansea, while only a couple of hours from London on the train, it has been the perfect choice for us.”

Last month the Welsh Government launched a promotional showreel featuring clips from the latest major productions filmed in Wales to promote Wales worldwide as a premier location for TV and feature film production.

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## Government needs to urgently look at suggestion of abuse of extra time provision in exams – Rayner

Angela Rayner, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary, commenting on reports that independent school students gain extra time for exams, said:

"Our education system allows children with special educational needs extra time in exams to ensure that they are not unfairly disadvantaged. The suggestion that this could be being abused raises serious questions about the fairness of this arrangement.

"The Government needs to look at this urgently to make sure that no school is abusing the system."

**Ends**

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## Hollow words from Jeremy Hunt as the NHS is suffering from the biggest financial squeeze in history – Ashworth

Jonathan Ashworth, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, commenting on reports that Jeremy Hunt said the problems facing some parts of NHS England are 'completely unacceptable', said:

"These are hollow words from the Secretary of State this morning. On his watch the NHS is suffering from the biggest financial squeeze in history and social care is at tipping point. Jeremy Hunt appears to be finally waking up to the scale of the crisis but he must now accept responsibility. Instead he offers just hand wringing but no solutions.

"This week we have seen more and more statistics revealing that patients are waiting longer, and suffering longer in discomfort.

“Government

advisor Lord Carter has extraordinarily called NHS conditions ‘warlike’ and now

Sir Robert Francis says there is an ‘existential crisis’ for the health service

warning that another Mid Staffs is ‘inevitable.’

“By

making such stark warnings Sir Robert Francis blows apart Jeremy Hunt’s rhetoric on putting patient safety first.

“The

Prime Minister can’t just put her head in the sand and ignore these astounding

warnings. This is clearly not just a ‘small number of incidents’ as she glibly

suggested.

“The Government’s mismanagement of the NHS is causing

chaos and misery for patients. We

can’t go on like this. They need to listen to the experts and explain fully in the Budget in a few weeks time how they will put the

NHS and social care on sustainable footing. NHS patients and their families should never be put through a winter like this again.

**Ends**