



Ein cyf/Our ref MA-KW/0609/20

Bethan Sayad AM
Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

28 February 2020

Dear Bethan,

Thank you for your letter of 30 January 2020, I was pleased to attend the meeting of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee on 16 January to discuss the Music Services Feasibility Study.

I turn to the points you raise in your letter.

Equality of access to excellence

Our ambition is for the provision of high-quality, universal access to music education for all learners, regardless of where they live or their financial circumstance. We want all young people to have access to music education and opportunities to develop their talents and skills, regardless of background or ability.

In response to calls for greater coherence and better co-ordination of music provision, a strong theme runs throughout the feasibility report to introduce a national plan for music education with the aim to provide a framework which sets out quality standards, progression routes and equality of provision. The report states that a plan could help to create greater coherence and drive specific improvements. It is also makes clear that there is a need for any plan to be considered fully with key stakeholders. My officials will work with the stakeholder group to ensure the best approach to developing a National Plan that ensures equality of access is adopted.

Importantly, the feasibility report also links a proposed national plan for music education with the new curriculum. It suggests that a plan would provide a framework for music education in schools, local authority music services, and other organisations that allows for clear benchmarking in terms of quality and provision as a strong component of the Expressive Arts Area of Learning Experience in the new Curriculum

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Kirsty.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Kirsty.Williams@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

for Wales. If a National Plan for Music Education was implemented, therefore, it needs to work in parallel with the Curriculum for Wales which was only published on the 28th January.

I agree that it is unacceptable for children's success to be determined by their social or economic circumstances. Underpinning all of our work is a belief that someone's ability to benefit from education should not be determined by where they live, what their background is or what the income of their parents is.

The Pupil Development Grant (PDG) is a powerful tool for schools to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to access the arts and cultural experiences they may not otherwise be able to participate in. In 2015 the Welsh Government issued [guidance](#) to schools on using the PDG in support of arts and cultural activities. This guidance made it clear that schools could use the PDG, on a case by case basis, to help individual learners from low income families to pursue particular art forms, such as musical instrument tuition; as long as it supported academic attainment more generally. The Welsh Government has produced a [training pack](#) on using arts and cultural activity to tackle the impact of poverty on attainment. This has been published on Learning Wales and highlights how the PDG can be used to support cultural enrichment. It also provides structure and support to professionals to increase their confidence when designing arts, culture and heritage interventions. Tuition would need to be part of a planned programme aimed at raising attainment across the curriculum with clearly defined outcomes.

I have recently announced the significant increase in funding through our Pupil Development Grant – Access. Funding exceeds £8 million for financial 2020/21. Not only are we looking for opportunities to change cultures and practices in schools, but we are also providing direct funding to families. This funding is not limited to supporting the cost of school uniform; it will support greater aspiration, cultural enrichment, well-being and resilience. Whether it's help buying school uniform or getting the right clothing or equipment for young people to take part in their favourite sport or musical activity inside or outside of school, then PDG – Access will support those opportunities.

Sharing good practice between our schools is part of the wider reforms we are implementing through our school improvement agenda. Regional consortia have helped build schools' capacity to self-improve through more collaborative ways of working, and therefore to improve pupil outcomes, in a relatively short amount of time. Through a range of school networks, funded by Welsh Government grants and co-ordinated by consortia, school leaders and teachers are increasingly able to access professional development and school improvement support from their peers, helping to build a culture of a collaboration and shared practice. I have asked officials to consider, with stakeholders, other ways in which we could support the sharing of identified best practice between local authorities.

Further information

During the discussion I mentioned that I was aware of individual independent schools which offer their facilities for use to others. For example I am aware that Christ College which is within my constituency, offers its facilities for use to external organisations.

You have asked for further information regarding independent schools hiring out facilities but this is not information which the Welsh Government holds. Independent schools are however, private businesses, and as such the use of their buildings is a matter for them.

You have also requested additional information on the funding and support provided for music education in schools by the Arts Council for Wales. The *Creative Learning through the Arts* programme is jointly funded and delivered with the Arts Council of Wales, although not exclusively focused on music, it has supported schools in providing a wide range of music activities and experiences (through Lead Creative Schools strand and Creative Collaborations and Go and See grants), over the period 2015-2020 with a total joint funding of £20 million.

A further joint funding of £3 million has been provided for a two-year extension phase to the programme for 2020-2022, which will enable continued support for music in schools.

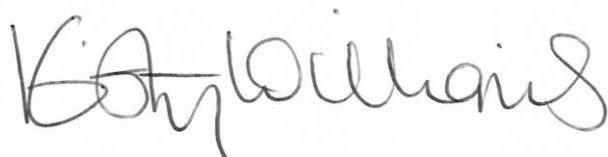
Next steps

The engagement of stakeholders is cited as an essential part of moving this agenda forward and I am pleased that we have an excellent representative of stakeholders engaging with us in this work.

The meeting on the 29 January was an opportunity for key stakeholder in music services to provide feedback on the findings and conclusions from the music services feasibility report and consider the next steps. My officials are currently considering the views from this meeting and I will be able to update you further once the feedback received has been fully evaluated.

Please find attached a meeting note from the stakeholder meeting on 29 January (Annex A), the membership is listed in the attendance. Please note, however, that these are for internal use only for members of the consultation group and are not for wider public circulation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education