A briefing paper in response to the Education White Paper, ‘Educational Excellence Everywhere’

Produced by Sound Connections

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On 17 March 2016, Nicky Morgan, Secretary of State for Education, published the Education White Paper ‘Educational Excellence Everywhere’. The briefing states that the paper “outlines plans to transform England’s schools and build on the progress that has already been made”, and details the government’s reforms for the next five years.

The paper is complex and detailed, and has caused great debate across the sector. The main headlines can be summarised as follows:

- All schools will become academies by 2020
- There will be 300 new teaching schools and 800 National Leaders of Education
- The Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) will be replaced with an accreditation judged by schools

The full report can be downloaded [here](#) and there are some useful summaries of the headlines at the [TES](#) website.

So what does this paper mean for our stakeholders within the music education sector?

**Schools**

All schools will be required to join a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) or, if successful and sustainable, continue as a single academy trust. This is the headline that has been most controversial, notably with recent suggestions of possible strike action from the National Union of Teachers (NUT). The NUT’s claims that this legislature is rushed and risky, aside from the cost implications and upheaval, ring true. We all recognise that education needs consistency for teachers and young people alike to thrive, and the suggestions that academies have improved standards in our schools is still inconclusive.

So far as arts subjects go, this will now be determined by the Academy Trust and it’s positioning and financing of the arts within their schools; thus becoming a lottery for our young people.

The White Paper also outlines additional funds for extending the school day, which could provide opportunities for delivering extra-curricular arts subjects. However, with funding only available to 25% of schools and when so many already offer this provision, the funding risks being ineffectual. Our view is that “music, alongside the other creative subjects, is central to the overall development of young people and should be at the heart of the curriculum.”¹ We put our name to the [#BaccForTheFuture campaign](#) led by the ISM against making “the narrowly defined English Baccalaureate (EBacc) all but compulsory in schools”², as we believe relegating the arts to an extra-curricular subject option would be doing all young people across London (and the UK) a profound disservice.

**Young People**

The White Paper recognises the value and importance for pupil premiums, providing additional funding to “children from the most deprived backgrounds, looked after children, and those who have been adopted from care or left care under special guardianship or a child arrangements order.” Where used appropriately, this funding is often committed to cultural activity, and the commitment set out in the paper to “protect the pupil premium for the rest of this Parliament” is welcomed.

For young people with additional needs and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEN/D), the White Paper outlines plans to offer greater support and guidance, with an intended review of “what is happening in practice for all children with SEN/D and what more can be done to improve these children’s attainment, outcomes and experiences”. Local authorities will remain closely involved in

¹ [http://www.baccforthefuture.com/what-organisations-are-saying.html](http://www.baccforthefuture.com/what-organisations-are-saying.html)
the support of young people with SEN/D, but it’s currently unclear as to where the funds will come from and how support around the child will be managed, particularly in the context of high-quality provision of cultural opportunities.

**Teachers**

The White Paper outlines a “new accreditation system to recognise trainee teachers’ expertise and ability in the classroom”. In practice this means that headteachers will have the power to accredit trainee teachers when they have demonstrated classroom efficiency, including areas such as behaviour management and subject knowledge. We already recognise that the arts are underrepresented in the current Initial Teacher Training schemes, and many early years and primary school teachers lack the skills and confidence to be able to deliver a high quality music curriculum. Removing Qualified Teacher Status and leaving schools and headteachers to accredit trainees’ practice may result in the arts playing an even lesser role, dependent on the particular interest or culture of the accrediting school or headteacher.

We have also long recognised that there are real challenges in the recruitment and retaining of excellent teachers – particularly in arts subjects. Whilst the paper acknowledges the crisis, there still remains no financial incentives for trainee teachers to take up these disciplines.

**Creative Industries**

Great emphasis within the reforms is placed on the delivery of the EBacc system, with the intention being that all pupils who start Year 7 in September 2015 will take the EBacc subjects (English, maths, science, languages, history or geography) when they reach their GCSEs in 2020. The application of this legislature squeezes out those subjects that we recognise as being crucial to young people’s sense of self, self-expression, and personal development (among others) – subjects such as music, art, drama and other creative industry-relevant subjects.

“Involvement with arts and culture is crucial to imagination, self-expression and creativity in young people. It also develops the skills that fuel the success of the UK’s creative industries, and that will result in the next generation of creative talent across the country.” Arts Council England

With creative industries recognised as one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK economy – Nicky Morgan herself is quoted in the White Paper for Culture as saying “I want every single young person to have the opportunity to discover how the arts can enrich their lives. Access to cultural education is a matter of social justice” – this legislature fails to address the skills shortage in creative arts. If we are not championing the arts in education, how can we expect young people to recognise the value and joy of working in the creative industries? And how does the government therefore expect the creative industries to flourish and retain its world-leading position?

The paper does suggest, however, that with academisation comes autonomy, and schools are not required to follow the national curriculum and EBacc systems. This may provide really exciting opportunities for schools, headteachers and MATs to embark on creative curriculums, championing the arts and culture in their schools. However, with primary tests only in a few narrow subjects, and no requirement to follow a national curriculum, finding a real incentive for teaching the arts in this new system would be a real challenge for schools without a senior leadership team that already recognises the value of the arts and creative industries.