

Briefing: Music in Schools April 2019

Purpose of this briefing

This briefing gives an update on the provision of music in schools, particularly the provision of instrumental music teaching, from the perspective of the EIS, Scotland's largest teaching union. It is issued in advance of the *Education and Skills Committee Debate: Instrumental music tuition* to be held on **Tuesday 30th April 2019** and we trust that it will be of use to members who may wish to contribute to that debate.

Why is instrumental music tuition due to be debated?

As members will know, the Education and Skills Committee recently considered the matter of instrumental music tuition in schools; the inquiry details are available here:

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/109900.aspx>

The Committee produced a report called 'A note of concern: The future of instrumental music tuition in schools', available here:

https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Reports/ES-S5-19-01.pdf

The report articulated a number of concerns that the EIS has been expressing for several years now, as austerity measures have eroded music education. Our fear is that instrumental music services are being diminished to the point of extinction; this cannot be allowed to happen. The report highlights some key issues, including:

- differing views regarding whether the status of music tuition is discretionary or part of the core curriculum
- a lack of clarity regarding whether instrumental music tuition necessary to provide adequate preparation for SQA examinations in the senior phase can legitimately be subject to charging
- the weight of evidence that charging for tuition still adversely affects those who qualify for concessions and exemptions as well as families with an income just above the thresholds for these
- the precarious position of instrumental music services and the need for the funding of these services to be re-examined.

The report states that:

"The Committee is concerned that, without action, the journey of young talent from Scottish state schools into bands, orchestras, and to become the teachers of the future will become more difficult."

We share these concerns, and would urge MSPs to use the opportunity of the debate on 30 April to press for the government to "change the tune", to defend and extend instrumental music education in Scotland's schools and to ensure that the funding is made available for this to happen.

Trying times for instrumental music services: charges up, pupil numbers down

The Instrumental Music Service Survey May-July 2018 highlighted the ongoing challenge facing instrumental music education across Scotland. It shows that:

- there was “a sharp increase in fees compared to previous years” in 2018/19
- 38% of local authorities raised tuition rates in 2018/19, including the introduction of fees in several local authorities where previously tuition was offered free of charge
- there has been “an overall increase in fees across Scotland...the highest of which place well above historic levels”
- 2017/18 is the first year of the survey where overall pupil numbers have fallen.

In the 2017/18 academic year, the average group lesson fee, amongst those local authorities who charged, was £212.19. Changes provided by councils for the most recent academic year, 2018/19, indicate that this average has now **increased to £234.76**. This is an increase of £22.57, or 10.6%. Of the historic years surveyed, this is the largest increase in the average tuition fees seen since 2016/17 when the average group tuition fee increased by £19.26 (10.5%).

The EIS fears that Scotland is rapidly moving towards a scenario where only children from well-off families can learn to play an instrument: essentially, ‘**who pays, plays**’. This would be unjust and unacceptable. Charges for lessons and instrument hire necessarily limit access to music, and levy a high price on the development of young people’s talent.

In total, there were 60,326 pupils who received instrumental music lessons from their local authority service at some point in 2017/18. This figure equates to 8.9% of all Scottish school pupils. Since 2016/17 this is a **decrease of 1289 pupils, or 2.1%**. In this period, the number of school pupils also increased by 0.3% meaning the overall change in the percentage of pupils taking instrumental music was a drop of 0.16 percentage points from around 9.1%.

Clearly, increasing charges and declining numbers of pupils able to participate in instrumental music lessons are extremely worrying for IM teachers and for all those who wish to see expressive arts at the heart of the curriculum. The many arguments in favour of protecting and expanding IM provision are set out in the EIS Charter, Change the Tune:

<https://www.eis.org.uk/Change-The-Tune/MusicCharter>

The Improvement Service survey report on IMS provision can be found here:

<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/research/ims-report-18.pdf>

But the government invests heavily in music, doesn't it?

We would refute any suggestions that government investment in music projects such as the Youth Music Initiative (YMI) can replace what is cut from local authority music services. YMI, and other such music projects, are valuable, but they are not a substitute for properly resourced instrumental music teaching.

YMI, for example, generally offers twelve hours of learning on one instrument, serving as a taster for music education. It seems deeply unfair to give children a taste of music, then not provide a sustainable system for them to develop their interest and talent. Why spark interest

if you don't intend to keep the fire burning? It is hard to see how this approach is compatible with an ambition of excellence and equity for all.

New Scottish Government/COSLA/MEPG guidance on music tuition

It is highly likely that during the debate on 30 April, new Scottish Government/COSLA/Music Education Partnership Group guidance on music tuition, published in February 2019, will be cited as a significant step forward. The guidance is available here:

<http://www.cosla.gov.uk/music-instrumental-music-tuition-guidance-2019pdf>

The EIS would dispute that the issuing of this guidance is a significant development. We have several concerns about it, most notably that it describes instrumental music tuition as "an additional offering" which "does not replace or limit music education in schools, although it does enhance it"; we would argue that instrumental music tuition having been treated as discretionary rather than as part of the core curriculum is one of the key causes of it having been underfunded.

In the view of the EIS, the guidance does not adequately describe the unintended consequences of charging regimes, including long-term impacts for the economy and Scottish culture. Further, it does not propose any kind of ceiling on charges, or any other mechanism to act as a brake on excessive or sudden rises, far in excess of the rate of inflation, which we have seen across several authorities in recent years. Thus it is not clear to us what value the guidance adds, although we welcome that it affirms that COSLA's Children and Young People Board have agreed that there should be no charging for students who have entitlement to Free School Meals, and no charging for students who are studying for SQA qualifications.

To be candid, our members do not see a new advisory document as a significant intervention, while their jobs and the future of the services for which they work hang in the balance.

The value of music education: supporting attainment and wellbeing

There is a vast amount of evidence about the value of studying and playing music. A literature review by Prof. Sue Hallam of the University of London's Institute of Education¹ reports that

"engagement with music plays a major role in developing perceptual processing systems which facilitate the encoding and identification of speech sounds and patterns"; "the role of music in facilitating language skills contributes to the development of reading skills"; and "active engagement with music can improve mathematical performance".

Dr Hallam also discusses the positive impact of participation in music on social and personal development.

A 2016 study on music and attainment² found that young people (aged 11-16) playing an instrument showed greater progress and better academic outcomes than those not playing, with the greatest impact for those playing the longest.

Dr Rachel Drury of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland reported in her 2015 paper³, 'The wider benefits of instrumental music learning in childhood', that *"there are wide-ranging benefits of instrumental music education for preschool and school children. Benefits to*

¹ Music Education in the 21st Century in the UK: Achievements, Analysis and Aspirations, Eds. Hallam and Creech, 2010

² The impact of instrumental music learning on attainment at age 16: a pilot study. Hallam and Rogers, B. J. Music Ed. 2016 33:3, 247–261, Cambridge University Press 2016

³ The wider benefits of instrumental music learning in childhood, Rachel Drury, RCS, 2015. (Unpublished).

literacy, numeracy, cognition, spatial-temporal reasoning, fine motor coordination and physical and mental wellbeing, and even the amount of grey matter in the brain, have all been linked with learning to play a musical instrument."

We believe that the wide range of benefits of learning and playing music have not been fully appreciated by educational policy makers in Scotland, and that music education has been consistently undervalued for many years. This must change.

Given the above, it is evident that charging regimes, which disproportionately impact on access for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, contribute to a widening of the poverty-related attainment gap in Scottish Education.

Consequences of continued erosion of IM services

If instrumental music services continue to suffer swingeing cuts, and local and national government continue each to expect the other to fix this, dire consequences will follow, including:

- significant job losses among skilled professional instrumental music teachers
- a devastating impact on instrumental music teaching in schools, damaging pupils' educational experience and preventing pupils from fully developing their talents (contrary to Article 29 of the UNCRC, which provides a right to education directed to the development of the child's talents and abilities to their fullest potential)
- undermining of the Curriculum for Excellence: creativity, confidence, participation and independent expression are central to the CfE; instrumental music supports all of these
- an erosion of Scotland's schools' contribution to the cultural life of the country.

We would urge MPs to take part in the debate on 30 April and ensure that the importance of instrumental music education in our schools is fully considered. **We would particularly ask for support for the Committee's view that music tuition should be provided free of charge in every local authority.** (Para 81).

We would ask also for comment on the Committee's observation on the frequency with which this issue recurs:

"The Committee notes that there have been a number of inquiries, reports and strategies produced regarding instrumental music tuition over the last 20 years. While reaching broadly similar conclusions, responses to each have failed to address the 'tipping point' concerns regarding the future of IMT in schools. The Committee believes that unless the fundamental issue of the status of IMT within the curriculum and associated teaching provision is addressed then it will continue to be treated materially differently from other subjects."

The debate on 30 April needs to move things forward, not simply add to the weight of discussion about the future of music education.

Contact information

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or see: <https://www.eis.org.uk/Campaigns/Music>

We would be very happy to assist with any queries or to discuss any of the above. Thank you for your interest in instrumental music education.