

# The Arts in Schools

## Foundations for the Future

Purposes, principles and practice

A new conversation on the value of the arts in and beyond  
schools



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN  
FOUNDATION

**A NEW  
DIRECTION**

We create **opportunity**

**The Arts in Schools**

**Project leads  
and partners**

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Led by A New Direction, an award-winning non-profit working  
towards a world where all children and young people achieve  
their creative potential

Supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the  
former Arts Council England-funded Bridge organisations

## The Arts in Schools

# Objective

To read and revisit the seminal 1982 Calouste Gulbenkian report to test its relevance, to reflect on what has happened to the arts in schools in the 40 intervening years, and to make recommendations for the future

***'To consider the place of the arts as part of the school curriculum in the maintained sector of education, and to make recommendations.'*** Terms of reference for the 1982 The Arts in Schools Inquiry

## The Arts in Schools

# The project resources

- ❑ Published a **think piece** and **40-year timeline** (May 2022)
- ❑ Convened **nine online roundtables** on the original themes of the report with more than 300 participants (June-October 2022)
- ❑ Set up and ran a **young people's group**, resulting in creative responses (July-September 2022)
- ❑ Published **a series of blogs** on the themes of the roundtables (September 2022-January 2023)
- ❑ Published **24 case-studies** of excellent arts education practice by and with schools (February 2023)
- ❑ Published **the final report, an executive summary and updated 40-year timeline** (March 2023)

## The Arts in Schools

The world has  
changed ...

- ❑ In 1982 there was no National Curriculum, no Ofsted, no SATs, no academisation. Schools were run by LEAs
- ❑ There was no internet, no YouTube, no Twitter, no Facebook, no TikTok, no AI
- ❑ It was before devolution: education and skills, and the arts, are now devolved to the UK nations
- ❑ There was no definition of the creative industries as an employment sector
- ❑ It was at the very beginning of professional arts organisations having learning teams

***'In the 40 years since The Arts in Schools there have been 22 Secretaries of State for Education with only eight being in post for more than two years. There were six postholders between 2020 and 2022, with – astonishingly – five in 2022 alone.'***

## The Arts in Schools

Two important things to state at the outset ...

- It is still *possible* for schools to offer a rounded arts curriculum. **There is some excellent practice** across the country which we celebrate in an accompanying bank of 24 case studies
- But to provide a good arts education within the curriculum and beyond now takes what was described to us as *'brave' and 'courageous' school leaders and teachers* because much of what's happening in education mitigates against it

***'The 1982 inquiry concluded with the central question about the purposes of schooling, the balance of the curriculum and about the whole character of education in Britain. Four decades on we have concluded that this central question is as pertinent, if not more pressing, today as it was in 1982.'***

## The Arts in Schools

# There are three headline findings

1. **Arts subjects and experiences make a positive difference to learning and personal outcomes** for children and young people, providing them with skills for life and skills for work.
2. **Despite this, there is a lack of value ascribed to them within the state education system in England** in which they are devalued due to accountability measures that exclude them, and by a system focused on exam success as opposed to whole child development. And access is not equitable: we have a two-tier system, with the arts more highly valued in independent schools.
2. **The schooling system itself is still running on outdated policies without a clear purpose** for what schools are equipping young people with, or why. Our analysis of the arts in schools within this wider context has enabled us to show why change is necessary and how it is possible.

***'We describe the arts as being "full spectrum" subjects – from solace to skills, from empathy to experimentation – providing memorable experiences and supporting the development of critical thinking, self-expression, independence, initiative, collaboration, compassion, achievement, and creative freedom.'***

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There are five core policy principles to underpin the arts in schooling ...

1. **Rationale:** clear purposes for schooling and a coherent vision for subject areas, with curriculum linked to purposes
2. **Parity of esteem:** equal status for arts subjects with other curriculum areas, within a broad and balanced curriculum
3. **Including every child:** an access entitlement built on inclusion and equality
4. **Whole child and a rounded learning experience:** educating for personal development and wellbeing, not just academic attainment
5. **Education for now:** educating for the importance of the present, as well as for the future

*'The original report presented the case for education for the present as well as the future (the world of work), and for schooling to be about more than academic achievement, and – importantly – for all children.'*



## The Arts in Schools

... and five core provision principles essential in enabling a school to become arts-rich

1. **Breadth:** exposure to all art forms and a breadth of work and experiences
2. **Balance:** between knowledge and skills
3. **Inclusion:** embracing the needs of all children
4. **Relevance:** reflective of the world in which children live and will work
5. **Learner voice:** listening to children and young people

*'Representation in all that happens in schools is crucial: across course materials, texts chosen, artists studied, composers selected, and performances, stories and histories experienced. To be fully engaged children need to see themselves represented in the arts they experience.'*

## The Arts in Schools

The report makes 10  
recommendations:  
scaffolding for the  
future

1. A national conversation to consider and define new purposes for schooling
2. A new curriculum area – the Expressive Arts
3. Changes to how we assess arts subjects
4. Creating an arts entitlement within the school day, with extra-curricular arts as additional
5. Representation and relevance

*'Equity has to sit side by side with quality – on the basis that it's still always the case that the poorest children get the worst deal when it comes to arts and culture education participation.'*

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6. Teacher and learner agency
7. Improved and evidence-based narrative case-making
8. Support for the arts in schools from the professional arts sector
9. Schools at the heart of their communities
10. Aggregating the findings of reports calling for education system change

*Professor John Last has described the fundamental 'flaw in the logic that says to count is to become economically productive, but to create is not'.*

**The Arts in Schools**

**What next?  
Organise and  
mobilise**

**Read** the report, the summary, the Timeline

**Share with colleagues:** with school and MAT leaders and with governors; with parents (crucially); with the CEOs, chairs and boards of arts organisations; with your MP; and on social media

**Share on social media:** on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn. Post a message with a link to the full report or executive summary to your followers. Ideally tag specific people **#ArtsinSchools40**

**Respond:** We will continue to collect responses over the next few months:

**info@anewdirection.org.uk**