

Changes in Secondary Music Curriculum Provision over time 2016-18 Summary of the research by Dr Ally Daubney and Duncan Mackrill University of Sussex

This research was undertaken between June and September 2018. This summary focusses on the main findings relating to changes in curriculum provision for Music. It follows on from the research undertaken for the period 2012-16.

505 responses were received and this report focusses on schools in England, based on 464 schools. These broke down into 423 State schools and 41 Independent schools. Responses were from Academies, Local Authority, Free and Independent schools. As with the previous study, 80% have an Ofsted grading of 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

The results highlight widespread evidence of change and include:

Changes at Key Stage 3

- An increasing number of schools have reduced or completely removed music in the curriculum for year 7 students. This means that some schools now offer no music as a curriculum subject and in others it is taught only on an 'enrichment day' once a year.
- In 2012/13 Year 9 Music was compulsory for all students in 84% of the schools responding but by 2015/16 it had dropped to 67% (data from previous study). Significantly, in 2018/19 Music as a year 9 curriculum subject is compulsory in less than 50% of the responding schools. Music in year 9 is compulsory in only 47.5% of the schools. It is optional in 48.4%, and the rest offer no music provision. This has declined year on year.
- Carousel teaching across Key Stage 3 (for example where students only study Music for one term on a rotation with other subjects) has become even more prevalent with Music curriculum time reducing year on year. This has led to a significant decrease in the time given for Music across the Key Stage 3 curriculum and does not provide a sustained offer.

Staffing changes

- The average number of full time equivalent (FTE) music curriculum staff continues to reduce year on year. 35.8% of respondents reported falling staffing levels for Music departments between 2016 and 2018/19 with only 14.6% stating levels had risen, and mostly these being in cases where schools had increased their student capacity.

28 schools (6%) have less than 1FTE
115 schools (25%) have 1 FTE
214 schools (47%) have between 1.01 and 2 FTE
101 schools (22%) more than 2 FTE

- The average number of FTE staff in Independent schools is much higher than in State schools. The average for Independent is 2.57 FTE (range 1 to 5.33) whilst in State schools it is 1.67 FTE (range 0 to 6).

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- Multiple responses mentioned more potential redundancies for music teachers in the next academic year, with some responses noting that music teachers were not being replaced when leaving or retiring, that they were ‘filling gaps’ in core subjects where not enough staff had been recruited (and that as a necessity the music curriculum offer had been reduced) and that redundancies had already happened as music had been reducing or dropped as a curriculum subject. The EBacc was frequently cited as a reason for a shift in curriculum focus, which negatively impacted staffing.
- There are considerable concerns about professional isolation as a growing number of departments have one person only teaching music across the school. It was also pointed out how this negatively impacts the wider musical life of the school.
- 70% of respondents reported teaching outside their subject area since 2016.

Impact of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

- Perceptions about the impact of the EBacc demonstrate that 59% responding to a neutrally worded question highlighted the EBacc specifically as having a negative impact on the provision and uptake of Music in their school (within and beyond the curriculum). Conversely, just 2.5% considered that the EBacc had a positive impact on Music.
- There continues to be a decline in the number of schools offering GCSE Music. There is no option for GCSE music in 18% of the responding schools. This is growing year on year and because the survey collected ‘uptake data’, this looks set to fall 5.7% between the exam period in 2018 and that in 2020 for students who have recently started in Year 10.
- Between 2016 and 2018/19 there has been a decline of 9.8% in the number of students in these schools starting a GCSE music course. Based on these figures, we expect the number of students completing the qualifications in 2018 and 2020 to continue to fall, as has been the decline in recent years.
- 8% of schools offering GCSE music deliver it outside of core curriculum time (for example, after school).
- 14.5% of schools reported that not every pupil was able to opt for Music as an examination subject at Key Stage 4 even when it was offered as a subject. Evidence from the data shows that the EBacc has a detrimental impact on whether students are able to opt for Music where it is offered. In some schools top set students were guided away from taking Music at KS4 because of the EBacc, whilst in others lower ability students were prevented from taking Music so they could concentrate on EBacc subjects.
- 22% of schools have specific entry criteria for taking Music GCSE.
- In Key Stage 5, the number of centres offering A level fell by 15.4% between 2016 and 2018. The number of students starting courses fell by 4%. We expect this decline to be mirrored in 2019 and 2020 once the A level results are released.
- Across the same period, the number of schools offering A level Music Technology fell by 31.7%, with a 10.6% drop in the number of students starting courses.
- Within the Independent schools responding, though there was a 7.3% increase in student numbers for A level Music, the number of schools offering the course decreased by 19.4%. For GCSE there was a 2.8% decrease in student numbers over this period.