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# Music Education in Suffolk

Mapping provision and  
moving towards music for all

BRITTEN PEARS  
ARTS

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# Report Summary

State funding for music is tight. There are over 100,000 state school pupils in Suffolk and about half of these pupils attend a school that engages with Suffolk Music Hub, which has a music education hub grant of under £10 per pupil per year. Despite the financial challenges, there is considerable evidence of excellent music education taking place, but this is not universal. This report maps Suffolk's music provision and education for children and young people in order to keep in step with the changes outlined in the recent policy paper, *The power of music to change lives: A National Plan for Music Education*, published in June 2022.

Key findings about music education and music-making engagement in Suffolk include:

- Little impact of whether a school is rural or urban
- Little impact on whether a school is large or small
- Little difference whether it is an academy or an LEA school
- Little difference according to Ofsted rating
- A weak but significant link to the percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium.

Our discussions with stakeholders demonstrate that school leadership and individual teacher or music lead teacher commitment is perhaps the most important factor in school engagement with music education.

Factors that act as barriers to engagement with music education include lack of school leadership support, cost, outcome-focused teaching, the quality of teachers, as well as social attitudes, and these negatively shape progress and progression in music education.

Factors that enhance music education are learner-centred teaching, competent and enthusiastic musician-teachers, family and friends, and normative, positive social attitudes to music.

This report offers multiple recommendations: widen the musical curriculum; acknowledge the importance of parents; continue the professional development of teachers; and reflect on the organisation of the music hub. These recommendations align with the recent policy paper and will help to address the gaps and barriers present in Suffolk's music education.

Music education is often viewed as a mechanism to support other learning goals, such as numeracy or literacy. What is key in this report, and the value that underpins our proposed solutions, is that music education is also important in its own right.





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Faced with financial cuts in real terms on our state provision of music education, it has never been more critical for Suffolk to consider how to optimise the great work that happens across the county. Working with our partners, this report provides the contextual information and recommendations to pave the way for those changes.

## Research objectives

Our project has four main objectives in relation to Suffolk's music:

- 1) Map current music provision, music education and participatory music activities for children and young people in Suffolk
- 2) Outline gaps and barriers to participation in current music-making provision in Suffolk
- 3) Identify effective ways to increase engagement and create greater access to music-making provision in Suffolk
- 4) Collaborate with partners to develop a collective plan for Suffolk until 2030.

## Data

The report is based on three main sources of data. The first main sources of information about engagement are from the music hub that forms the return to Arts Council England for 2021-22, supplemented with data from Britten Pears Arts about school engagement with their Celebrations and Big Sing events that are organised each year. The report also uses relevant data from the Department for Education (DfE), Arts Council England (ACE) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The second main source of information on engagement is from stakeholders and involves, potentially, a very wide range of organisations, including schools that do not engage with the music hub. The third source of data is from focus groups the research team carried out with the help of children and young people.



## Abbreviations used in this report

ACE – Arts Council England

DfE – Department for Education

ONS – Office for National Statistics

WCET – Whole Class Ensemble Teaching

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# CHAPTER 1

**Current music provision, music education and participatory music activities for children and young people in Suffolk**



# Introduction

This chapter will outline the policy context for music education in England, important considerations of funding and an exploration of the role of participation, progression and sustainability in the refreshed plan for music education. This is followed by a detailed exploration of the patterns of music hub and music-making engagement across Suffolk using available data. This chapter will also explore the perspectives of stakeholders on music education. We are presenting the data that we have access to, but it needs to be noted that there is a richer picture of music education and participation to be explored across over 100,000 children and young people in Suffolk that our sources of data and scope of this project are unable to consider. What we present is the best data available, along with some surprising findings that question some widely held assumptions, especially regarding why and which schools are more engaged with music-making. Engagement in this context means hub provision of music lessons or whole class ensemble teaching along with advice.

## Policy context

In state schools, music education has been a key non-statutory part of the national curriculum since 1992 with regular changes to content, testing, expectations and the quantity of guidance (Bath et al, 2020; Savage, 2021). Since the first National Plan for Music Education in 2011, the newly created music hubs, usually based on local authority music services, played a core role providing music education, but alongside a changing context of school organisation. This organisational context was a move to the widespread use of academies as a way of organising and administering schools. Academies have no formal requirement to adhere to the National Curriculum, though most do (Mansell 2016) and few links to previous local authority support and oversight. Given that music hubs were usually mapped onto local authority areas, this had important consequences for music education. The core initial role of the music hubs from 2011 was to:

- a) Ensure that every child aged 5–18 has the opportunity to learn a musical instrument (other than voice) through whole-class ensemble teaching programmes for ideally a year (but for a minimum of a term) of weekly tuition on the same instrument
- b) Provide opportunities to play in ensembles and to perform from an early stage
- c) Ensure that clear progression routes are available and affordable to all young people
- d) Develop a singing strategy to ensure that every pupil sings regularly, and that choirs and other vocal ensembles are available in the area. (DfE and DCMS, 2011, p. 26) (see also Savage, 2021, p. 476).

Music hubs were introduced from 2012 alongside the expansion of academies with greater financial and curricula independence at primary and secondary level. This led to considerable diversity of provision and cases of disengagement from music hubs by some academy schools. Savage (2021) argues that this change produced an increased variability of provision with differences between urban or metropolitan areas, and rural areas where it is more difficult to access specialist facilities, alongside different approaches and levels of success, engagement and finance for music hubs. The expansion of academies and the implications for music education is a common theme in research literature (see Henley and Barton, 2022).

According to Savage (2021, p. 478), 'There have been few independent evaluations of the work of Music Education Hubs.' This is the starting point for our work to explore music education provision in Suffolk. The policy context shows an increase in access and engagement, but some question the quality and sustainability of that engagement with the focus on whole class ensemble teaching for instrument lessons (WCET) in primary schools. Savage (2021) argues there is a 'postcode lottery', which means differences between different music hub areas or school catchment areas. The introduction of music hubs led to improvements in some music hub areas and for Savage (2021, p. 478) 'there is often an increasing dynamism and commitment to music education in these areas compared to the services previously offered by the local authority.' In policy terms, Savage (2021) makes a plea, based on the work of Schmidt (2019) to put teachers in schools and music education hubs at the heart of the process of policy development.

In the most recent policy paper, the government have set out their vision for music education in England. The Power of Music to Change Lives: The National Plan for Music Education (DfE, 2022, p. 5) sets out three goals:

- 1) All children and young people receive a high-quality music education in the early years and in schools
- 2) All music educators work in partnership, with children and young people's needs and interests at their heart
- 3) All children and young people with musical interests and talents have the opportunity to progress, including professionally.



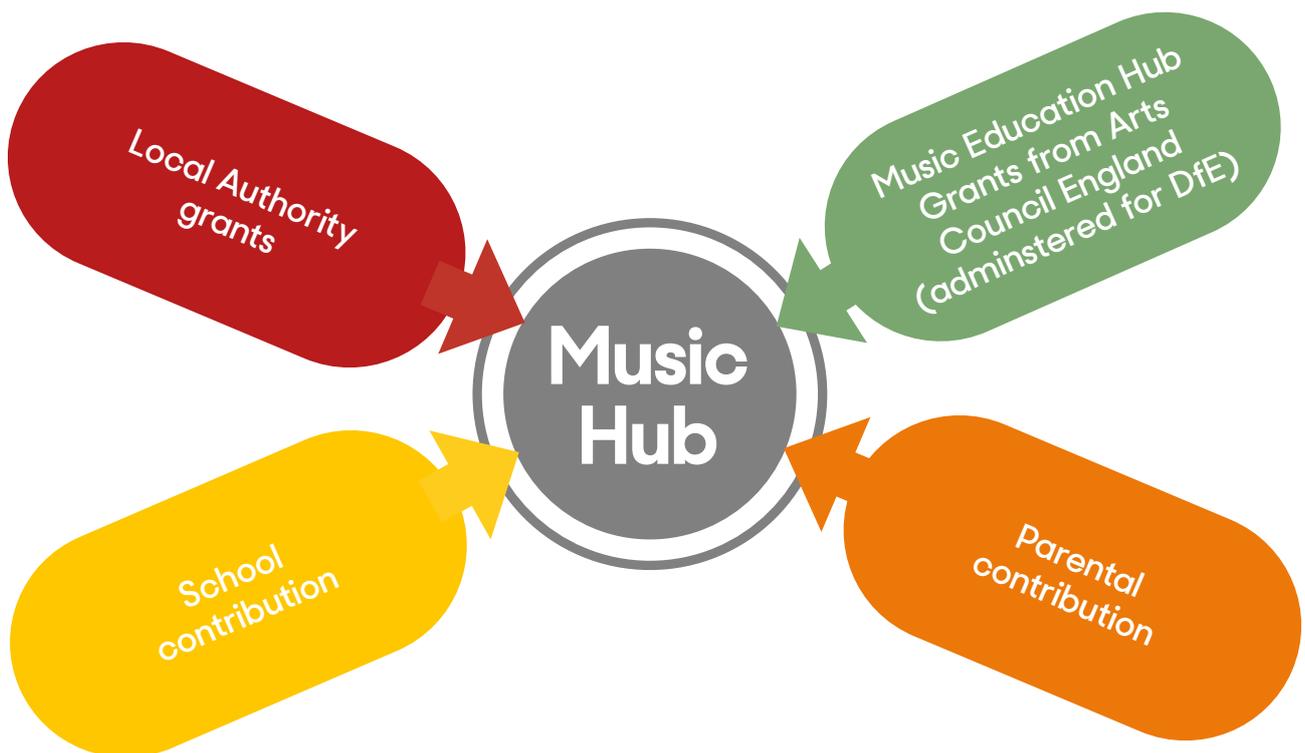


# Funding

Between 2015 and 2022, music hubs in England have had a stable budget from the DfE distributed through Arts Council England in the range of £74-76m per year. Meanwhile, pupil numbers have remained broadly stable with between 4.6m-4.7m state-funded primary pupils but with an increase from 3.2m to 3.6m pupils in state-funded secondary pupils in line with trends in birth rates. Overall funding for the music hub in Suffolk has seen a decrease in school contribution to the delivery of services from 51% in 2012/13 to 35% in 2021/22. The main sources of funding for Suffolk Music Hub can be found in Figure 1.

DfE funding for local authority music services was £82.5m in 2011-12 (DfE 2011) and the funding for music hubs distributed through ACE will be £76m in 2022/23. This compares with overall cash funding per 5-16 year old pupil of £6,510 in 2021/22 compared to £5,180 in 2010/11. Overall funding for music hubs in England has declined over the last decade in real terms.

Figure 1: Main sources of music hub funding





Sustainability in terms of being able to maintain a service or level of engagement over time, is a key consideration for music hubs and one of their key roles is not needing to rely on the individual commitment and skill of particular teachers within schools to maintain a local 'eco-system' for music education. This is important given real terms cuts to music hub funding over the last decade. Sustainability means being able to maintain a service over time, but sustainable progress can be viewed in terms of music-making for classes, groups and individuals as they develop. Sustainability for music education becomes more pertinent considering ABRSM's findings in which children and young people tend not to continue to progress their musical development further within formal education routes.

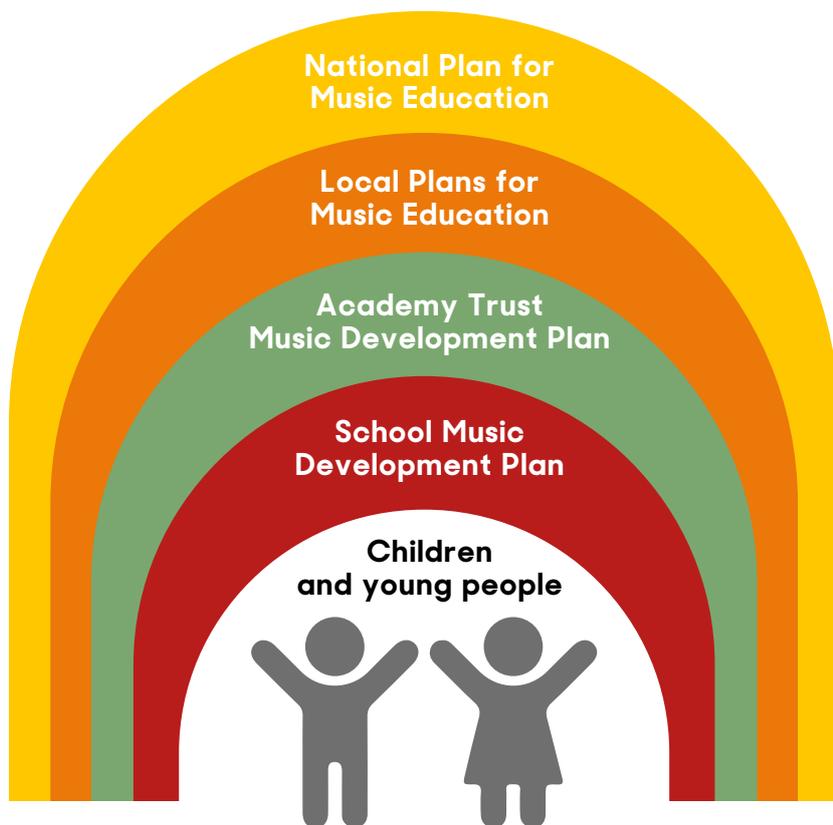
Parental interest in music is one of the best predictors of engagement with music-making over a sustained period (see studies by Krupp-Schleußner & Lehmann-Wermser, 2018; Ehrlin & Tivenius, 2018) and children and young people are understandably the focus on who participates in music-making (OFSTED, 2021). However, parents have a role in motivation and facilitating this participation. Recent research demonstrates the benefits gained in autistic children, in terms of their verbal development, emotional regulation and social interaction, when parents facilitate participation using a 'Sounds of Intent in the Early Years' framework (Lisboa et al, 2021). Ways to increase parental involvement in music-making is an important insight from the literature that music hubs could have a role, alongside schools, in encouraging.

The formal music education context, and the music hubs, are not the only route to music participation. Pop-up and temporary events, community groups and services, and private tutoring, all have their role in the music education of children and young people in Suffolk. It is not simply the formal music education or music hub offer. Resembling other subjects relating to the arts or to sport, we would benefit from viewing music participation as a mosaic, encompassing varied opportunities to make music. An increased focus on sustained partnership working from a music hub would help to maintain links between different contexts.

Given the various players involved in music education, sustainable participation and progression for children and young people benefits from an ecological systems approach (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1977). A nested approach in which we can view the intersection between the various facilities, resources and expertise that ultimately shape the children and young people who reside at the heart of the education will enable a deeper understanding of the data and inform recommendations that are tied to our current definitions of music participation.

The 2022 revised Plan for Music Education uses an ecological model to represent the different organisational roles in the provision of music education with children and young people at the centre. What is missing is the family or social context of the young people – insight we will be offering when we hear the voice of children and young people in Chapters 2 and 3.

Figure 2: The role of music education plans for children and young people



Source DfE 2022, p. 14)

## Music hub data

There are two main sources of information about engagement. The first is from ACE music hub returns on music participation which they administer for the Department for Education. The music hub makes the most significant contribution in terms of reach and impact on music education for children and young people across the county. There is the potential to reach around 102,000 pupils in state-funded primary and secondary schools in Suffolk. Even factoring in the level of school engagement with the music hub, where 53% of primary age pupils and 46% of secondary age pupils attend a state-funded primary or secondary school that engages with the music hub in Suffolk, this is a very large potential impact. Our research also shows that some schools are highly engaged in music education at the primary and secondary school level without the music hub. There are also schools with higher levels of pupil premium and no music hub engagement that are providing an important music education and music-making offer. We can therefore



take the music hub engagement data as a baseline and note that the actual level of engagement with music education is often much higher than this, although occasionally very limited in some schools. Music hub engagement is also part of the route into music that then develops a range of skills through and for performance. These include school ensembles, school concerts as well as community music groups, sometimes linked to a particular school or group of schools. This school-based engagement with music also develops with other community-based activities in the early years and later on in secondary school. The opportunity to perform music is a key aspect of most primary schools and is important as both a source of motivation and a place where skills that have been developed can be demonstrated.

The second main source of information on engagement is from stakeholders and involves a potentially wide range of organisations, including many schools that do not engage with the music hub. There are many music projects run by different organisations based around a place, school, or aiming to engage a particular sector of the population. These organisations rely on goodwill, voluntary fundraising and often bidding for grants and projects. Within schools, these projects often rely on support from school leadership – both a barrier and potential facilitator which will be discussed later in this report. Where these projects are supported by grants, projects can be short-term and not always regular or sustainable. These projects are also very reliant upon dedicated teachers in schools or the community.

The music hub data communicated to ACE alongside DfE and other population data from the ONS gives us a good overall context of the hub activities in Suffolk. There are 154,588 children and young people aged 0-18 in Suffolk (ONS 2022) with 102,883 in a state primary or secondary school (DfE 2022).

The latest 2021-22 data for state-funded schools from ACE returns shows that the hub worked with 135 primary schools (or 54%) and 19 secondary schools (41%). Our analysis using DfE data about school type shows that overall 51% of academies and 56% of local authority-maintained schools engaged with the music hub. Further detail can be found in Table 1 that shows lower music hub engagement from secondary schools than primary schools. Some of this can be accounted for by the importance of whole class ensemble teaching (WCET) being an offer directed towards primary schools and a key focus of the music hub's role.





Figure 4: State school engagement with music hub by type of school, 2021-22

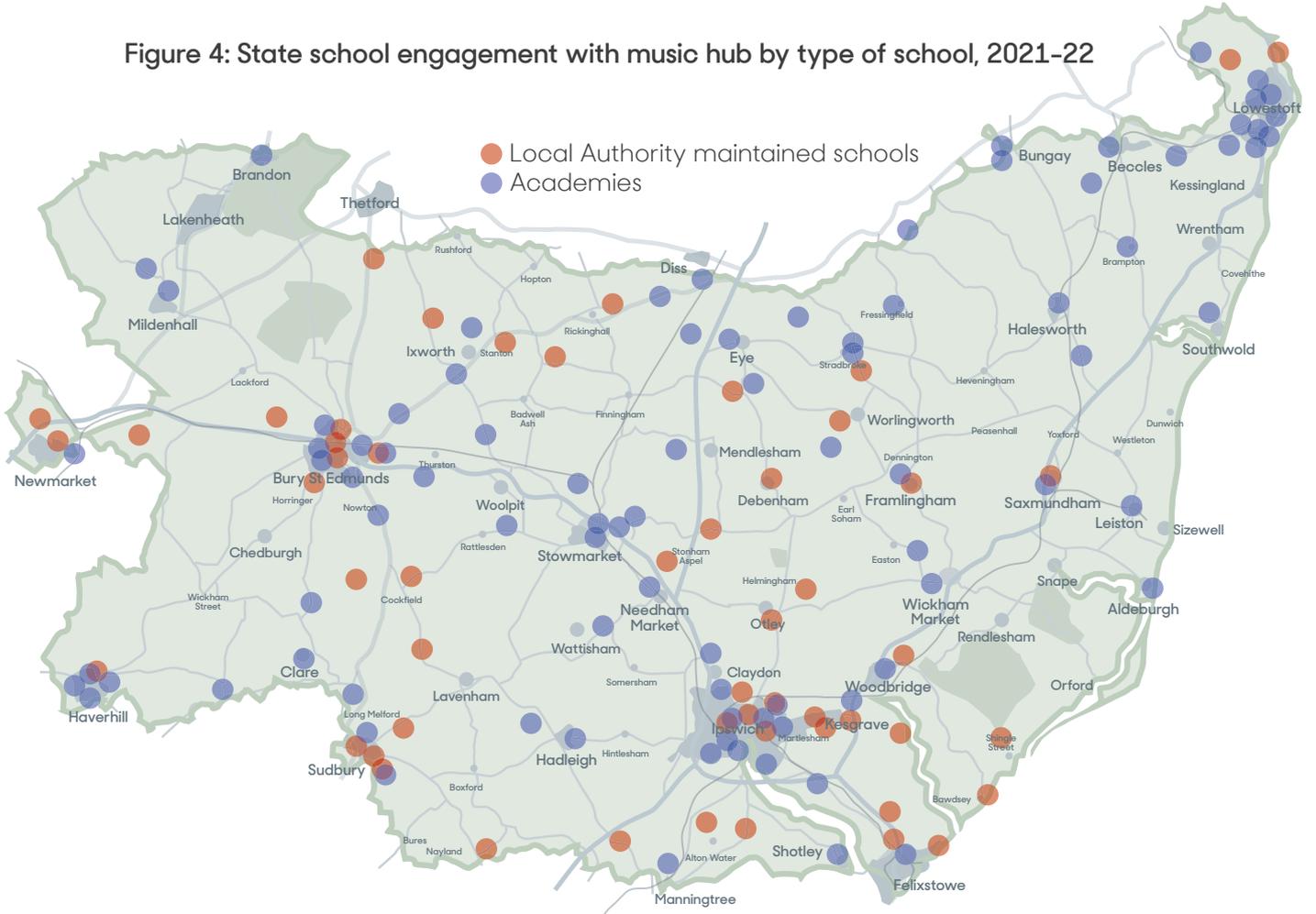
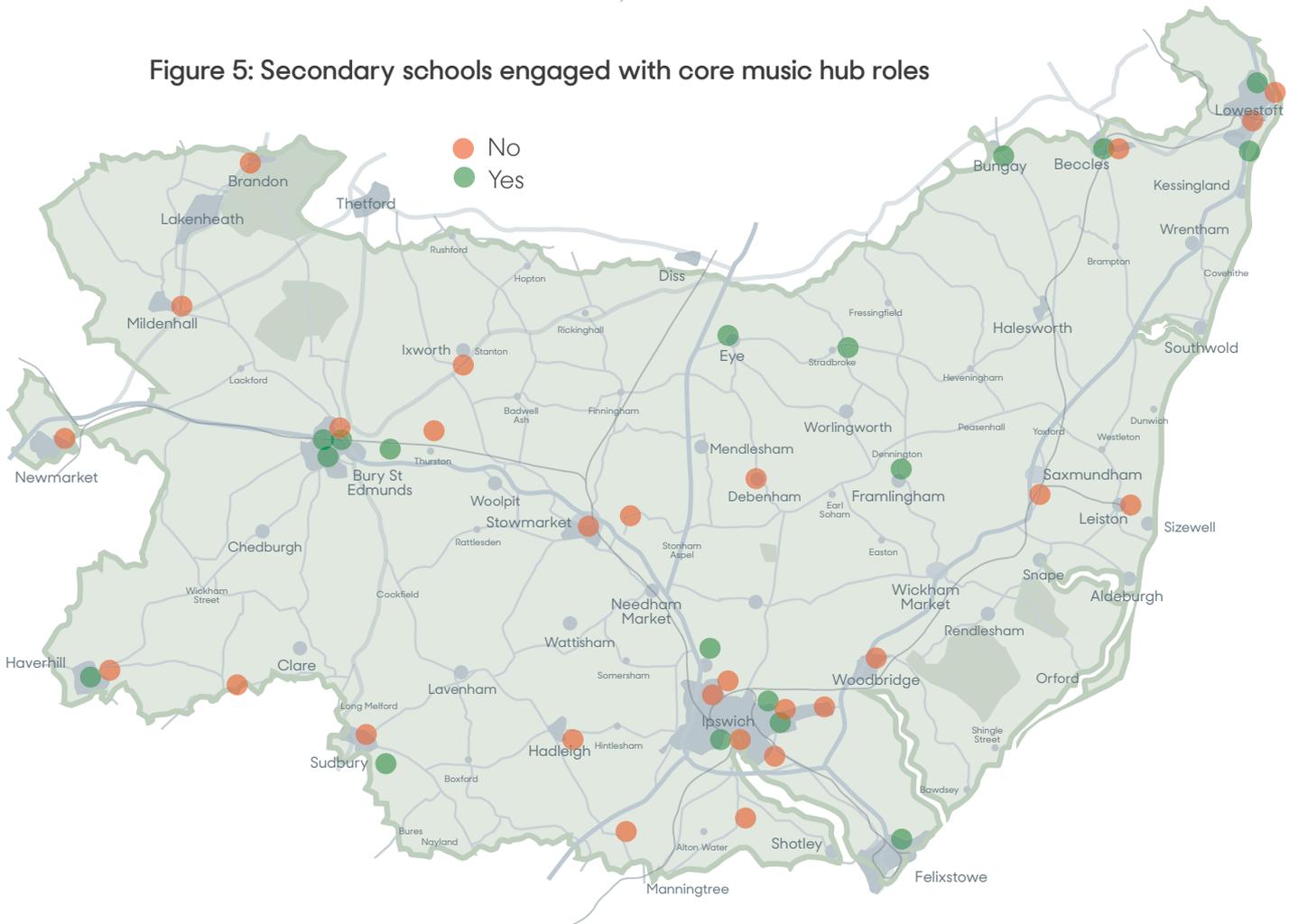


Figure 5: Secondary schools engaged with core music hub roles



A similar balance of engagement with the music hub is found when the different sizes of schools across the county is considered. There is a total state-funded primary school population of 57,005 and a total state-funded secondary school population of 41,509 from 2021–22 data. The music hub potentially engaged with 50% of state school pupils when considering school enrolments size rather than counting schools. There are slightly higher levels of engagement from LEA schools compared to academies for both primary and secondary school pupils, although there are very few LEA pupils in secondary schools compared to academies, as the policy of moving to academies started earlier and is more complete in these schools in England.

**Table 2: Number of pupils potentially engaged with music hub by type of state-funded school and phase of education**

	Primary no	Primary yes	Secondary no	Secondary yes*	Primary engaged with hub %	Secondary engaged with hub %
Academies	18056	18520	18819	16046	51%	46%
Free Schools	180	205	2095	–	53%	–
Local authority maintained	8504	11540	1578	2971	58%	65%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26740</b>	<b>30265</b>	<b>22492</b>	<b>19017</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>46%</b>

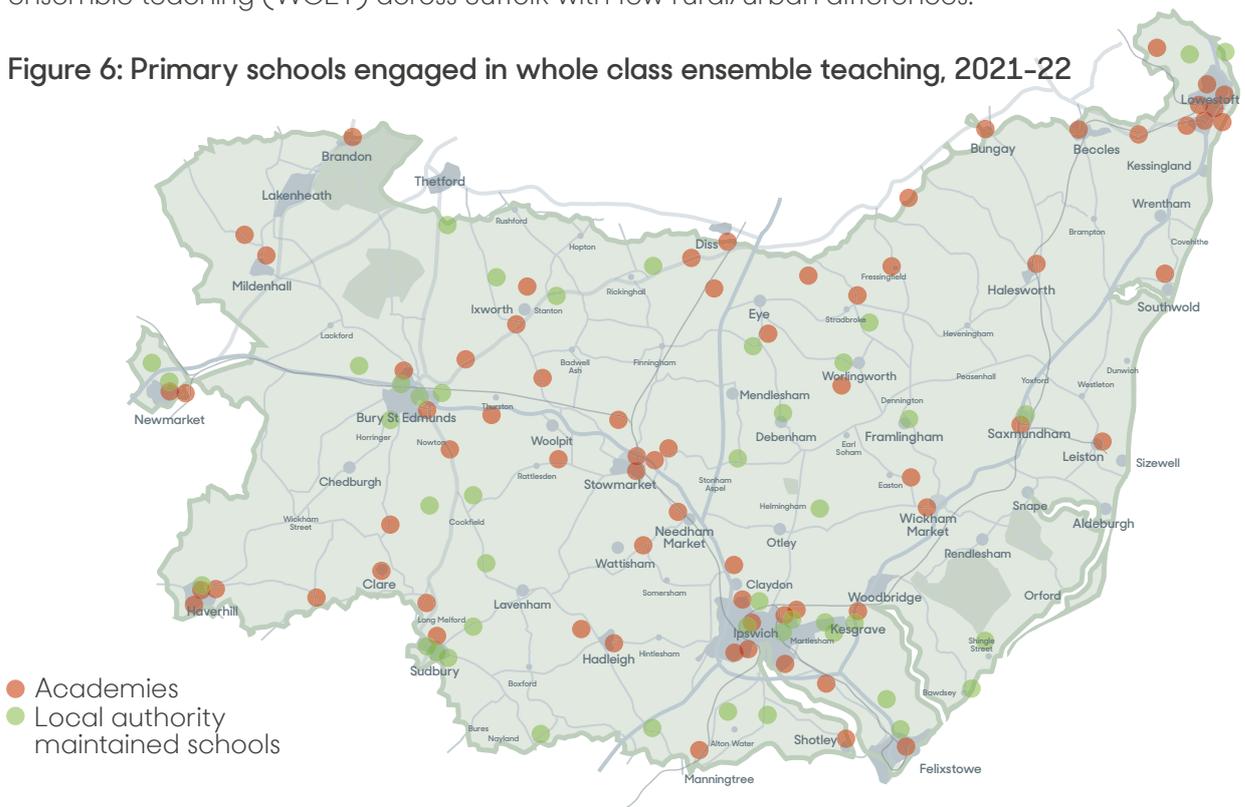
\* Most secondary school engagement is provision of music lessons to a small percentage of pupils and some secondary schools have sixth forms

Sources: ACE return 2021–22, and DfE 2022

Tables 1 and 2 show there is about 50% potential engagement with the activities of the music hub, but it is important to note that actual and potential engagement will be much lower in secondary schools as these do not have whole class ensemble tuition – a service that reaches most music hub engaged primary school pupils at some point in their school career, usually in year 4 or 5.

Figure 6 below shows the distribution of primary schools engaged in whole class ensemble teaching (WCET) across Suffolk with few rural/urban differences.

**Figure 6: Primary schools engaged in whole class ensemble teaching, 2021–22**



**Table 3: Numbers and percentages of pupils engaging with WCET by year group and ONS urban-rural classification**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Mixed Year Groups*	Total Number of Pupils
Rural	20	20	330	628	494	86	878	2456
Urban	22	28	204	1454	879	279	178	3044
Total	42	48	534	2082	1373	365	1056	5500
Rural %	48%	42%	62%	30%	36%	24%	83%	
Urban %	52%	58%	38%	70%	64%	76%	17%	

\*These are usually mixed across years 3, 4, 5 or 6 and often for smaller primary schools

Sources: ACE return 2021-22, and DfE 2022

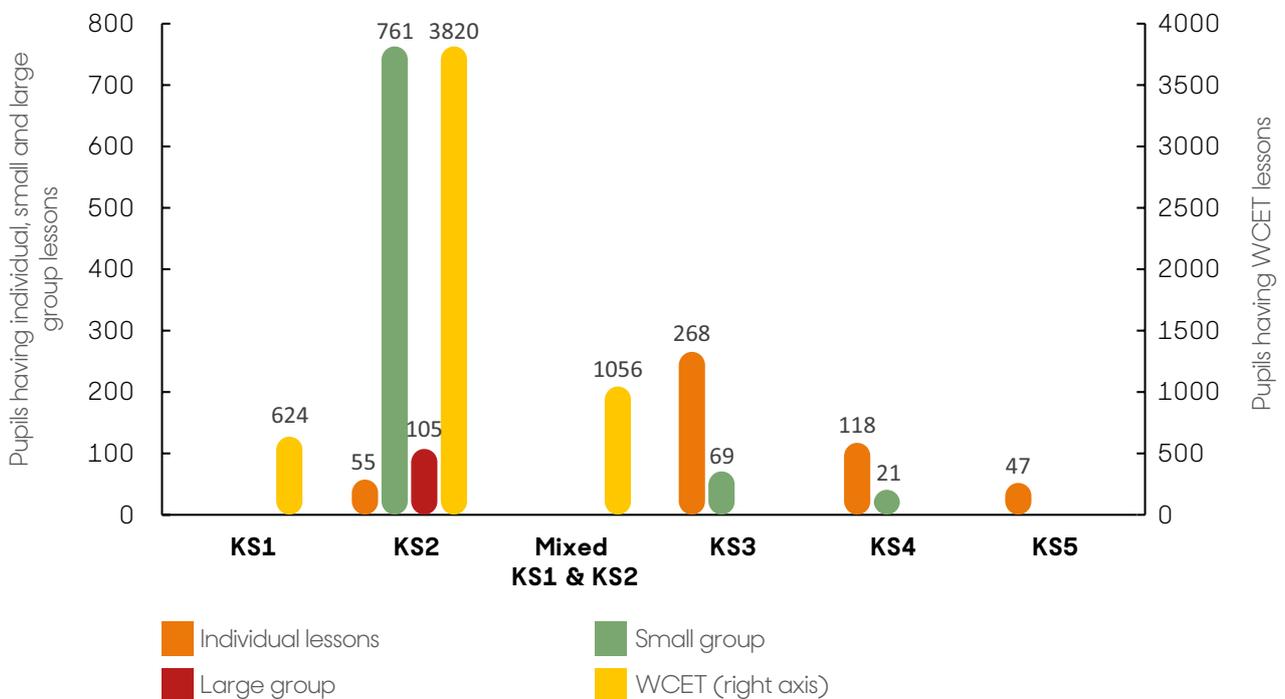
Table 3 shows how rural schools tend to start WCET a little earlier in year 3 where the year group is not mixed. Year 4 is clearly the peak year for pupils to take a WCET class, followed by year 5. And as we would expect, smaller more rural schools have more mixed year groups for WCET. We can note a considerable drop off in WCET engagement by year 6 which is the year of SATS. The UK Parliament Education Committee (2017) in its review of primary school assessment, noted the “close link between primary assessment (SATS) and school accountability creates a high stakes system which can negatively impact children’s teaching and learning”, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum and “teaching to the test”. The engagement of primary school children with the instrumental or vocal tuition of WCET is intended to be earlier in the music education journey rather than later, although there are some examples of using this to re-engage or start year 7 secondary school pupils in some music hub areas.

Engagement with services offered by Suffolk Music Hub – WCET, individual lessons, small group lessons and large group sessions – changes depending on age, as captured by National Curriculum Key Stage (see Figure 7). There is a large drop in engagement with these services from schools as pupils enter Key Stage 3 and beyond. These findings align with recent data presented by ABRSM (2021) in which the trend in group music participation for children and young people is mainly up to the age of 13, with most being in Key Stage 2. Many do not continue to progress their musical development further within formal education routes. Opportunities and ways to improve progression is a key aspect of the refreshed National Plan for Music Education (DfE, 2022). Key Stage 2 is the main focus of activity for Suffolk Music Hub in terms of small group and WCET services and there is considerable reach compared with one-to-one lessons. This shows the efficiency of WCET in reaching far more pupils than individual lessons, exactly as was



intended. The report by Fautley, Kinsella and Whitaker (2017, p. 2) on WCET states that “done well, WCET makes a real difference to the lives of the children and young people involved”, but notes that the “quality of teaching and learning are highly significant” and “good support from host schools is the most significant feature”. The challenge of progress and progression is to enable more pupils to continue learning an instrument in small group or one-to-one contexts and perform in school bands or wider community, or county-wide ensembles. In some larger secondary schools outside of the music hub, there are higher levels of music instrument lessons than with the hub. Part of this is related to the lower level of engagement of secondary schools with the music hub. There is also a challenge for the music hub to try to maintain scale and reach along with progression.

Figure 7 Number of pupils having Suffolk music hub lessons by key stage and type



Sources: ACE return 2021-22, and DfE 2022



**Table 4: Percentage of pupils engaged with music hub by school type and rural-urban classification**

Rural*	% No	% Yes
Primary	43%	57%
Secondary	56%	44%
Urban*		
Primary	49%	51%
Secondary	53%	47%
Total rural	48%	52%
Total urban	51%	49%

\*Classification based on where main settlements are in the Middle Super Output Area of the school according to the simplified two-fold classification.

Sources: DfE 2022, and ONS 2017

Table 4 shows few major differences between whether a predominantly urban or rural school setting has an impact on participation with the music hub. Overall, 31% of Suffolk pupils attend a school in a rural area and 69% in an urban area. This compares to 18% of England's population living in rural areas.

**Table 5: Number of primary schools engaged with WCET services by rural-urban classification**

	Engaged in WCET		Total	% Engagement
	No	Yes		
Rural*	73	64	137	47%
Urban*	62	53	115	46%
Total	135	117	252	

\*Classification based on where main settlements are in the Middle Super Output Area of the school according to the simplified two-fold classification.

Sources: DfE 2022, and ONS 2017



Table 5 indicates very little percentage difference between rural and urban settings of primary schools that have engaged in WCET services. Further exploration of the data found no clear link between Ofsted rating and likelihood to engage with the music hub.

We did, however, find that primary schools with a religious characteristic were less likely than non-religious schools to engage with the music hub – 61% of primary schools with a religious characteristic did not engage with WCET or the music hub. Interestingly, we did not find a relationship between school size and WCET engagement.

We considered other factors that might explain engagement and explored the role of poverty using pupil premium as the main school-centred measure. Here we found a statistically significant, but weak, negative relationship between the percentage of pupils at a school eligible for pupil premium percentage and whether the music hub had worked with the school as part of its core roles ( $r(318) = -.178, p = .001$ ). A greater percentage of pupil premium related to slightly less engagement between that school and the music hub.

So from the data, whether a school is rural or urban, large or small, an academy or an LEA school, or has a high or low Ofsted rating, there is little impact on engagement with the music hub, but a small impact from the religious characteristic of the school. There is as noted above a weak but significant link to pupil premium. Our discussions with stakeholders suggest that school leadership and individual teacher or music lead teacher commitment is a very important factor. School leadership and teacher commitment is quite evenly spread across Suffolk from our mapping of engagement, though with some lower levels in urban areas like Ipswich. We must also note that many schools are offering both a good music curriculum and important opportunities for instrument learning that do not engage with the music hub.

From discussions with stakeholders, some primary schools found resourcing a strong music offer of both instrument and curriculum lessons a challenge for both financial and staff confidence and skill reasons. There were wide differences in what was offered between different primary schools, and this was linked to both financial issues and school leadership support with making music a priority. Some primary schools were not engaging with WCET, or offering small group or one-to-one lessons because they could not afford it. Given the funding model of music teaching, in some schools with higher pupil premium, engaging with group or one-to-one lessons was viewed as a financial risk because of a possible low uptake.





primary and secondary schools have very little music beyond some elements of music education, maybe using some online resources to deliver this part of the curriculum to provide structured support for non-specialist teachers. In some schools there are no instrumental or singing music lessons taking place either as a whole class or one-to-one organised through the school. Even in these schools there will be some pupils who are accessing music education and instrument learning or singing through private lessons or community organisations, usually related strongly to parental interest, motivation, and often payment. There are also some schools that are offering a rich inclusive music education with high levels of instrument learning and musical engagement without using the music hub. These schools have impressive levels of instrument learning, musical skill progression and performance opportunities. From our conversations, some schools working outside of the music hub had dedicated teachers with responsibility for music, excellent relationships between the music teachers and peripatetic music teachers (circulating music teachers who go from school to school) often with, in effect, their own music hub. We saw excellent examples of secondary schools linking with feeder primary schools with peripatetic teachers being the important links of continuity for music lessons.

Alongside the more formal music offer of instrumental lessons, there are often important opportunities for performance and musical enjoyment in most schools. This can take the form of singing assemblies, termly concerts, or performance at religious festivals, often linked to local churches. The music hub also organises the ensembles in Suffolk which offer an important offer of progression. This includes Suffolk Youth Orchestra, Suffolk Youth Brass and Woodwind, as well as a jazz band and choirs.



## Case Study 1: Urban Secondary School

This urban secondary school with 39% of pupils with pupil premium is growing its music offer. It has full support from school leadership and the pupil premium is used to fund the music offer. There is a singing choir and concerts, alongside carols at a local church and a community choir for parents. The school has two practice rooms, a music studio and is able to fund the instruments it needs. There are some developing links with feeder primary schools. The school engages with Suffolk Music Hub in order to source one-to-one lessons for some instruments. There is growing interest in music lessons, and so the school has a growing appetite for students to take GCSE music, with possible future numbers of up to 50 (for a school of just under 900 pupils without a sixth form). About 10% of pupils have one-to-one music lessons and these are free for pupils. The school pays the music teachers directly as part of the academy HR function. The school also aims to develop an ensemble and links with other progression activities for pupils.



## Case Study 2: Rural Secondary School

This school, set in a rural area and with 10% of pupils with pupil premium (compared to 27% nationally in England) has an impressive range of musical activity. The school does not engage with Suffolk Music hub. Around 30% of pupils have one-to-one music lessons in the school and there are high levels of progress in musical skill measured by grades. There are excellent links with primary schools where the role of peripatetic teachers is important in providing musical continuity.

One-to-one music lessons are common in the feeder primary schools, and these are facilitated by the schools, so parents pay the music teacher directly. The secondary school agrees a standard rate for the teachers, but payment is a private invoicing arrangement between the teacher and parents. There are ways that children with pupil premium can have reduced or free lessons.

Music is a vibrant presence in the school and the children and young people are clearly gaining pleasure from it, as well as confidence, empowerment and the sense of achievement from working with fellow pupils. Pupils are given considerable responsibility and freedom in deciding what music they learn and whether they follow grades or their own self-set goals in the music lessons. Music teachers take the lead from the pupil in terms of what they want to get out of the lessons. A local eco-system of musical excellence has developed with excellent links between the schools, the music lead, and importantly peripatetic music teachers.

The school has two choirs, a jazz band, a school orchestra with around 50 players, provides three concerts a year and two shows, with good links between music and drama. The peripatetic teachers play a key role in organising the musical groups. There is a high level of support from all levels of school leadership and music often features in the school liaison days for Year 6 primary school pupils. There are also two concerts a year at the secondary school from one of the feeder primary schools. High levels of music progress, progression and enjoyment are very much in evidence.



The data shows an even spread of hub engagement across LEA and academy run schools, even those in larger multi-academy trusts (for example, the Inspiration Trust has schools around Lowestoft and south Norfolk and administers music similarly to other secondary schools). Here, there is a strength in providing support between schools and sharing both resources as well as professional development and skills, but also a tendency among some to look for simpler digital solutions that do not require musical education or training for teachers. Arguably, these solutions offer less focus on music-making and more on the goals of the national music curriculum at the relevant key stage.

For example, there was quite widespread use of online resources such as Charanga or Kapow, but also a range of other resources, some produced by the school and others part of a bigger music lesson offer. Many of these resources were directed more towards the music education curriculum in schools rather than instrument learning. Sometimes the resources are provided through the music hub (e.g. Charanga) but they are also purchased separately by schools. There is a vibrant commercial market in these music education resources with lots of offers. Some teachers expressed positive views of some of these resources in allowing non-specialist teachers to delivery music education, that often includes singing, but not instrument learning.



...arguably there is more of a 'leadership lottery' that shapes the engagement between Suffolk schools and the music hub

Overall, in conversations with teachers and music leads, we found that a key factor in a school's music offer was the level of commitment by the school leadership, and whether pupil premium was used to fund music instrument lessons as well as give music a prominent part in the curriculum. There is a weak indication of a 'postcode lottery' based on pupil premium in relation to music hub engagement, but arguably there is more of a 'leadership lottery' that shapes the engagement between Suffolk schools and the music hub. We found considerable commitment to use pupil premium to fund music lessons in some schools with very high levels of pupil premium (around 40% in some cases) which is a good indicator of deprivation levels among pupils attending a school. It is interesting to note that music instrument learning and music is often viewed by leaders in schools with higher levels of deprivation nationally as key to improving wider school outcomes. Our research found much literature to support the idea that music-making and learning an instrument or developing singing skills is an important way to increase outcomes in other subject areas. It must however be noted that the exact mechanism by which this takes place for a set of skills that are not close to each other or readily transferable is not always clear. It is not a simple effect of music learning.



## Community music organisations

Organisations outside of formal education have a significant role in music education. Britten Pears Arts is partly funded through ACE, as is Norfolk & Norwich Festival which promotes creativity for children and young people across the East of England. Many other smaller community organisations and groups are self-funded or rely on small grants. Britten Pears Arts engages with a large number of schools, second only to the music hub across Suffolk and includes some which do not engage with the music hub, through both the annual week-long Celebrations and Big Sing events held in the studio, practice and concert spaces at Snape Maltings. 47 schools that did not engage with the music hub also engaged with Celebrations and 39 with the Big Sing. Britten Pears Arts also has a free vocal group called Group A, as well as organising professional development days for school-based initial teacher training. Other organisations like Come and Sing also have a key role in developing vocal skills and work in Norfolk but also at the Big Sing events in Suffolk.

Peripatetic music teachers play a significant role in linking schools to instrument learning. This might be through a formal role in the music hub or one mediated through the school. We also came across examples where peripatetic teachers had a direct link for payment and for updates on progress with parents, but the initial contact and organisation was through the school. This shows a range of people and organisations involved in music education.

Churches played an important role in providing a space for performance for some schools. In smaller rural schools it was often the only place large enough to hold a school concert. Stakeholders considered the link between music and events like harvest festival, Christmas or Easter concerts as very important for a sense of occasion and achievement in the life of the school and for those engaged in music learning. The organisation of concerts and performances was one of extra roles many or most music leads in primary or secondary schools were engaged in. These events are part of the life of the school but rely on particular individuals and usually the support of the school leadership.

Singing and choirs are a key part of the role of churches, and the Cathedral Choir at Bury St Edmunds Cathedral engages with 10–12 local primary schools by offering singing lessons within curriculum time, as well as a link to become part of the choir, an important route of progression.

Many schools also have other community links, and there are many community organisations that work with different schools or areas. There are broader organisations, such as Suffolk Artlink – a charity for arts and social inclusion in Halesworth Suffolk. Working with their local community, Somerleyton Primary School stage a village fair that raises funds for the school to offer music lessons. Jubilee Opera and Jubilee Opera Chorus – a very professional organisation with high standards – raise important sums of money and offer opportunities for children to develop their musical abilities.

## The wider musical offer

There are many venues around Suffolk and a range of nationally and internationally important festivals all offering the opportunity for children and young people to listen to musical performances. Examples are First Light Festival, Latitude festival, Henham Park, and the Aldeburgh festival, which all take place in East Suffolk. There are established places for concerts in Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Aldeburgh, as well as numerous places where gigs, concerts and festivals take place. In Ipswich there is a vibrant band scene with gigs around The Smokehouse, St Stephen's Church, and a range of different pubs. It is important to note the fairly clear divide between music venues mainly catering to adult audiences, such as pubs, and those where children and younger people are also welcome to attend in often more formal environments. There are many music venues and events across Suffolk, and these should be a key resource for ensuring children and young people are able to experience musical performances.

There are many smaller community concerts in churches, care centres and other community-based venues. There are some small charities linked to music particularly in village schools. Some larger more network-based initiatives that are broader than music are those like Periscope, a local cultural education partnership in West Suffolk, which aimed to link schools and educators with arts and cultural organisations.

There are organisations working with young people outside of school settings with a focus on social integration – and often with a therapeutic or affirmative aspect. Examples are the innovative and effective programmes from Noise Solution who work directly with young people on referral. Another example is the work by Sewell Music for neurodivergent musicians. Other organisations such as Ipswich Community Media and South Street Studios have music as a key aspect of what they do – usually outside of the formal school system.

The countywide ensembles run by Suffolk Music Hub at centres in Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds are important initiatives where progression can happen, and these take place at a school. Although important in offering progression opportunities for children and young people, there is a not insignificant cost incurred with some of these activities in order for the music hub to be able to run them.

There are at least 28 recording studios across Suffolk, ranging from small scale single rooms through to rehearsal spaces, and up to full residential recording studios used by major national and international artists.





## Partnerships and Independent Schools

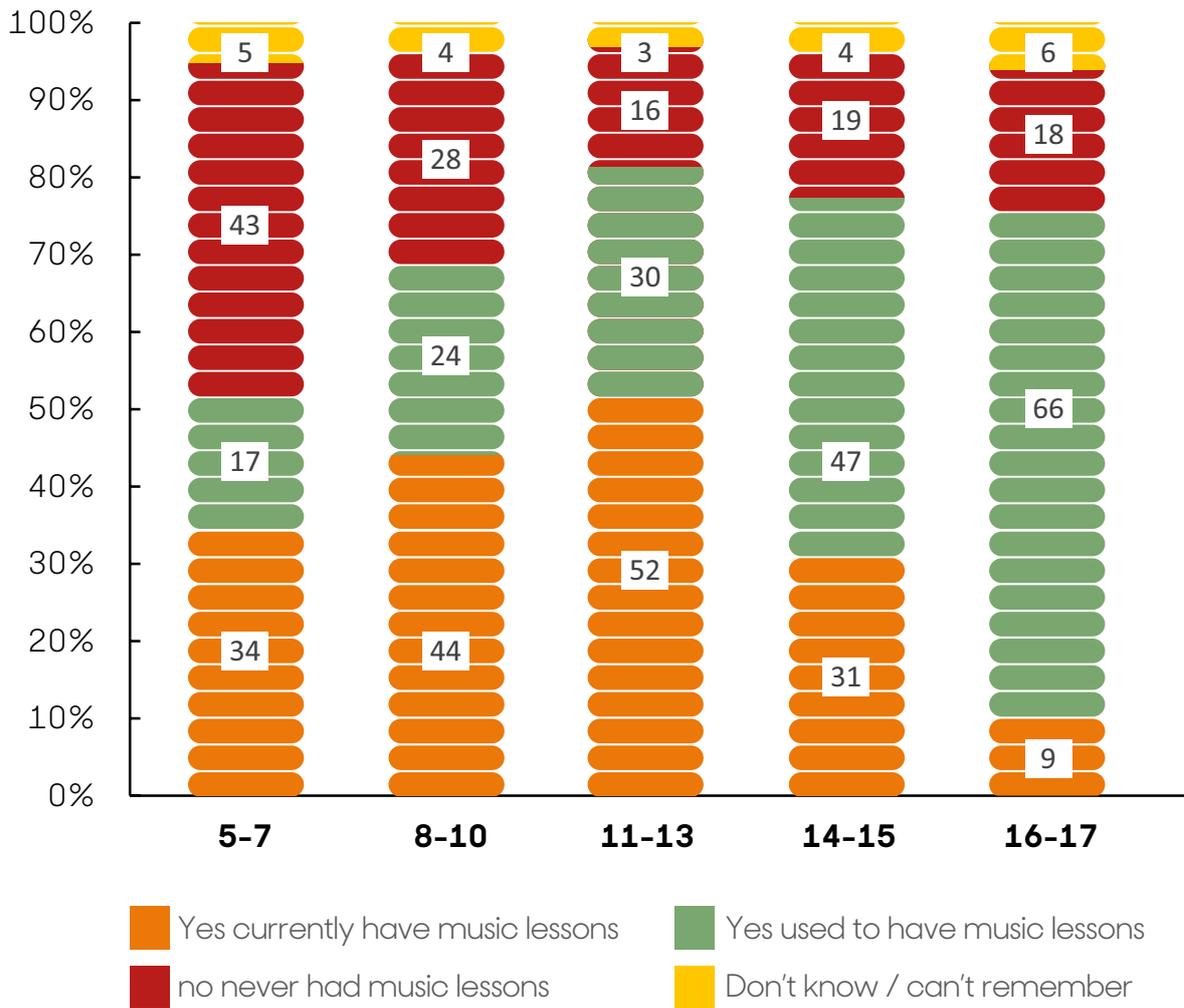
This report focuses on data from the music hub, and from a small number of focus groups with children and young people, alongside discussions with a range of stakeholders. This report, however, is not an exhaustive account of all music-making in Suffolk, as there will be wonderful and important activities going on that we have not heard about. Part of the recommendations of this report is in developing the role of the music hub in partnership to allow for a better overview of the rich range of musical activities. Some other factors we have not explored are the role of independent schools in music education. From our conversations with stakeholders, most schools in this sector have a substantial musical offer and impressive levels of instrument learning and music-making with dedicated resources and teachers. It is important to note that music and creativity are an important part of the appeal of independent education within Suffolk at places like Ipswich School, Woodbridge School and Framlingham College. We found evidence of some links, for example the Suffolk Music Hub residentials that take place at Framlingham College for their ensembles and some sharing of resources. Music festivals and concerts from independent schools are open to the community, but we suggest that there may be some important resources that could be shared for the benefit of all children and young people in a local area. It might need careful case-by-case discussion but a partnership role from the music hub could facilitate the use of some of these important physical and human resources, while noting that the relative size of the state sector to the independent sector needs to be kept in mind to temper expectations about overall impact.

## Wider patterns of music-making

As well as the data for Suffolk, we have some wider indicators of music engagement and making to provide further context for music education policy. The 2020 survey of music-making in the UK (as reported in the Learning, Playing and Teaching in the UK in 2021 ABRSM report) shows perhaps surprisingly high levels of reported music engagement, with some differences by social background. Figure 7 shows both high levels of music lessons in Key Stage 3 (11–13) although these are probably mostly referring to curriculum lessons, not lessons to learn an instrument. Learning an instrument or having vocal lessons, rather than a school music curriculum lesson, is not shown in our data from the music hub or from our discussions with stakeholders. We therefore need to be careful in taking these national figures to reflect local contexts.



Figure 8 Children who have had classroom music lessons in school by age, 2020

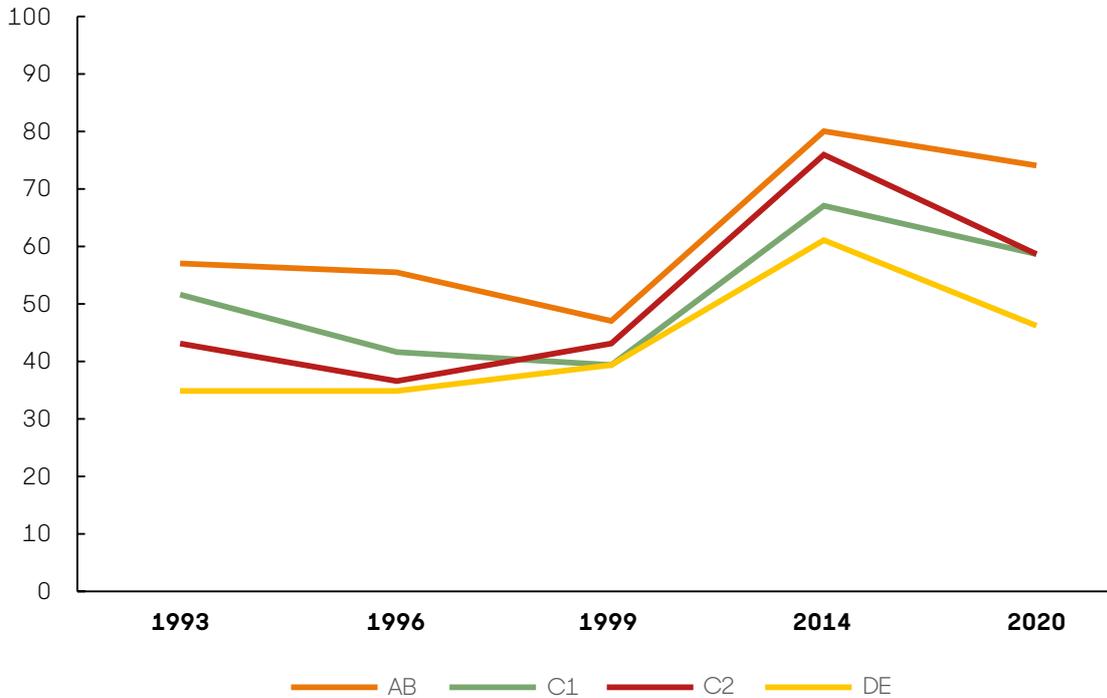


Source: ABRSM, 2021

The ABRSM data show there has been a decrease over time in children playing an instrument since 2014, a high-water mark of participation. Even this more recent lower level is higher than previous surveys in the 1990s and may be impacted by some curriculum and funding changes as well as some impact of lockdown in 2020. Most of the data in the surveys was however collected before the lockdown. Overall, these are still quite high figures and higher than those from the Understanding Society data set using an equally open question of 'do you play a musical instrument' to a narrower age range of 11-15 year old young people. Here there was a broadly stable figure of between 34% (2020-21) and 39% (2014-2015).

In Figure 9, there are clear differences of instrument playing by social grade. This uses a classification of social grade still common in marketing, but not common in the wider social sciences, where AB and C1 are professional, managerial or administrative occupations and C2 and DE are skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations.

**Figure 9: Children (age 5–14) who currently play an instrument by social grade**



Source: ABRSM, 2021

The 2019 Social Mobility Report, 'An Unequal Playing Field: Extra-Curricular Activities, Soft Skills and Social Mobility' found that music "is clearly the preserve of more affluent family households, with 11% of the lowest income households taking part compared to 32% taking part from the highest income households" (p. 31).

Across both the ABRSM survey and the Understanding Society survey there is a decrease in the percentage of respondents stating they currently (ABRSM) played (Understanding Society) a musical instrument from 72% to 60% in the ABRSM survey (age 5–14) and from 39% to 34% in the Understanding Society survey (age 11–15). When considering



lessons, children from wealthier households are 1.6 times more likely to have music lessons than those from the poorest household (ABRSM, 2021).

Looking at the data on engagement from the ABRSM report that is captured above, as well as data from the ACE returns for music hub reach suggest that a high percentage of schools engage with the music hubs.

The ideal is probably high and relatively equal levels of participation across different social groups. As there are patterns to participation, these can be instructive to let us know how engagement for some groups can be increased. If there are widespread interventions to increase engagement with music, one would expect to see current inequalities reflected at a higher level of participation, and not greater equality of music engagement across different social backgrounds.



## Conclusion

There is considerable music education activity taking place across Suffolk at pre-school, primary, secondary school and college levels. This activity is however variable and not always linked to the activities of Suffolk Music Hub. There are also important wider, informal and community-based music-making activities that are part of the broader music eco-system, but the main focus in terms of music education reach is the state education sector. The data and discussions with various music leaders and teachers highlight potential barriers relating to pupil premium, and perhaps wider deprivation. Importantly, school leadership and the notion of a 'leadership lottery' is also another potential barrier in providing quality music education – particularly the leadership required to partner with other organisations and local communities. We now turn to hearing the voice of children and young people in Suffolk, and their insights on the gaps and barriers to participation in current music-making provision in Suffolk.



# CHAPTER 2

## Gaps and barriers to participation in current music-making provision in Suffolk



## Introduction

Mapping music provision in Suffolk in Chapter 1 ruled out potential barriers such as rural, urban or academisation as engagement factors but did identify potential challenges in music-making activities relating to school leadership and pupil premium rates. This chapter builds on this work by first exploring the social factors that shape participation and engagement with music-making provision. Next, we draw on the perspectives of children and young people through focus groups to identify barriers to participation. Key barriers concern the initial music offer, teachers, cost and social attitudes. These barriers inform some of the suggested solutions for ways to increase engagement with music-making activities.

## Social factors in music-making participation

Music education and participation is shaped by the family and social characteristics of children and young people and the areas where they live. Two thirds of children and young people live in urban areas – even in Suffolk, which is one of the more rural counties in England – and our exploration of the data shows little difference with music hub engagement based on an urban-rural distinction. From the evidence base, we know that a key factor in children’s music-making and development is parental interest and their own music-making skills. In fact, parental interest and their music proficiency is more important than socio-economic status based on parental occupation (Krupp-Schleußner and Lehmann-Wermser, 2018). Together, these elements provide the main factors shaping the likelihood of children and young people engaging in music. Girls are slightly more likely than boys to take music lessons, but this is not as pronounced as in other curriculum areas where choice and self-selection is a key factor. Ethnicity is a factor that is difficult to gauge from available data at the Suffolk level, but nationally, there is an important debate about how inclusive a music education curriculum that is often based on the western, classical musical tradition and instruments. This debate can partly be explored locally, particularly around the selection of instruments and types of musical activities.

These wider social characteristics are general factors that always operate locally and through the activities that children and young people are experiencing and doing. It is at the local level that gaps and barriers can be identified. These consistent social factors are however mediated strongly through the music education policy context but always play out in the range of local options and decisions.



## Barriers to music-making participation

In this section, we explore the barriers that were identified by children and young people in the focus groups we carried out. We present these barriers through two key strands:

- 1) Music education in the curriculum in KS1, 2 and 3
- 2) Progress and progression (cost, teachers, and social attitudes).

### Music education in the curriculum in KS1, 2 and 3

The children and young people we spoke to shared a range of views about their experiences of music education as part of the National Curriculum programmes for study. For a number of our participants, timetabled curriculum music lessons were not particularly enjoyable or engaging. For example, one participant suggested that:



I'd say music lessons at school are pretty naff. They're a bit boring, to be honest. Because most of the time, we're just playing the keyboard. Especially before doing GCSEs, it's just we're always doing keyboards, and it's so boring. Because we never do anything new.  
(Focus group participant)

The lack of enjoyment and challenge experienced in music lessons meant that a number of the children and young people we spoke to – despite being actively engaged in a range of musical activities – chose not to study it at GCSE level. For instance, one young person suggested:



I didn't pick it at GCSE, as it was pretty boring. Because we're normally always playing the keyboards, and we don't usually have a wider range of options to play. It's either you play the piano, or you play the keyboard, and that's basically it. (Focus group participant)



This was also captured in the following exchange during a focus group:



**Facilitator:** What are school music lessons like?

**Male 1:** Well, not as good as Miss \*\*\*\*\*'s (peripatetic teacher)

**Female 3:** I don't do them anymore.

**Facilitator:** You don't do them?

**Female 3:** Because I'm in Year 10, I didn't take it as a GCSE. It wasn't something that really interested me. I was more just interested in doing music on my own. Also, we have three [subject] options to choose from, so I had three [subjects] that I wanted to do more than music.

These perceptions and experiences appear to demonstrate a disconnect between children and young people's experiences of music as a curriculum subject and their musical passions and interests. In doing so, they reinforce the findings reported by Zeserson et al. (2014) who concluded that the musical motivations, skills and aspirations of children and young people are 'not sufficiently taken into account in planning and delivery of classroom-based learning' (p. 20). While the children and young people we spoke to forged other avenues for engaging in music, less-than-positive experiences of timetabled music education presents a key barrier, particularly for those who are not supported to have, or are aware of, opportunities to engage in music beyond the classroom.

In addition, when further reflecting on their participation in timetabled curriculum music lessons, children and young people identified how it can be 'frustrating' to learn alongside peers who are less interested in music:



If you're struggling with something, and you're asking the music teacher for help, they're usually just focusing on giving the kids that just don't really care about music, and giving them attention... It's really frustrating, in a way. (Focus group participant)



We recognise that this is a challenging pedagogical issue. Timetabled music lessons are likely to bring together children and young people of varying interests, motivations and proficiencies and striking a balance between challenge and skill for all pupils is complex. A detailed consideration of possible solutions to this challenge is beyond the scope of this report. However, from the children and young people we spoke to (all of whom had high levels of engagement in music) we got the sense that they were passionate about using their experiences and skills to support others to engage with music and that they enjoyed being part of a learning community. From these insights, we speculate that pedagogies that emphasise 'peer-tutoring' or 'musical communities' (Fernández-Barros, Duran and Viladot, 2023, Zeserson et al. 2014) might result in more inclusive, collaborative and engaging musical experiences for children and young people.

## Progress and progression

In addition to their timetabled music lessons, children and young people also provided insights on some of the barriers they experience to progress and progression in music. These related to cost, teachers and social attitudes.

### Cost

The most significant barrier to participation identified by the children and young people we spoke to was cost. Our participants were acutely aware of the cost associated with engaging and progressing in music. They noted how things like instruments, tuition and performing can be expensive, particularly for single and/or low-income households:



Financial barriers are a really big thing for my family, because we're a single-person income. It's not the biggest wage or whatever. So, it's like, in terms of paying for my music lesson each week and my sister's two music lessons a week, it's just a lot.  
(Focus group participant)



I think the price of instruments. Because it just means that people aren't going to be able to gain access to them... Like, if they don't come from a family with a lot of money, they're not going to be able to gain interest in it, because they're not going to be able to have one. (Focus group participant)

For some of the children and young people we spoke to, the cost of engaging in music, particularly where instruments and tuition are required, prevented them from participating in particular activities:



I think county music is very expensive. The amount I pay to be in the orchestra is insane... I had to stop the orchestra just because it got too much (Focus group participant)

A number of focus group participants also shared stories of friends who had stopped completely because of financial barriers:



**Female 4:** There are a few people who I've known who have had to stop because they just can't afford it.

**Female 2:** Yes, which is really, really sad for them as well, because I've seen how upset the parents are about that.

**Female 4:** I think it makes them feel bad.

**Female 2:** Yes, because they really want their kids to do it and they see how much joy it brings them, and they're not wanting to hinder them and that, but they just can't as a family afford to do that. So, they have to stop something that their children really like and how much their children get enjoyment out of it, and that just goes.

The costs associated with music and the challenges this brings is not new information; the presence of a two-tier system in which those who can afford, and those who cannot is widely acknowledged and evidenced (e.g., Wilson, Hunter & Moscardini, 2020; Donnelly et al and Social Mobility Commission, 2019). Some conversations with stakeholders showed that costs to schools of engagement with the music hub and the likely uptake in schools with higher level of pupil premium is a further barrier. However, our data clearly demonstrate the impact that these costs have on music education for children and young people and how cost can limit opportunity for the less privileged. Music may be a luxury that many families simply cannot afford.



## Teachers

In this report, we illustrate how music teachers play a central role in shaping children and young people's engagement and progression in music. While teachers mostly play a positive role, the children and young people we spoke to suggested that teachers can also be a barrier to engagement and progression in music. For example, our participants shared experiences where music teachers were not supportive or patient:



I liked playing the piano. I really loved it. But my teacher was awful. He was quite mean... He was just really impatient... Because, like, even if I'd practised, he wouldn't really see, like, he'd just assume that I hadn't practised, and he just wasn't patient with me. (Focus group participant)

A common theme across the focus groups was a belief that the process of being assigned a music teacher is one that contains 'luck'. The notion of 'luck' appeared to be normalised among children and young people and it was seen as natural that being taught by a 'good' teacher is something of a lottery:



I loved playing music that I was playing, and that I was getting set to do. I just got unlucky with the teacher. Because I don't know, he wasn't very, he didn't give much feedback. He just assumed that I'd never practised, and went, "Don't bother coming next week."  
(Focus group participant)



For one young person, the concept of 'luck' was compounded by a lack of 'high-skilled' teachers in Suffolk as well as an inability to retain them:



**Female 1:** I mean, in our area, there's not a lot of high-skilled or highly-qualified music teachers. And the ones that do come don't stay long.

**Facilitator:** Where do they go?

**Female 1:** They leave... back to education... I mean, we've got our current teacher who's currently studying music at \*\*\*\*\*. And he's been with us for two years, and he's leaving at the end of this year, now.

**Facilitator:** Okay.

**Female 1:** Yes, there aren't many highly skilled teachers, who actually stay.

These extracts show the expectations of young people around teaching and patience and also the nature of the labour market for music teachers.

## Social attitudes

Our focus groups also identified how social attitudes can act as a barrier to children and young people's engagement and progression in music. For example, one participant indicated that there is a 'stigma around being able to play a musical instrument' (Participant, focus group 2). This 'stigma', which is often around instruments associated with more classical forms of music-making, can have serious consequences for children and young people's engagement in music, as the following quote illustrates:



If you can play the piano, then you're not cool. And I think a lot of kids are pressured by that these days... I have a friend who played the violin for about five years. She's quit now, because- I don't know whether it was because she's older now, and either doesn't have the time, or has just lost interest over time, or whether it was because she kept being called a nerd. (Focus group participant)

Here we see how social attitudes towards music can have a significant impact on children and young people and their engagement in music. In a study of when and why young people stop making music, Ruth and Müllensiefen (2021) speculates that young people who play instruments not considered to fit with the 'norm' can be at greater risk of stopping music lessons. While our data supports this, we recognise and warn that the 'norm' in one context might be very different from the 'norm' in another. Social attitudes might not be as strong of a barrier in contexts where high levels of music participation is more typical, such as presented in the earlier case study in which over 30% of young people are engaged and regularly participate in instrument music lessons.



## Conclusion

We can conclude that young musicians are acutely aware of the barriers they face in their music education. The barrier of cost challenges initial access to music services, but also represents a challenge to sustaining a child or young person's continued engagement with their musical development. Naturally, the locus of control relating to this barrier lies with parents, schools and wider music education services – children and young people have little control over the cost of tuition, for instance. Moreover, the effect of cost is likely to weigh heavier in schools with higher pupil premium – although caution should be taken with this interpretation as the school level in the relationship between pupil premium and engagement with music hubs is different to the individual level of effects of cost noted from our participants. Additionally, there is reduced or no costs for pupils eligible for free school meals for most schools. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to suggest that a two-tier system of music education which hinges on cost, as noted by Wilson, Hunter and Moscardini (2020) in the context of Scotland, is present in Suffolk's music education. Teachers also play a significant role in terms of progression, as the quality of the teacher seems to make or break the decision to pursue music. Against a backdrop in which there is a stigma of playing certain genres of music, or types of instruments, it seems that teachers and music education providers would benefit from refining the fit between their music education and the children and young people they teach – normalising musical styles and considering the process of music-making. In the next chapter, we will consider solutions to increase engagement in light of the barriers raised in our mapping exercise, and from the voices of children and young people in Suffolk.

# CHAPTER 3

## Increasing engagement and access to music-making provision in Suffolk



## Introduction

We have identified some key barriers that children and young people face in their music education. Arguably, these are barriers that schools and music education providers will also experience. For instance, questions on how to address the financial challenges and create a cost-effective model for music education are likely on the forefront of educator's minds. Similarly, questions on how to ensure quality teaching approaches in music education that fit with the child or young person's interests, and how to balance a curriculum incorporating musical theory and practice that also ensures the process of making music is at the heart of its teaching method are key questions to answer. Answering these questions requires strong leadership within schools to maximise any opportunities to support an inclusive music education. In meeting these questions, which represent the barriers raised so far, we can increase the engagement and access to music-making provision in Suffolk. We will hear more from what young people and stakeholders in Suffolk have to say about the participation issues and potential solutions that could be explored in addressing these challenges. Finally, we present recommendations to support a feasible and detailed plan which aims to address the 2022 policy paper, [The power of music to change lives: A National Plan for Music Education](#).

## Identify current participation issues and potential solutions with children and young people and stakeholders

In this section, we return to the focus group and stakeholder data to consider the factors that support children and young people's engagement and participation in music. We focus on four elements in particular: singing, teachers, process and outcome, as well as family and friends.

### Singing

One simple and effective solution to increasing engagement is through the use of singing. It is something that is present in many primary schools and early years settings, and when used alongside singing tuition and regular opportunities for singing, such as singing assemblies and choirs, is a very effective way to develop musical skills and enjoyment



in sound-making. We found that the extent to which singing is an important part of the school music offer differs. This variation is related to teacher confidence and the role of the music lead or coordinator in primary schools, and is always framed within the level of support and prioritisation from school leadership for music. Singing underpins a broad musical offer at secondary schools, and those schools with a strong instrument learning offer also had a strong singing culture.

## Teachers

As suggested in the previous section, teachers are an important factor in children's participation and engagement in music. Having a teacher that children and young people liked and connected with was seen by some as the difference between engaging and not engaging in music:



[I have] weekly music lessons with Miss \*\*\*\*\*, who makes it really fun. She's the reason I carried on with it, because the first teacher I had was a county council one, I think, and I probably wouldn't have carried on if I'd had her. Miss \*\*\*\*\* just makes it a lot more fun. (Focus group participant)



I probably would've stopped if it wasn't for Miss \*\*\*\*\*, as everyone has said. Miss \*\*\*\*\* is pretty amazing, to be fair. (Focus group participant)

When we asked what makes a 'good' teacher, the children and young people were largely in agreement and suggested that they value teachers who are enthusiastic, energetic, passionate and fun as well as patient and caring. They also appreciated teachers who designed lessons to reflect their interests and match their level of ability.



The focus groups demonstrate how teachers have a lasting impression on children and young people. This was illustrated in the following exchange between focus group participants:



**Female 2:** My Year 6 teacher definitely loved music.

**Female 4:** Yes, he loved music so much.

**Female 2:** He was a class teacher, if that makes sense. He didn't necessarily do instruments himself, but when it came to school plays and the music side of it...

**Female 4:** He was on it.

**Female 2:** He was again a very passionate, bubbly, energetic character, who wanted the kids to enjoy it. But at the same time, he wanted us to be so good and know that we could reach that good level.

In line with previous research (Creech and Hallam, 2011) our findings demonstrate the importance of pupil-teacher rapport and suggest that teachers play a central role in supporting children and young people to develop positive and lasting musical identities.

## A focus on process and outcome

Our data demonstrate how children and young people enjoy music-making for its own sake. A number of participants emphasised that they find the process of making music highly enjoyable and, in some instances, a welcome distraction:



I don't really know if I want a career in it or anything. But it's just a nice thing to do. It's like my sport. It's just another thing that just makes me happy. If I'm a bit stressed, I'll do that [music]. Because activities make you feel better. It's something you do and it takes your mind off things. (Focus group participant)



This is not to say that the children and young people we spoke to were not concerned with the outcome of music-making; working towards grades and qualifications (GCSEs) and performing music were also seen as important. However, if music education is overly concerned with the attainment of grades, there is potential to take away children and young people's enjoyment of music. This was stated explicitly by one young person who argued that 'if it's just grades, grades, grades, you're not going to have that enjoyment' (Participant, focus group 2). Another participant spoke about how grade assessments were 'stressful' and not particularly helpful:



They can be very stressful. And also, after it, you get your sheet, and it's got your scores on it, and your grade, and if you pass or not. But it doesn't really give much feedback, of how you could have done better. (Focus group participant)

The ambivalence with which grades were perceived was captured by one participant, who identified both their benefits and limitations:



I think grades are good, in the academic aspect, in getting those extra qualifications. But I think realistically, nobody likes doing grades. Because there's no freedom in it. When you're not working towards a grade, you get to learn whatever you want, work at your own pace. Some people might like grades, because they're working towards something. But others might feel like [without grades] they can, kind of, spread their wings a bit, and go into different areas. (Focus group participant)

The data collected suggest that while children and young people recognise a role for grades, their engagement with music-making activities is not necessarily motivated by attaining them. Rather, children and young people enjoy the process of music-making, particularly when it is done alongside friends and when they are supported to exercise agency. Our data demonstrate that there needs to be a balance between engaging with the processes of music-making and working towards particular outcomes. This balance will be different for different individuals.

We can understand that there is intrinsic value of music education. However, much of the discussion around music education is goal orientated, where music engagement is seen as a means to another end, such as improved numeracy, literacy or other aspects of social or cognitive development. However, Lehmann-Wermser (2013) argues that we need to see the intrinsic value of music education for children when they receive it and the pleasure they gain from this education. Enjoyment is therefore a genuine motivation for wanting to progress with music-making. While music can serve other learning goals, it should not be the only lens by which we view music education. Music education should be valued in its own right.

## Family and friends

Our data demonstrate that family and friends play a key role in increasing engagement in music and sustaining participation. In the focus groups, the role of family was identified as an important driver for engaging in music-making activities. In most instances, children and young people identified how their engagement in music was supported by their parents:



My mum's big on music, so she likes hearing me play at home and stuff, so I'll do that for her. (Focus group participant)

The role of parents was also illustrated in the following exchange between children and young people in a focus group:



**Female 2:** Both my parents are very musical.

**Facilitator:** Have they played a big role in maybe your musical interests?

**Female 2:** Yes, definitely.

**Male 1:** For me, it was my dad. Because he plays guitar as well. And he, sort of, got me into it.

**Facilitator:** At what age?

**Male 1:** Year 4. So, I was probably about nine, 10, I reckon.

**Facilitator:** Okay, and you've kept it going since?

**Male 1:** Yes.

In addition to parents, children and young people also suggested how music was a passion that they shared with their sibling(s):



I'm a bit competitive. My sisters used to play instruments and they used to have Miss \*\*\*\*\* as well. So it's always been a little bit of a running joke like, "oh, I'm at the same grade as you, now." We play the same instrument... but I can be like "I'm actually better than you (laughs)." (Focus group participant)

I've got a five-year age-gap with my sister and I think the one thing we share the most is music. When she comes home, she plays the piano and I'll play the flute, and we'll do it together. It [music] literally bonds people together so much. (Focus group participant)

So, there's not really many people in my family that play music, apart from me and my brother, who also plays guitar. (Focus group participant)

Our data demonstrate clearly that having a family member who presently or historically has engaged in music – i.e., has musical capital – facilitates the child or young person's own musical engagement. However, while having a parent who is or has been musical themselves can increase the likelihood of children and young people participating in music, we feel that it is important to mention that it is not necessarily a precursor. For a minority of the children and young people we spoke to, all of whom were engaged in music-making activities, their parents were not musical:



They're really not musical. No. [But] even though they're not musical, they still encourage us to do it. Because they're like, "Oh, we really missed out on that when we were your age. You should give it a go"... But it's never forced on either of us. (Focus group participant)





I feel like my parents just love that I do an instrument. They just love that I'm doing an extracurricular thing. Another thing that I'm doing. The only thing that they're very musical at themselves was that they used to play a bit of Classic FM. (Focus group participant)

This suggests that even if parents are not musical themselves, an understanding of its benefits can still increase children and young people's engagement and progression. In this way, there are alternative reasons for parents to engage their child in music. For instance, increasing their child's engagement with music education could represent an active strategy of improving the chances in overall education for parents – particularly middle-class parents. In this way music education can be a conscious strategy or enrichment that draws on everyday knowledge of the link between music and social and intellectual development. Participating in music-making is a way of generating cultural capital and pulling up the drawbridge (Lehmann-Wermser, 2013) between other social groups. It is a way of giving children a head start in the perceived labour market 'race' – and this includes the wider enrichment activities that generate academic and later labour market dividends. This is an active and conscious strategy of many middle-class parents.

Regardless of parental motivation, the home environment plays a key role in music engagement. A study of the impact of a long-term programme of music education (Krupp-Schleußner and Lehmann-Wermser, 2018; p. 44) in two areas of Germany shows that "children's affinity for music and the importance of music at home have a larger influence than all other predictors on their learning an instrument as well as on their overall musical involvement." This is not surprising and mirrors other studies that show the importance of books and encouragement for reading in the home as being important predictors of literacy (Douglas, 1964). Learning music is therefore about the family unit promoting and encouraging that learning, probably in subtle immersive ways rather than strictly didactic ways, similarly to how literacy is promoted.

In addition to family, friendships also facilitated children and young people's musical engagement, as illustrated in the quote below which identifies how enjoyable it can be to play and perform music alongside friends:



It's so much fun and doing it altogether. It's like, once you've done, you can look over and just smile at all your friends. It's like, "We did it together," kind of thing. (Focus group participant)







Overview provides a strong case for the benefits of active engagement with music throughout the lifespan. In early childhood there seem to be benefits for the development of perceptual skills which affect language learning, and which subsequently impact on literacy. Opportunities to be able to co-ordinate rhythmically also seem important for the acquisition of literacy skills. Fine motor co-ordination is also improved through learning to play an instrument. Music also seems to improve spatial reasoning, one aspect of general intelligence which is related to some of the skills required in mathematics. While general attainment is clearly affected by literacy and numeracy skills, motivation, which depends on self-esteem, self-efficacy and aspirations, is also important in the amount of effort given to studying. Engagement with music can enhance self-perceptions, but only if it provides positive learning experiences which are rewarding. This means that overall, the individual needs to experience success. (pp. 281-2)

So, a positive experience with music engagement has a positive impact on other curriculum areas. This resonates with a range of other research into the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people. The benefits of music to neurodevelopment, psychology, social experiences, among others, are highlighted in the Power of Music 2022 report and the music plan which aims to provide high quality music education for all.

There are therefore positive outcomes to positive engagement with music. It is like 'apple pie' as part of the curriculum in that there is nothing not to like. It is important, however, to note the different levels of engagement with music by different social groups. It is this inequality that means not everyone is benefitting from music engagement. In some ways, this reflects the inequalities that one sees in relation to literacy and reading for different social groups and social contexts, but arguably even more accentuated in the extent of these differences.





## Conclusion

Music education is integral to an education system that provides a broad and balanced curriculum to all its pupils regardless of background or circumstance. We can understand that any policies and associated activities that aim to increase engagement in the music-making provision in Suffolk will need to address the barriers and build on our understanding of the factors that increase engagement. Specifically, rethinking costing models to enable schools and families to further engage with the local music offer should widen the reach of services such as the WCET. Similarly, rethinking the costing model might enable local provisions to capture an understanding of those schools that don't currently engage with the music hub – perhaps reflecting how a costing model could resonate with the more partnership-based role raised in policy papers. Shaping the partnership-based role of music hubs, to strengthen leadership and teacher competencies around music education within schools, could go some way towards addressing the challenges of leadership and teachers noted in this report.

Major themes that have surfaced include social attitudes and the wider music curriculum – particularly the notion of process over outcomes – which arguably are linked. Ultimately, underpinning both themes is the notion of relatedness – both in terms of connecting with the musical material, and connecting with others. As such, focusing curricular design on the process of peer-to-peer music-making, coupled with strategies to normalise musical practice in the classroom to address any negative social attitudes, might benefit local provisions of music education. As such, given that children and young people's capacity for more sophisticated social interactions and social intelligence develops significantly during adolescent years, focusing on music education provisions in secondary education warrants attention.

Finally, we have understood the importance of parents in motivating music education. As such, engaging parents more widely with local music services, and engaging them on the merits of a music education, should widen the reach of music services. Based on these reflections, this report will present several recommendations that will fit into the existing framework of local organisations.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

This report makes recommendations that can be part of a feasible and detailed plan, which in collaboration with stakeholders and funders of activities will address the 2022 policy paper, The power of music to change lives: a national plan for music education. These recommendations are informed by our research.



## Recommendations based on wider evidence

- To increase music participation there should be a focus on exploring and encouraging parents to be more involved in music-making alongside or separately from children
- Promote equality of access by viewing music participation as holding similar status to other core areas of the curriculum (such as literacy and maths) recognising that music has important links to motivation and well-being
- Make music-making enjoyable and collaborative.

## Music hub organisation and partnership

- Develop a school self-review document as a starting point for music hub engagement, as part of the offer for all state schools
- Develop and maintain progression routes from initial engagement with instrument or music education in primary school (whole class ensemble, small group, or one-to-one lessons) to encourage more children to develop skills after their introduction to music-making
- Flexible support for schools to develop a music plan as part of the music hub offer, with templates, resource access and an emphasis on partnership
- Develop, maintain and extend partnership links through the hub, using a dedicated role and set of resources to coordinate this
- Develop role of facilitating peripatetic music teachers for schools or groups of schools outside of those who may be directly employed by the hub
- Have a music hub offer and financial model to ensure that schools with higher levels of pupil premium do not fear financial fallout from a lack of parents taking up a paid-for music offer through the hub or locally employed peripatetic music teachers
- Explore a way that an overall offer of singing AND music instrument learning is available for all state school pupils
- Explore use of underused musical resources in independent schools for nearby state schools, so that they can evidence their charitable status more inclusively
- Explore how an increase in self-determination as a key way that participation is defined and nurtured in terms of musical identity, motivation, enthusiasm, and adaptability across musical contexts.

## Professional development

- Music champions and hub to help CPD/training of non-specialist staff, to increase confidence delivering music education
- Develop music lead training programme for those responsible for music in a school, while encouraging professional support networks
- Develop offer to early years providers, including CPD for and through early years networks
- Explore role of musician-in-residence model, covering a number of primary and secondary schools to facilitate links and share skills and resources. This could be part of the role of facilitating peripatetic music teachers
- Develop CPD for instrument music teachers, to allow links to be made to other statutory parts of the National Curriculum
- CPD of nursery rhyme songbook and training for early years practitioners. Maybe part of a course that links the setting and parents.

## Wider music curriculum

- Consider music-making as sound-making and include the use of different technologies in different settings to respond to children and young people's interests
- Explore ways to enhance children's input into instrument choice for whole class, small group or one-to-one instrument learning
- Explore music education offer that links parents and children in primary schools. Maybe as a digital package to link parents to the school music offer. Trialling courses that prioritise parent and child music-making and learning in primary schools
- Consider transition points at end of whole class ensemble offer and start of secondary school to create more stepping on and succession points for music progression
- Consider different access points for music when learners stop learning an instrument and step off the progression route
- Develop a sustainable music education system to develop continuity of experience that is not so dependent upon individual, dedicated music teachers having the main responsibility for developing and maintaining music provision
- Ensure enough opportunities for enjoyment and development of self-motivation, autonomy, individuality and confidence
- Promote equality of access by viewing music participation as similar to other core areas of the curriculum (such as literacy and maths) and having an important link to motivation and well-being. Just as we should not be content with a school that has not given a child the opportunity to develop maths and English skills, we should not be satisfied if a school does not offer opportunities for any pupil to develop music skills. This is in line with the broader art and cultural creativity recommendations of the Durham Commission on Creativity in 2019.

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