

TIME TO LISTEN

...TO WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE
AND TEACHERS SAY ABOUT
THE POWER AND IMPORTANCE
OF ARTS AND CULTURAL
EDUCATION



TIME TO LISTEN

In the most comprehensive research study of its kind, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Tate and the University of Nottingham have joined together to examine the benefits of arts and cultural education.

Funded by Arts Council England, and conducted in secondary and special schools in England, the TALE (Tracking Arts Learning and Engagement) study analysed 6,000 responses from young people aged 14–18, tracking students and 63 teachers over three years.

The study brings to light the voices and opinions of young people. The depth and breadth of the research gives significant new insights into the positive difference that sustained engagement with arts and cultural education has on the lives of young people. These are benefits that students in the independent sector enjoy every school day.

IT IS TIME TO LISTEN to what young people and teachers say about the power of arts and cultural education.

IT IS TIME TO UNDERSTAND the increasing difficulties state-funded schools face in giving access and priority to arts and cultural education.

IT IS TIME TO MAKE REAL CHANGE by adopting our five key recommendations to ensure every young person can learn in an arts and culture rich school.



TIME TO LISTEN...TO WHY ARTS AND CULTURE IN SCHOOL MATTERS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people tell us that arts and culture rich schools enhance their lives now, and prepare them for life after school, by:

- developing their critical thinking and capacity to interpret the world around them
- developing a sense of their own identity and personal responsibility in their school and community
- building self-belief, confidence, empathy, appreciation of difference and diversity
- encouraging them to express their ideas, opinions and stories in complex and nuanced ways
- providing opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively
- acquiring knowledge and skills in using different forms, media and technologies

Young people tell us that arts and cultural learning in school is significantly different because:

- in arts lessons they have more agency, responsibility, independence and freedom to make decisions. They enjoy and are motivated by this
- they often see the arts as a valve for releasing the pressures they experience elsewhere in their lives. They say that this improves their health, wellbeing and happiness
- arts and cultural learning is open-ended and experimental, so there is no right or wrong. They value having to develop and support their own views and opinions
- they have a different relationship with their teachers because of the ways they are taught

TIME TO LISTEN...TO WHAT DEFINES AN ARTS AND CULTURE RICH SCHOOL

All students, whatever their heritage, status or family income, have access to and participate in arts and cultural education.

The school sees arts subjects and cultural education as vital to the compulsory school curriculum. It therefore ensures that:

- a range of arts subjects is offered at all key stages
- the school timetable makes it possible for students to choose arts options
- students are actively encouraged to take arts subjects
- specialist teachers are employed to teach arts subjects
- arts facilities are well maintained and equipped
- budget allocations recognise the actual costs involved in arts and cultural education
- career advice incorporates careers in the arts and cultural sectors
- teachers participate in professional development opportunities provided by local and national arts and cultural organisations

Students are supported to participate in cultural activities and arts learning through:

- partnerships with local and national arts and cultural organisations
- subsidised excursions, visits and performances in school
- a range of cultural activities through clubs, lunchtime and after school activities, in addition to timetabled lessons

WHAT MAKES THESE THINGS POSSIBLE?

Teachers of arts subjects teach in a different way. They:

- approach the class as a community of producers who work together to share, critique and debate ideas in a respectful, supportive and appreciative manner
- find out about, and value students' own individual cultures and interests and look for opportunities to adapt the curriculum to reflect them
- create opportunities for students to exhibit and perform their work for wider audiences
- stay connected to the professional practice of the arts discipline they are teaching
- set ambitious projects and support students to exceed their own expectations of themselves
- act as a bridge between professional arts organisations and their school community

The teacher is an arts and culture 'broker'. They act as role models for their students by being committed to learning about arts and culture themselves and sharing their knowledge and experiences with students.

The school leadership team actively supports and promotes the importance of arts and cultural education by:

- seeing arts as integral to their school's identity, through the buildings and displays, and through the values the school promotes
- ensuring sufficient curriculum time is allocated to arts subjects
- showcasing the benefits of arts learning to parents and the local community

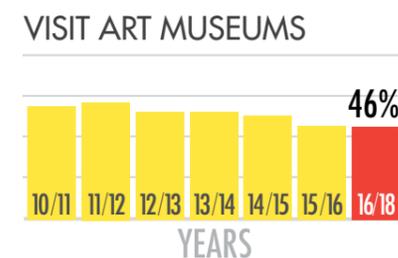
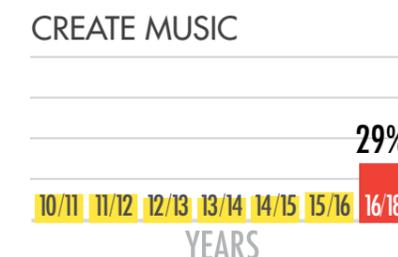
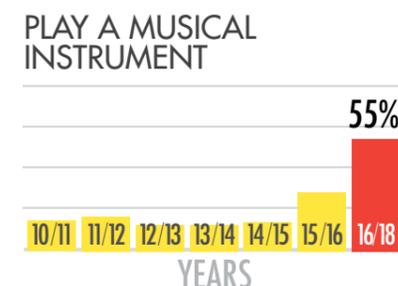
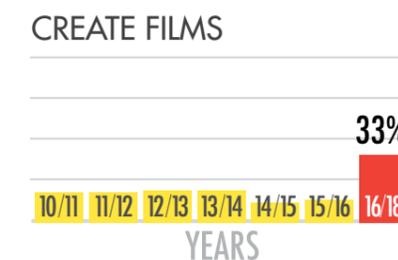
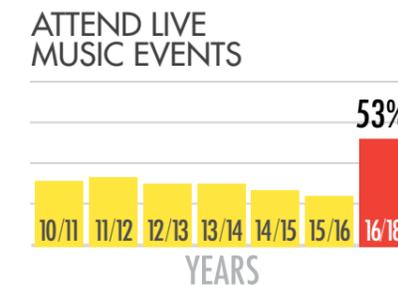
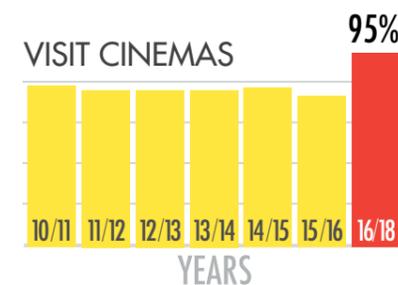
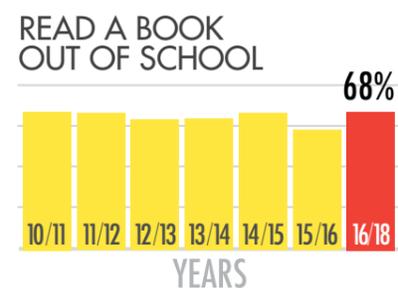
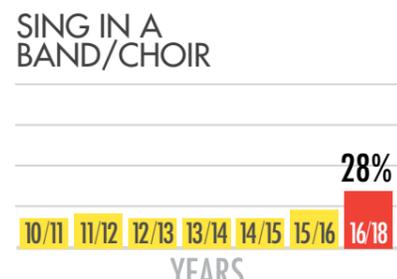
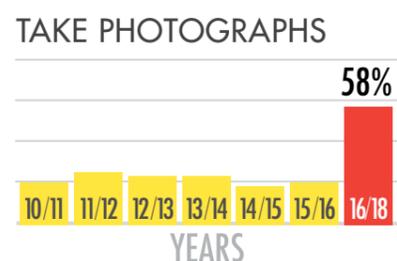
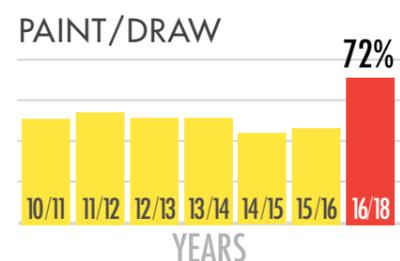
The school enjoys partnerships with one (or more) arts and cultural organisations locally or nationally. Teachers are often inspired by these partnerships and particularly value:

- access to new professional and disciplinary knowledge and skills
- the chance to develop sustainable partnerships over time
- the opportunities that partnerships provide to build local engagement in arts and culture

PARTICIPATION IN ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS

The graphs compare the everyday arts and cultural participation of 14/15 year olds in the research schools (red column) with a national sample of their peers. The national data is taken from the annual government Taking Part surveys for the years 2010/11 to 2015/16 (yellow columns).

This comparison shows that students in arts rich schools are much more engaged in arts and cultural activities – regardless of whether or not they have chosen to continue studying the arts at KS4 and 5. They go to more events and they are engaged in more creative activities in and out of school.



TIME TO LISTEN...TO WHY ALL STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS ARE NOT YET ARTS AND CULTURE RICH

There is a clear shift in the way students and their families are making subject choices. Young people who want to keep their options open, including the option of going to university, find choosing an arts subject too risky. There has been a steady decline in the number of students who enroll for arts subjects¹, which in turn leads to loss of specialist teachers in school and in teacher training.

There are 5 important barriers that prevent schools becoming arts and culture rich.

- 1 THE WAY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IS MEASURED.** State funded schools, regardless of their legal status, have an obligation to provide a 'balanced and broadly based' curriculum. They should include arts and cultural education as an entitlement for all. The English Baccalaureate [EBacc]² is currently important as a school audit measure. Subjects that are not in the EBacc – including arts subjects – have been downgraded in the eyes of some schools, parents, teachers and inspectors, and regarded as of lower importance.
- 2 UNIVERSITIES PROMOTE THE IDEA OF 'FACILITATING SUBJECTS'** that 'leave open a wide range of options for university study'.³ The list of facilitating subjects contains no arts subjects except English Literature.⁴ The implication is that if you want to keep your options open, don't study arts subjects.
- 3 RECENT CHANGES TO THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM.** GCSEs and A levels were reformed in 2010 to be 'linear' rather than modular, and to be externally rather than school assessed, preferably by written examination. This reduces the emphasis on practice and the importance of the experiential making and performing aspects of arts subjects.

- 4 PRESSURE ON TIME AND BUDGETS,** and from school inspections. School level indicators that count in inspections are prioritised, especially in schools in more challenging situations. 'Core' subjects are timetabled first and often given more formal curriculum time. Option blocks are changed to reflect the curriculum hierarchy and students' choices are limited. Extra-curricular time gives way to 'intervention' or revision. Budget pressures mean that money is less available for visits to galleries, theatres, museums or for bringing in arts specialists into the school.
- 5 A HISTORICAL LEGACY OF DIVISIONS BETWEEN ARTS AND SCIENCE SUBJECTS.** An equation of science subjects with economic value and a failure to recognise the valuable financial contribution made by the creative industries contribute to the sciences being seen as more valuable than the arts.

¹ Joint Council for Qualifications: fall overall of 8.4% at GCSE level from 2015 to 2016 (44,400 students).

² The EBacc consists of 5 good passes from these subjects: English, maths, two sciences, an ancient or modern language, history or geography.

³ From the Russell Group's guide for schools: 'Informed Choices': A Russell Group guide to making decisions about post-16 education'.

⁴ The facilitating subjects are: maths, English literature, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history and modern languages.

TIME TO CHANGE

*'Students are
getting messages
from all over
the place that doing
arts subjects
is wrong...'*
TEACHER

*'For me, the arts are the way
of expressing humanity's
culture throughout the years.
It expresses how we were,
what we are now and where
the future is going.'*
YEAR 11 STUDENT

The unintended consequence of:

- emphasising the importance of STEM subjects
- focusing school performance measurements around progress in some subjects and not others
- Russell Group universities defining a list of subjects that keep student options open but exclude arts subjects

is that young people and teachers feel that arts and cultural education is less valued, and therefore less valuable.

6,000 RESPONSES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE, in 30 schools, plus interviews with 63 teachers **TRACKED OVER THREE YEARS**, tell us that studying arts subjects is **A CRITICAL PART OF SCHOOL LIFE** and a fundamental right for all children.

Young people and teachers are also saying loud and clear that it is becoming harder for them to access and give priority to arts and cultural education.

Arts subjects help young people to develop the knowledge, capacities and attributes they need for an uncertain future. They improve their wellbeing and help them deal with the pressures of school and adult life.

The UN Convention on Human Rights guarantees everybody the right to participate in the cultural life of their community and to enjoy the arts. Every child should be offered equal opportunities to take part in the arts and culture. These opportunities should happen in school.

More than a third of the students surveyed rely on their school for access to the arts. There is no level playing field for students and their families.

It is time to listen, to act and to make real change.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

- 1** All secondary schools should be able to:
 - a) ensure that at KS3 the arts have parity with other subjects
 - b) offer a full range of arts subjects at KS4 (GCSE)
 - c) confidently talk to students and their families about the value of studying arts subjects.
- 2** The Ofsted process should ensure the breadth and balance of the school curriculum by specifying in the inspection framework the minimum proportion of curriculum time to be spent studying arts subjects at KS3, and the range of arts subjects which should be offered at KS4.⁵
- 3** There should be an Arts and Culture Premium for all children in schools.⁶
- 4** Russell Group universities should review their approach to Facilitating Subjects, recognising that studying arts subjects can provide young people with an essential foundation for further study.
- 5** There should be acknowledgement and appropriate reward in both pay scale and job title for the work of teachers who take on the essential role of 'arts broker.'

Every young person – not just a minority – deserves to learn in an arts and culture rich school.

TIME
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For further information visit
www.researchtale.net

⁵ In 2017, the Cultural Learning Alliance called for Ofsted inspections to recognise and comment on the quality of arts and cultural learning in their reports, both praising great practice and flagging up where more needs to be done. They called for new guidance from Ofsted that no school, academy, youth service or children's centre be judged outstanding unless it offers a broad and balanced curriculum that includes the arts and culture: <https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Cultural-Learning-Alliance-manifesto-asks-May-2017.pdf>

⁶ The government currently allocates £320 million a year to primary schools to fund a sports premium; this is a per head annual amount that schools must spend on sports activities. We call for the creation of an Arts and Culture Premium that would similarly ring fence budget to ensure all students in primary and secondary schools are able to access arts and culture. The Cultural Learning Alliance called for an Arts and Wellbeing Premium in May 2017: <https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Cultural-Learning-Alliance-manifesto-asks-May-2017.pdf>