

# The Arts in Schools

## Foundations for the Future

Purposes, principles and practice

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



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN  
FOUNDATION

**A NEW  
DIRECTION**

We create **opportunity**

## The Arts in Schools

# Our objective

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

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

## The Arts in Schools

# Resources available

- ❑ A **Think piece** and **40-year timeline** (published May 2022)
- ❑ A **series of blogs** with more on the way, including a one featuring **young people's creative responses** to the project
- ❑ A resource bank of **24 case-studies** of excellent arts education practice by and with schools
- ❑ Final ***The Arts in Schools: Foundations for the Future* report**, together with an **executive summary** (published 30 March 2023)
- ❑ An updated Arts in Schools **40-year timeline**
- ❑ A **social media pack** and **PowerPoint** presentation on the report's findings for anyone to use

<https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/the-arts-in-schools>

## The Arts in Schools

Two important  
points to state  
at the outset ...

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

***'School leaders who make space for the arts believe that education is about more than achieving good grades: they are thinking about the whole child, and the school as (and within) a community.'***

## The Arts in Schools

# Headline findings

1. Arts subjects and experiences make a positive difference to learning and personal outcomes for children and young people, providing them with skills for life and skills for work.
2. Despite this, there is a lack of value ascribed to them within the state education system in England in which they are devalued due to accountability measures that exclude them. And access is not equitable: we have a two-tier system, with the arts more highly valued in independent schools.
3. The schooling system itself is still running on outdated policies without a clear purpose for what schools are equipping young people with, or why.

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

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# A new ambition for schooling (in Wales)

**Four purposes** – the starting point and aspiration for school curriculum design in Wales: the aim of a school's curriculum is to support its learners to become:

- ❑ **Ambitious, capable learners**, ready to learn throughout their lives
- ❑ **Enterprising, creative contributors**, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ❑ **Ethical, informed citizens** of Wales and the world
- ❑ **Healthy, confident individuals**, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

*'Every Child Matters (England, 2003) introduced five key outcomes that professionals working with children and young people should strive to achieve: staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, achieving economic wellbeing, and making a positive contribution.'*

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There are 5 core policy principles to underpin the arts in schooling ...

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

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

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... and 5 core provision principles essential in enabling a school to become arts-rich

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

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



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The report makes 10  
recommendations:  
scaffolding for the  
future

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

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

## The Arts in Schools

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

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

# Brokerage

The end of four decades of national structures making it possible for schools to connect with artists and arts organisations:

- Local Education Authority Arts Advisers providing LEA-wide services
- Creative Partnerships (2002)
- Creativity, Culture & Education (2009)
- Bridge network (2011-2023)

***'We want to see recognition by policy makers and funders that if schools are to access programmes, projects and resources from the professional arts sector, they require support and active brokerage work in order to do so.'***

## Beyond school

*'Professional arts organisations are only part of the story of arts provision. Culture in all its forms exists in the school, the home, in schools' local communities, in the professional arts sector, in broadcast, film, media and online. Its richness and diversity cannot be confined by what is taught within schools. Its practitioners are in the subsidised, commercial and voluntary sectors.'*

*'For many children and young people, particularly the most marginalised and vulnerable, the opportunity afforded by non-formal learning is enhanced through it taking place off school grounds. Out-of-school activities, youth clubs and youth workers are all part of the fabric of a non-formal learning offer.'*

## The Arts in Schools

What next?  
Organise and  
mobilise

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

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

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

**Respond:** A New Direction will continue to collect responses over the next few months:

[info@anewdirection.org.uk](mailto:info@anewdirection.org.uk)