

News story: Record numbers learning instruments in class thanks to music hubs

More children are getting the opportunity to learn an instrument or take part in music ensembles such as choirs and orchestras thanks to the government's network of music education hubs.

Figures released in a new report today show more than 700,000 children were taught to play a musical instrument with their class through the 120 music hubs across the country – which are backed by £300 million government funding and run by the Arts Council of England.

The Key Data on music education hubs report also shows that in 2016/2017:

- Almost 9 out of 10 schools (89%) benefitted from the support of the music hubs – up from 84% in 2013/2014;
- 711,241 pupils received whole class ensemble teaching through the hubs, up from 596,820 in 2013/2014 (up 19%);
- 182,602 pupils continue to learn an instrument after having had whole class ensemble teaching compared to 166,529 in 2013/14; and
- choirs are the single biggest type of music making activity, making up 32% of all ensembles. Other popular types of ensemble include rock bands and woodwind ensembles.

Music, art and design, drama and dance are included in the national curriculum and compulsory in all maintained schools from the age of 5 to 14, as part of a commitment to ensure pupils to get a broad, balanced education. In 2012 we introduced a new network of music education hubs to support the teaching of music both in and out of school. These hubs are being supported by £300 million between 2016 and 2020.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Learning a musical instrument opens all kinds of opportunities for children to express themselves, whether it's being part of a band or orchestra or just playing for pleasure at home.

I believe all children, regardless of their backgrounds, should have the same opportunities and that's why it's so good to see that our music hubs are reaching so many, with more than 700,000 pupils learning to play instruments together in class last year.

Our continued support for the arts, which is the second highest funded element of the curriculum behind sport, will see almost £500m invested between 2016 and 2020 – with £300 million supporting the work of music hubs to make sure more and more pupils have the opportunity to learn an instrument.

Hannah Fouracre, Director of Music Education for the Arts Council of England said:

Whether it's the boost in confidence that comes from having a creative outlet, the teamworking skills developed by being part of an ensemble, or the ways that taking part in arts activities improves performance across a child's education, the benefits of music education are enormous.

With over 700,000 children across the country now playing an instrument thanks to music education hubs, the programme is a fantastic way to create these opportunities for as many young people as possible. Music education hubs are partnerships formed of schools, local authorities, arts organisations and voluntary organisations working together to create joined-up music education provision.

Earlier this year, the Schools Minister announced increased funding for arts education programmes, taking the total investment between 2016 and 2020 to £496 million. The extra money gives pupils across the country access to a range of cultural opportunities including:

- Almost £90 million of combined funding in 2018-20 will go to the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) and the Dance and Drama Awards (DaDa). These funds support the most talented pupils to attend prestigious arts institutions, such as the Royal Ballet School in London and Chetham's School of Music in Manchester. Previous recipients include award-winning actor and star of the Crown, Claire Foy;
- £8 million in 2018-20 to support a number of cultural education programmes. These give young people the chance to try their hand at film making with the British Film Institute, improve their skills with the National Youth Dance Company and explore different art materials at National Art and Design Saturday Clubs. This funding also gives pupils the chance to learn about the country's most famous historical sites with Historic England; and
- a £1 million boost in 2018-20 for the 'In Harmony' projects in Liverpool, Lambeth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham, Leeds, Telford and Wrekin/Stoke-on-Trent to help them to continue to provide music education for disadvantaged pupils in their area. These projects aim to inspire and transform the lives of children and families in deprived communities through the power and discipline of ensemble music making.