

# Speech: Matt Hancock's speech at the launch of the New Schools Network arts report.

Thanks everybody for coming today, and thank you to Dr Nick Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery for hosting and opening up early especially for us.

I hope that everybody here heard very clearly the commitment and the passionate advocacy of cultural education from Nick Gibb as the Minister of State for School Standards and the importance of cultural learning in our education system.

I could too make the argument for how the combination of technical expertise and creative cultural content are the point at which Britain will earn its crust over the 21st century. But I think it is far better for that argument is made by Nick, because you would expect it from me as the Minister for Digital and Culture. But you can see that this is an argument that the whole of Government adopts and buys.

But of course how you do this has been a point of contention recently. But we believe strongly that the arts should be for everyone and not just a privileged few and perhaps most importantly that arts should be used as the potential to be an incredible force for openness and social mobility.

This is drilled through our Industrial Strategy, which sets out the combination of our creative flair and technical expertise, and underpinning that as a direction of travel must be the necessity of the next generation to be well prepared and have a well-rounded education.

Over the last few months I think we have seen some significant, positive developments in arts education and I want to build on that momentum.

The first was the work of DfE in saving art history A-Level.

Now Art History A-Level may have only had a relatively small number of entries of around 1,000 each year – and that was part of the problem – but the symbolism of when it was made not available and then when it was saved and the amount of people who have been through Art History A-Level and who see that as the grounding for their career in the arts is incredible, so I am delighted at the work to save it.

But it is part of a much bigger drive. DfE also announced £300 million to help children from all backgrounds to enjoy the benefits of music and the arts and in the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced funding towards work between the RSA and Education Endowment Foundation to pilot and examine through scientific research based on randomised control trials the impact of cultural education on disadvantaged pupils. And if like me you believe in the

hypothesis that high-quality rigorous cultural education enhances people's life chances then this research is the opportunity to see this hypothesis proven.

Nick has spoken about Ebacc and how this welcome report from the New Schools Network puts to rest arguments that the policy is stifling cultural education.

But I will make just one further point.

In order to win this argument that we in this room believe in about the importance of art in education, we have to make the argument in the right way.

We all believe in the intrinsic value of the arts.

I am not an artist by profession. But artists know how to relate to an audience.

And we have got to understand that our audience is the education profession. We need to help support and persuade them to deliver this rounded education.

Our audience is the teachers and head teachers who are focussed through their life's passion and life's work and life's passion on driving up exam results and driving up life chances.

So we need to articulate the value of cultural education in the language of life chances and exam results.

I passionately believe that cultural education – arts, music, drama, drawing, dance, even portraiture – is complementary not contradictory to success in maths and English.

This should not be an argument about a battle between the arts and other subjects, but instead a battle for stronger, better, well-rounded education.

Ultimately, the best schools in the country do this. They combine excellent cultural education to complement excellence in other academic subjects. This report backs up that analysis. It looks at the data and says if you want to drive up standards across the board, push your arts and music offer.

Rigorously taught, music complements maths; drama complements English; and the study of art complements history. The rigour matters but so does the breadth.

Of course, everyone can play their part in this debate and we need your help directly to support schools too. Everyone can do their bit.

We are actively encouraging leaders in the arts, as in other fields, to make a direct, personal contribution through organisations like Speakers for Schools, which arranges talks in state schools by successful people to inspire pupils. Both Nick Gibb and Nick Cullinan have played a big part in making that happen, and if you are not involved then you are not doing your

bit so I urge you to get involved.

So lets concentrate on how we win this argument and that is by concentrating on the complementarity on how arts education drives up standards. And not by engaging in a false battle between arts and science and English and maths. But instead by saying that if you've got the talent and if you want to spark somebody's motivation and imagination in an artistic subject then lets make sure that everybody in our country has the opportunity to embrace the arts, and in so doing drive up their success in science and maths and English too, and ultimately enhance their life chances are enhanced.

I think we have got a chance to do this now and I look forward to working with all of you on it. But ultimately our goal is that every single person has the chance to fulfil their true potential. Lets do that based on the evidence and lets work together to make it happen.