

Speech: Nick Gibb: the importance of high-quality arts education

It is a pleasure to be at the Music and Drama Education Exposition. This event offers teachers and organisations promoting music and drama education the opportunity to attend seminars, workshops and debates. And after the growth in popularity over the past 5 years, the exposition will be visiting Manchester in October, giving teachers from all over the country the opportunity to benefit from what the exposition has to offer.

Thanks to the likes of Pinewood Studios, the West End, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Britain is world leading when it comes to film, theatre and music. The arts contribute to the wealth of our nation, both culturally and financially.

As a child I was in the church and school choirs and began piano lessons at the age of 5; alas, ceasing piano lessons at the age of 6. But every day in school assemblies we were played a piece of classical music; we never knew the names of the pieces but it introduced us to the wonders of the best music ever written and from that I became a lifelong lover of classical music.

That's why I am keen for primary schools to become involved with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM)'s Classical 100. This free resource, designed specifically for primary schools in conjunction with Classic FM, Decca and primary teachers, can help introduce pupils to classical music. Since it was launched, over 3,000 English primary schools have registered to use the resource.

Last month I visited 2 schools in Birmingham to see Classical 100 in operation. I joined in with a class of year 3 children in Bournville Junior School playing Beethoven's Ode to Joy on bell plates and hand chimes.

It is important that all pupils are taught about and have the opportunity to participate in the arts. When I returned to the Department for Education in 2014 as Minister of State for School Reform, one of the first announcements I made was that funding for music education hubs would increase from £58 million in 2014 to 2015, to £75 million in 2015 to 2016. And in November last year I announced that [music education hubs would continue to receive £75 million every year until 2020](#).

That funding should support all pupils, whatever their background, whatever their family's income, and whatever particular special needs or disabilities they may have. No child should be excluded from music because their parents cannot afford to pay for lessons or an instrument, or because they have physical disabilities or other special needs.

Last week I met Stephen Hetherington, founder of the [One-Handed Musical Instrument Trust](#) and heard about the excellent work the trust is doing to remove the barriers to music faced by physically disabled people. This

includes a pilot, with the [Birmingham music education hub](#) and others, teaching children to play one handed recorders and specially adapted trumpets. I am delighted to see that Stephen is here today with colleagues from Birmingham City University and I urge you to find out more about their work and how it could help your pupils.

The Department also provides £29 million for the [Music and Dance Scheme](#), which ensures that exceptionally talented young musicians and dancers are able to fulfil their potential. The vast majority of pupils at the specialist schools like the Royal Ballet School and Yehudi Menuhin School receive means-tested support.

Similarly, the £13.5 million [Dance and Drama Award scheme](#) provides means-tested support for aspiring young dancers and actors, helping many young people on their way to careers in the performing arts.

The government provides funding for the national youth music ensembles such as the National Youth Orchestra and Youth Music Theatre UK. And we provide funding for In Harmony, an intensive orchestral experience focused on schools in some of the country's most deprived communities.

These specialist schemes are vital, but they do not reach everyone, which is why the government has focused on improving the quality of arts education in schools. Music and art and design are compulsory in the [national curriculum](#) from the age of 5 to 14. Dance is a compulsory part of the [PE curriculum](#) for 5- to 14-year-olds. And drama is a compulsory part of the [English curriculum](#) for 5- to 16-year-olds.

Following the review of the national curriculum, a greater emphasis was placed on teaching pupils the core knowledge and techniques underpinning these subjects:

- The new [art and design curriculum](#) has a stronger focus on the teaching of drawing from an early age and a new emphasis on knowing about the historical development of art through a greater emphasis on teaching about great artists and designers.
- The revised [programmes of study for music](#) place a greater focus on the historical development of music and listening to the work of great composers. For example, there is a new reference to pupils being taught to appreciate and understand a wide range of high quality live and recorded music in key stage 2.
- And, in the new [drama GCSE](#), pupils will study at least 1 play in depth and 2 extracts from a second contrasting play. This rigorous study of pieces of drama will be accompanied by participation in at least 2 performances.

And today, I can announce that the government has updated [content for the GCSE in drama](#) and [A level in drama and theatre studies](#). This update specifies that all pupils will now have the entitlement to experience live theatre, reaffirming the government's commitment to providing pupils with an enriching arts education. When studying for qualifications in drama, pupils should not be limited to watching a DVD or a peer performance; they should have the

opportunity to sit in the audience, experiencing a live performance.

The government is committed to ensuring that high-quality arts education is the entitlement of every single child. All pupils, whatever their background, should have access to the best that has been thought and said, including a secure grounding in the arts.

In 2010, the government inherited a school system where the curriculum had been stripped of the rich knowledge content that all children deserve to be taught. For our society to be socially just and socially mobile, all pupils must be endowed with the core knowledge needed to be culturally literate.

The government acted.

As well as ending the grade inflation that devalued the public's faith in exams and removing many so-called 'equivalent' qualifications, the government, through the introduction of the [EBacc](#), has placed greater emphasis on ensuring pupils are taught a core academic curriculum.

The government now publishes both the proportion of pupils entering and the proportion of pupils achieving a good pass in the 5 EBacc subjects: English, maths, a science, a humanity and a language. In 2010, just one-fifth of pupils were studying this combination of subjects. This has since risen to two-fifths, with the proportion of pupils entering the EBacc rising year on year.

Yesterday, I launched the [New Schools Network's report into the importance of the arts](#) – alongside Matthew Hancock, Minister of State for digital and culture policy. The report examined the relationship between arts education and the EBacc.

Despite the success of the EBacc in ensuring greater numbers of pupils are now taking the combination of subjects that facilitate pupils pursuing any post-16 path they should choose – including attending one of the country's world-leading universities – the policy has consistently come in for criticism.

This report puts to rest the tired and inaccurate criticisms of the EBacc policy, a policy which is designed to make this country more meritocratic. In fact, a recent [Sutton Trust report](#) found that schools enthusiastically adapting their curriculum to enter more pupils into EBacc subjects were more likely to achieve good English and maths GCSEs and go on to take A level or equivalent level 3 qualifications, as compared to a set of schools with similar characteristics. Additionally, the pupil premium gap closed slightly more in these schools compared with schools with similar pupil intakes.

But a particularly damaging criticism of the policy is that it is driving the arts out of education. This is not true, as the report makes clear. The EBacc was deliberately restricted to 5 subject areas to ensure that pupils could take the EBacc and still pursue a number of other subjects, including arts subjects. Data suggests that on average pupils in state-funded schools enter 9 GCSE subjects which count in the performance tables – rising to 10 for

pupils with higher prior attainment – leaving ample room for pupils to study a number of arts subjects alongside the EBacc. The proportion of pupils in state funded schools taking at least 1 arts subject has increased from 45.8% in 2011 (when the EBacc was announced) to 48.0% in 2016.

But the report is correct that the government must do more to extol the importance of a high-quality arts education. The government's vision for arts education is encapsulated in 2 words: equity and quality. And this vision must be backed up by concrete action.

That is why I am here to speak today: to express my gratitude to you for what you do for arts education in this country, and to offer you my support as you help to ensure all pupils – whatever their background – receive the high quality music and arts education they deserve.

Thank you.

Press release: Fishing cheats land big fines in court in Middlesex

Anglers had penalties of over £450 each imposed at Uxbridge Magistrates Court on 6 February 2017 for fishing illegally, without an Environment Agency rod licence.

Adam Younie 26 of Haverhill, John Tibbs 46 of Romford, and Steve Sullivan 48 were caught fishing without a licence by Environment Agency fisheries enforcement officers at Thorney Weir lakes, West Drayton, Middlesex. Each were fined £300 (with £127 costs and £30 victim surcharge) when an Environment Agency annual licence at the time, cost just £27.

All anglers failed to appear in court. Environment Agency Fisheries Team Leader, Richard Tyner said:

We check licences across all fisheries in Hertfordshire and Essex, and work in partnership with fishery owners and the police to detect and deter fisheries crime. People who don't buy a licence are cheating other anglers and the future of the sport. The Environment Agency relies on the income from rod licence sales to continue the important work we do to protect fish stocks, improve fisheries and encourage more people to take up fishing.

If you are caught fishing without a rod licence you risk a criminal conviction and a fine up to £2,500. There is no excuse. Annual rod licences for trout and coarse fishing remain at £5 for 12 to 16 year olds, £18 for

senior and disabled concessions and £27 for non-concessions. Children under 12 can fish for free. Licences are easy to buy from the Post Office website or by phone on 03448 005 386 prior to fishing. Anglers should always ensure they have permission to fish at a fishery and check Environment Agency byelaws.

Last year, Environment Agency officers checked more than 62,000 licences and prosecuted more than 1,900 licence cheats. Between them, they were ordered to pay fines and costs in excess of £600,000. To help crack down on unlicensed fishing, the Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal activity by calling 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Money raised from rod licence sales is reinvested in the environment, including; a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers, protecting stocks from illegal fishing, fish restocking, invasive species eradication, and working with partners to encourage people to take-up fishing for the first time.

Press release: Parmigianino's 16th century masterpiece at risk of leaving the UK

Culture Minister Matt Hancock has placed a temporary export bar on a 16th century masterpiece by Parmigianino, to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The Virgin and Child with Saint Mary Magdalen and the Infant Saint John the Baptist is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £24.5 million.

This exceptional artwork is a rare example of a religious easel painting from the last decade of the artist's short career. It is one of the finest examples by Parmigianino remaining in private hands and is the only late religious painting by the artist in the United Kingdom.

The extraordinary work has been in the United Kingdom for nearly 250 years and was one of the first Parmigianinos to be bought by a British collector. Acquired from the Barberini Collection in Rome, it has passed through the collections of three of the country's major collectors of Italian Renaissance painting.

Minister of State for Digital and Culture Matt Hancock said:

"This incredible painting has been in the UK for almost 250 years and showcases the amazing talent of Parmigianino and his eloquent approach to

composition.

“Its highly unusual iconography and rare depth of colour helps us to understand his masterful technique and I very much hope that we keep this wonderful piece in the UK and on display, so that generations can marvel at it in the years to come.”

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA), administered by The Arts Council.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the painting’s aesthetic importance and outstanding significance to the study of Parmigianino’s oeuvre and to the sixteenth-century practice of painting on paper laid on panel.

RCEWA member Aidan Weston-Lewis said:

“I can’t think of a more ravishingly beautiful Italian Old Master painting remaining in any private collection in the United Kingdom. It is in pristine condition, has a very distinguished ownership history and, unusually for the period, has the additional fascination of being painted on paper, which opens up new avenues for scholarly research and technical investigation. Its permanent export overseas would be a major loss.”

The decision on the export licence application for the painting will be deferred until 9 June 2017. This may be extended until 9 December 2017 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £24.5 million (plus VAT of £196,000).

Offers from public bodies for less than the recommended price through the private treaty sale arrangements, where appropriate, may also be considered by Matt Hancock. Such purchases frequently offer substantial financial benefit to a public institution wishing to acquire the item. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the painting should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

An image of the painting can be downloaded from our [flickr site](#).

ENDS

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Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the painting should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.
2. Details of the painting are as follows: The Virgin and Child with Saint

Mary Magdalen and the Infant Saint John the Baptist Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola, called Parmigianino (1503–1540) C.1535–40 Oil on paper, laid on panel, 75.5 x 59.7 cm

3. Details of provenance are available here
4. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
5. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

[Speech: Institute of Directors Annual Dinner speech](#)

It's a great honour to be invited to speak this evening at the prestigious Institute of Directors Northern Ireland annual dinner and I am very grateful to you for your kind invitation.

Before coming to my main remarks I would like to pay tribute to the IoD and the work that you do.

Whether it's the professional support and development you provide for your members. Or by communicating your policy positions through the media or directly to ministers and officials, as you do so effectively, you play a key role in the business life of our country and in shaping public debate about economic and business strategy.

And on that note I would like to say that Ian Sheppard and Linda Brown have been outstanding members of the Business Advisory Group that I established in September.

They have ensured that the voice of the IoD here is heard loud and clear and they've contributed greatly to my understanding of local issues since my appointment last July as I seek to represent Northern Ireland's interests around the Cabinet table.

It's also fitting that the new IoD Director General Stephen Martin is with us this evening, his first official visit in his new role.

As we all know Stephen is originally from Northern Ireland, so it's great to know that Northern Ireland business has a friend and champion right at the top of the IoD.

Stephen's appointment speaks volumes about the massive business talent that we have here.

That was also demonstrated last October when Northern Ireland directors won a record five national titles at the IOB Director of the Year Awards, including the Overall Director of the Year Award for Brendan McGurgan of CDE Global.

Many congratulations to all of you and to the five others who were also highly commended. It's a great achievement for all concerned and you should be very proud.

I'm conscious as I stand here that this is supposed to be a fun and enjoyable evening, and we are all looking forward to being entertained later by Hal Cruttenden, but there's a serious side to proceedings too.

And I'm afraid it falls to me as Secretary of State to perform the serious role tonight.

As everyone here in this room is aware we gather here against a backdrop of great economic and political change and uncertainty.

So I want briefly to speak about three issues that I know will be of concern to everyone in the room.

First, the Government's plans to continue strengthening the economy, both here across the UK as a whole.

Second, about the decision of the people of the UK to leave the European Union.

And third, about the need for political stability here in Northern Ireland.

I will take all three in turn.

It's now nearly seven years since this Government began its mission to rescue the economy away from a culture of debt, spending and reckless irresponsibility that had delivered a rise in unemployment of over half a million, the biggest deficit in our peacetime history and the deepest recession since the war.

In May 2010 the UK stood on an economic precipice and we had two choices.

Continue as we were and risk economic ruin or chart a different course, dealing with our deficit, controlling spending and charting a course of fiscal responsibility.

Today, due to the often very difficult decisions we have had to make and the sacrifices and hard work of the people of the UK, the results are clear.

The deficit is down by nearly two thirds.

We have record numbers of people across our country in employment.

Last year we were the fastest growing of any major advanced economy in the world.

The Bank of England has just upgraded its economic forecasts for this year.

And it's not just a recovery for the south east of England, all regions of the United Kingdom have benefited.

Here in Northern Ireland the economy has seen solid growth. There are nearly 54,000 more people in work than seven years ago, while the number of people claiming unemployment benefits is down for the ninth month in a row and by over 49 per cent since its peak.

So, the fundamentals of the UK economy remain basically strong.

But as a government we recognise that there is still a great deal more to do if we are to realise the Prime Minister's driving mission of building an economy that works for everyone and not just the privileged few.

We need to recognise that one of the main lessons of the EU referendum is that there are far too many people in our country who struggle hard but only just manage to get by, who think the world works for others but not for them.

As a Government we've taken over a million of the lowest paid out of tax altogether including over 33,000 here in Northern Ireland.

We've introduced the first ever National Living Wage.

And we've reformed welfare to ensure that work always pays while ensuring that those who need help are always protected and delivering a fairer deal for the taxpayer.

And we're taking a number of measures to help business grow through our reforms to national insurance contributions, making it easier for businesses to employ people.

Through our £23 billion National Productivity Investment Fund, which will bring significant benefits here in Northern Ireland.

Through the development of a modern industrial strategy to ensure that our economy is fit to deal with the challenges that lie ahead.

And of course through cuts to business taxes to ensure that we have the lowest rate of corporation tax of any economy in the G20.

On the subject of corporation tax let me reiterate this Government's commitment to devolving rate setting powers to the Northern Ireland Executive

and Assembly.

It's a measure that can bring significant new investment, jobs and prosperity to Northern Ireland, you've campaigned for it and I want to deliver it.

The legislation is on the statute book but it can only be triggered if we have a stable, functioning devolved Executive with sustainable finances. So the power to bring about this change rests locally and I hope that message will be heard over the coming weeks.

Chairman, the picture I've set out means that I remain optimistic about our country's economic future and I remain confident that our economic future will remain bright as we embark on a new chapter in our country's history as we leave the European Union.

I appreciate the result in June came as a shock to many here in Northern Ireland but the democratic verdict of the people of the United Kingdom was clear.

And just as we joined the common market as one United Kingdom so we will leave the European Union as one United Kingdom.

This week the Bill enabling the Government to trigger Article 50 beginning our negotiation to leave the EU cleared its stages in the House of Commons and the week after next it will go the Lords who will, I hope, fully respect the will of the elected Commons and the will of the people.

So we are on course to trigger Article 50 by the Government's stated timetable, no later than the end of March. In recent weeks through her speech at Lancaster House and the White Paper the Prime Minister has very clearly set out our key objectives in the negotiations that lie ahead.

Providing certainty wherever we can and putting the final deal to both Houses of Parliament.

Controlling our own laws and ending the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice.

Strengthening the precious Union between the four countries of our United Kingdom.

Maintaining the Common Travel Area with Ireland.

Controlling immigration from Europe while continuing to attract the brightest and best to study and work here.

Guaranteeing rights for British nationals in the EU and EU nationals living here.

Protecting workers' rights.

Pursuing an ambitious free trade agreement with the EU outside the single market but allowing for the freest possible trade in goods and services

between Britain and EU member states.

Striking new trade agreements with other countries around the world.

Keeping the UK as the best place for science and innovation.

Continued co-operation in the fight against crime and terrorism.

And finally a smooth, orderly departure with an agreement about our future partnership by the time the two year Article 50 process has concluded followed by a phased process of implementation.

This is the clear agenda of a Government that wants to build a new, positive and constructive relationship between the UK and the EU.

A new and equal partnership between an independent, self-governing, global UK and our friends and allies in the EU, fully recognising that it remains firmly in our national interest that the EU should succeed after we have left. Since June we have also been very clear about our determination to ensure that Northern Ireland's special circumstances are fully protected.

Things like the single electricity market.

And particularly in relation to the Border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

I am acutely aware that 60 per cent of all Northern Ireland's exports of goods to the EU go to Ireland. Over 14,000 people regularly commute across the border for work or study.

So in addition to the commitments about the Common Travel Area, the White Paper we published last week states explicitly that "we aim to have as seamless and frictionless a border as possible...so that we can continue to see the trade and everyday movements we have seen up to now." And that's a message that was underlined by the Prime Minister following her discussions with Enda Kenny in Dublin last week.

We're determined to get the best deal for Northern Ireland and for the United Kingdom as a whole.

In seeking to protect Northern Ireland's special circumstances the Government has of course sought to engage fully with the Northern Ireland Executive. That's been carried forward in a number of different formats, whether through bilateral meetings or participation in the Joint Ministerial Committee such as the one chaired by the Prime Minister in Cardiff just before she went to Dublin.

As the UK Government we want that level of engagement and participation to continue.

But that requires a fully functioning and stable, devolved Northern Ireland Executive, which leads me to my final point about the need for political stability here.

This Government stands four-square behind the key principles and political institutions set out in the 1998 Agreement and its successors.

And over the past decade Northern Ireland has seen the longest unbroken run of devolved government since the demise of the old Stormont Parliament in 1972.

Since the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements significant progress has been made areas such as addressing paramilitarism, reforming welfare and putting the Executive's finances on a sustainable footing.

Last summer's parading season passed off peacefully, and the long-running dispute in north Belfast has been resolved.

We've also been working intensively to build the necessary consensus to bring forward the bodies to address the legacy of Northern Ireland's past.

So I remain in absolutely no doubt that once this election is over what Northern Ireland needs is strong, stable, fair, accountable and effective, power sharing devolved government.

Devolved government to strengthen the economy, attract inward investment and spread prosperity.

Devolved government to ensure that Northern Ireland's special circumstances are fully reflected as we respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by EU exit.

Devolved government to participate in continuing North/South practical co-operation.

Devolved government to build a stronger, shared society in which there is respect for everyone.

Political stability here has been hard gained over many years with considerable effort by people on all sides.

It has been taken forward by successive UK Governments, along with Irish Governments, US administrations, the EU and others.

The progress that's been made here has rightly been held up as an example to the world about how to overcome difference and work together for the good of the whole community.

So my final message tonight is this, let's not throw away that progress, that stability and that achievement.

I for one am not contemplating any other outcome but a resumption of devolved, partnership government.

That's what most people in Northern Ireland want and that's what we are working to deliver.

To build a brighter, more secure future for Northern Ireland.

To build a Northern Ireland that works for everyone.

[Press release: Foreign Office concerned at conviction of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny](#)

From:

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Part of:

The re-trial concluded by finding Alexei Navalny guilty and re-imposing his original five year sentence.

On 8 February 2017 a Russian court convicted Russian opposition politician, Alexei Navalny, on charges of embezzlement. The original case in 2013 was re-run after the European Court of Human Rights said Alexei Navalny was denied a fair trial.

An FCO Spokesperson said:

We are concerned at the conviction handed down to Russian opposition politician, Alexei Navalny. The judgement once again raises questions about the selective application of the rule of law in Russia. The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the same charges in 2013 were politically motivated.

The conviction of Mr Navalny reflects a worrying trend in Russia where the space for public debate and legitimate opposition is shrinking ever further, and where political activists and civil society are facing increasing pressure. The UK urges Russia to uphold the principles of democracy and support political pluralism.

Further information