

Cultural Learning Alliance Blueprint for an Inclusive Arts-Rich Education

The changes we want to see from the next government

Four foundational changes

CLA’s manifesto asks are presented in the context of widespread calls for education system change, and are about the wider context for schooling as well as the specific issues for Arts education. The foundational education policy changes that CLA is seeking are:

1

Setting new purposes for schooling

with the Expressive Arts as one of the group of core and equal curriculum areas mapped onto the new purposes; this goes beyond just a ‘curriculum review’

2

A minimum four-hour Arts entitlement within the school week

to the end of Key Stage 3 that enables high-quality, progressive learning experiences, and provision at Key Stages 4 and 5 outside of exam syllabuses. In addition, there should be extra-curricular Expressive Arts opportunities at all stages and phases of schooling

3

Complete reform of the school accountability system

to ensure it no longer adversely impacts Expressive Arts subjects – abandoning the EBacc and reforming Progress 8 – and changes to student assessment in line with the recommendations of [Rethinking Assessment](#).

4

An entitlement to teacher training

and teacher development opportunities for Expressive Arts subjects

Underpinning these system changes there will need to be:

An emphasis on a **rounded learning experience** for the personal development and wellbeing of the ‘whole child’ – for the present as well as for the future

A focus on **representation, breadth and relevance** across the Arts curriculum, resources and practice

A commitment to ensuring that the **cultural sector** can respond strategically and collaboratively to meet the needs of young people in schools and in their communities, and is resourced specifically to support this work.

The case for change

The value

The Arts are important for the individual, for schools and for society. Expressive Arts subjects have an important, evidenced and unique role in contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people, providing them positive, memorable experiences, and with skills for life and skills for work. They make a powerful contribution to children’s and young people’s personal, social and creative wellbeing.

The Expressive Arts also have an important role to play in contributing to the relevance and inclusiveness of the school culture and joy of learning, preparing young people to thrive as active citizens. A rich Arts education, as an integral part of a broad and balanced schooling experience, supports the development of many desirable skills and capacities which are valued by young people and by employers.

The problem

For more than a decade, increased accountability measures have focused on a narrow range of subject areas, which has led to a systemic downgrading or exclusion of Expressive Arts subjects and experiences. Today’s curriculum is overly knowledge-centred and focused on what can be easily measured.

A system that has the objective of creating the employees of the future has failed to embrace what employers say they want or to recognise the value of the Arts on a personal level to young people’s wellbeing. It has prioritised learning to count over learning to create. The Arts are highly valued in independent schools, but have low status in the current English curriculum and accountability framework, so access to the Arts is not equitable: this two-tier system is a social justice issue.

For more information see the CLA 2024 Report Card.

The national benefit

Investment in education and skills is key to future productivity and economic growth. CLA proposes that the country’s future economic and industrial strategy should align with a new and ambitious national education and skills strategy, and that the Expressive Arts subject area is **embedded** into the foundations of our schooling system in order to meet the needs of all children and young people, and to grow the future workforce.

We are in a time of crisis. Short-term manifesto initiatives to boost Arts education will be inadequate to meet the ambition necessary for our schooling system: we require a new social contract for education. The system change required is not a quick fix – it will take at least two parliaments to deliver. In the interests of today’s learners, there must be a clear national strategy for re-establishing high-quality Arts provision for all, with practical and ambitious timelines for successful implementation.

CLA manifesto asks GE2024: The detail

1

Foundational requirements

Four foundational requirements for the incoming government

1. Setting new purposes for schooling at the heart of a new vision and ambition

England requires a more rounded and ambitious set of purposes for schooling which are reflective of the world in which children live and will work, and which prepare them for healthy and fulfilling lives. Children and young people need a coherent vision for a balanced and modern curriculum which is relevant and inclusive.

The **Expressive Arts** should be a statutory core curriculum area embedded into the new purposes alongside other subject areas, as in other nations. The definition of Expressive Arts subjects should be expanded from Art and Design, Dance, Drama, and Music to include Digital Arts (including Film) and Craft.

2. Complete reform of the system of school accountability and student assessment

Expressive Arts subjects require an accountability, assessment and progression criteria-based system that is relevant, proportionate, and developed through consultation with teachers and practitioners. The current EBacc accountability framework is adversely impacting education and must go, and Progress 8 requires reform.¹

We recommend that Rethinking Assessment forms the basis for considering approaches to *all* assessment, across all subjects, including the use of digital learner profiles, and achievements beyond exams.²



1

Foundational requirements

3. Creating a four-hour Arts entitlement within the school week

Because Arts subjects and experiences make a unique contribution to children and young people’s education, and have a positive, evidence-based impact on outcomes for them, we call for a weekly entitlement of a minimum number of curriculum hours for Expressive Arts subjects to the end of Key Stage 3, and provision available at Key Stages 4 and 5. Opportunities should be made available for young people to continue with their Arts interests outside of exam syllabuses at Key Stage 4 and beyond – as is the case with sport. All children and young people should be able to benefit from the learning, personal and social development made possible by these disciplines.³

It is important that extra-curricular Arts provision is not seen as a substitute for curriculum Arts provision, but is available for children and young people to extend their in-school Arts engagement to a deeper level, or to pursue interests and recreation beyond their qualifications choices.

Outside school, all national/government-funded youth provision should embrace a range of quality Expressive Arts activities as a key enrichment strand, with opportunities for progression, in partnership with the cultural sector.

4. An entitlement to teacher training and teacher development opportunities for Expressive Arts subjects

When Expressive Arts subjects are part of all young people’s entitlement, a parity of subject status in access to teacher training and CPD will be required across all routes and providers, at primary and secondary level. There is a significant issue in lack of parity of experience for early career teachers and trainees in their exposure to high quality Arts practice. Confidence to teach the Arts, and having opportunities to increase skills and competences throughout a teaching career – including at leadership level – are vital.

There should be continued opportunities to develop new strategies, ideas and inspiration, including from Arts practitioners. Identifying an Expressive Arts Lead in all schools will be an important step, and will help in identifying training needs. Teacher agency in the classroom is important in relation to what is taught and how it is taught, and is vital for boosting creativity and raising professional status. Arts teaching should be a formal part of Initial Teacher Education provision and it is essential that primary teachers receive a minimum level of training in Arts teaching.⁴ Every primary school also needs to be able to access at least one Arts specialist to support curriculum work in the classroom. Expressive Arts teaching bursaries should be made available across the range of Arts subjects to boost the number of secondary Arts teachers after more than a decade of decline.

2

Guiding principles

Guiding principles
to underpin the
foundational changes

A rounded 'whole child' and community approach

We believe that education should serve the whole child rather than be narrowly defined by academic outcomes determined centrally by the government. Education is about personal development and wellbeing, not just academic attainment, and is important for the present, as well as for the future. We value the five principles of Every Child Matters.⁵ They acknowledge that health, enjoyment, safety and achievement contribute to successful learning and life chances – and to making a positive contribution – in the present and the future. We would like to see all schools enabled to be active players in their local communities, and benefiting from wider community culture and Arts partnerships. Whole school commitment to the voice and influence of children and young people – **learner voice** – is also important. Their views and experiences should contribute to the Arts offer in all schools, and to a national policy consultation about system change.

Representation and relevance

In order for children to fully engage with their education, they need to see themselves reflected in what they are learning. Representation in schools must be considered across the diversity of genres, course materials and activities, e.g. texts, artists studied, composers selected, stories, histories and performances experienced, and in the engagement of cultural partners.

It is important in the syllabuses followed towards public examinations. This breadth and relevance is important for social cohesion, and in ensuring that schooling reflects the lives, identities and cultures of our changing society, both through contemporary work, and in making links between work that is considered part of a 'traditional' canon, and contemporary culture.



3

Cultural Sector

Ensuring culture sector responsiveness to school needs

The cultural sector has a responsibility to ensure that it has a dialogue with schools in order to contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people. It can provide schools with additional specialisms relating to specific artforms or employment arenas. In order for this to happen the sector must prioritise its learning and participation teams.

In addition to the professionalisation of the Arts educator workforce through training and CPD, we would like to see more collaboration between education and Arts policy makers and funders to ensure that the resources of the professional Arts sector can be made easily available and relevant to schools (including, importantly, online), and responsive to their needs. We would emphasise that unless representation is addressed within the cultural sector, Arts organisations will be unable to support schools in their pursuit of representation, breadth and relevance.

We see the need for three key functions/ approaches to support delivery:

Brokerage

Recognition by policy makers and funders that if schools are to access programmes, projects and resources from the professional cultural sector, they require consistent support and funded, active brokerage work in order to do so. There should be recognition of the role teachers play in that brokerage through one teacher in every primary, secondary and SEND school or group of schools (ideally a member of the Senior Leadership Team) being identified as Expressive Arts Lead, and a governor in every school being given responsibility for promoting and monitoring Expressive Arts partnerships with external Arts organisations and artists.

Validation schemes

Continued support and proper resourcing for schemes that validate and encourage best practice in school Arts provision and young people’s cultural engagement.

A focus on careers advice, entry and progression routes:

The Arts sector needs to see itself as providing education for employment, removing barriers and creating opportunities in order to build a creative workforce across *all* sectors, and a trained and diverse workforce for a thriving cultural and creative industries sector.⁶ The creative talent pipeline starts in schools, including in primary. The sector needs to be relevant to national education, skills and industrial strategies and to work with school careers programmes, connecting with post-16 education, including adopting the Gatsby Benchmarks, and offering work experience and entry-level jobs through apprenticeships.

4

Action

What we will do –
and what you can do

Please support and join us as we call for political parties to commit to giving young people an entitlement to a broad, balanced, future-focused and Arts-rich education. We will be sharing these manifesto asks with all political parties, and will be raising awareness across our communication channels.

Meanwhile we know that we need improved and evidence-based case-making. CLA is now tackling this through its new Evidence and Value Narrative Working Group, with its findings and recommendations to be shared to inform evidence-based policy making and practice.

Following the publication of party manifestos we will publish detailed analysis of any education and culture pledges, and whether they address CLA’s manifesto asks and are likely to positively impact the Arts in schools.

Here’s what you can do to help:

Tell your local candidates what changes are needed. Ask them to pledge support for an Arts-rich education for every child as part of wider education system change and to publicly recognise their support for the value of the Expressive Arts in schools.

Back the asks on social media – tag Cultural Learning Alliance in your posts and link to this document on [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Threads](#)

Please contact our team if you wish to discuss the asks: info@culturallearningalliance.org.uk

[Sign up](#) to receive all our latest news.

We are in the process of developing a longer document to provide a more detailed commentary on our manifesto asks and to address implementation. We are also planning to commission a CLA Young People’s Manifesto.

For deeper background we suggest reading The Arts in Schools: Foundations for the Future, published in 2023 by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and A New Direction and available on CLA’s website: www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk

Endnotes

- 1

The rationale for the list of EBacc subjects was the Russell Group universities’ list of ‘facilitating subjects’ which was scrapped in 2019 in recognition of its negative impact on the uptake of Arts subjects. Disappointingly there has been no corresponding change to the EBacc.
- 2

We are seeking a complete overhaul of accountability measures, and for the EBacc to be scrapped, but in the short-term including Expressive Arts subjects in Progress 8 measures would make a significant difference.
- 3

The Arts in Schools: Foundations for the Future report recommends a minimum of four hours.
- 4

We suggest an absolute *minimum* of twelve hours for each year of training for primary teaching.
- 5

Every Child Matters (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.
- 6

Britain’s creative industries are 50% larger than in 2010 and contribute £124.6bn in gross value added (GVA) annually, employing more than two million people.
O. Brook, A. Miles, D. O’Brien, M. Taylor. Social Mobility and ‘Openness’ in Creative Occupations Since the 1970s

