

# Cultural Learning Alliance Blueprint for an Inclusive Arts-rich Education for Every Child

The changes we want to see from the new Labour government

## Rethinking the role of the Expressive Arts in education

Expressive Arts subjects – art and design, dance, drama and music – play an important, evidenced and unique role in improving outcomes and life chances for children and young people. An Arts-rich education is an integral part of a broad and balanced education, contributing to children's personal, social and creative development. It also provides young people with skills for life and work which are valued by both young people and employers, enabling them to thrive as active citizens. Expressive Arts subjects are therefore important for the individual and society.

We are in a time of crisis, and require a new social contract for education in order to meet the needs of all children and young people, and to grow the future workforce. The country's investment areas and industrial strategy should align with a new and ambitious national education and skills strategy, with the Expressive Arts embedded as a valued and equal curriculum area. This starts with supporting the ambition of schools to provide a high-quality, future-facing and well-rounded educational experience for all students, and is aligned with wider calls for education reform.

## The need for education system change

The EBacc school performance measure needs to go. Since 2010, 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. A system with 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. The percentage of GCSEs taken in Arts subjects has halved since 2010; there are schools which no longer offer some Arts subjects at all at GCSE (42% and 41% of schools in the case of Music and Drama respectively).

Today's curriculum is overly knowledge-centred and focused on what can be easily measured. We require clear new purposes for schooling, with the Expressive Arts as a core and equal curriculum area mapped onto these purposes. The Expressive 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 that urgently needs to be addressed.

