

Letter from Sharon Hodgson MP to Rt Hon Justine Greening MP,
Secretary of State for Education

Dear Justine,

I write to you in my capacity as Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design in Education, and on behalf of our APPG, to welcome you to your new role as Education Secretary and to outline our position on the future of art education in our schools.

The APPG has for many years now championed and promoted high-quality and inclusive art education in our schools. This is because we believe that art education is essential to not only our cultural, spiritual, creative and social wellbeing, but also to our economy, with a growing creative sector which is estimated at £84.1 billion to our economy last year alone. If we are to continue to support this important sector in our economy, then we must be ensuring that the skills coming through the pipeline are of a high-quality and reflect the diversity in our society, from women, to BME groups and all socio-economic groups.

Art education is not a right of the privileged few, but should be accessible by all in society. That's why it is welcome that in the Government's Culture White Paper, a position was set out, which states, that all state-funded schools should 'provide a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils'. The APPG strongly supports this statement, however, believes that if we are to see this vision realised then Government policy around curriculum and wider education policy must be in line with this vision and not forgotten about.

This is seen the most with the introduction of the EBacc, which though welcomed to improve academic rigour in our schools, has meant that non-EBacc subjects have fallen by the wayside. This has been seen in recent studies by both the Cultural Learning Alliance and the National

Society for Education in Art & Design (NSEAD), who respectively found that, the number of art and design teachers had fallen by 4% and 33% of art and design teachers at Key Stage 4, across all types of schools, saw a reduction in time dedicated to their subject over the past five years.

This figures are only a snapshot of the various studies that are out there from professional bodies, campaign groups and the teachers themselves, who want to see proper investment and support given to art education in our schools, however, they provide us with a clear understanding that more must be done to ensure the vision set out in the Culture White Paper is realised.

Over the years, the APPG has worked to promote this vision, where we have promoted the belief that access to art education can have a positive impact on a child's education, including the likelihood of that child remaining on in formal education passed the Government requirements; equipping children with the transferable skills to succeed in other subjects across the curriculum which can help open up a vast array of career opportunities.

Specific campaigns we have worked on have included discount codes, which saw art, craft and design subjects being counted against each other which has meant young people have been pushed away from these subjects to ensure league table status and also the need for STEM to become STEAM to ensure that allocation for science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects is offered to art subjects as they are also vital to our 21st century economy.

Our APPG has worked across the creative, artistic and education sectors to bring together the top people within their industries to promote art education, and I can assure you that they will all welcome the opportunity to engage and work with you on this important area of policy. Therefore, I would welcome the chance to meet with you to discuss this matter further, or to invite you along to an APPG meeting

in the near future so that you can directly engage with the sector itself.

If you would like to meet or to attend a future APPG meeting, my member of staff, Hannah Blythe, would be happy to work with your office to find a mutually convenient time for this to go ahead. Hannah can be contact at blytheh@parliament.uk or on 0207 219 6916.

Yours sincerely,

Sharon Hodgson MP
Member of Parliament for Washington and Sunderland West
Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design in
Education