



## **Establishing priorities for communications with Damian Hinds and The APPG for Art, Craft and Design in Education**

This is a transcription of the presentation given by Sophie Leach, assistant general secretary, to The APPG for Art, Craft and Design in Education, which asked: ‘How do we re-establish communication between the APPG and Damian Hinds MP, Education Secretary, and what are the priorities?’

Our APPG was formed five years ago, in that time we’ve had four Secretaries of States for Education, and to whom we’ve addressed five letters. We’ve seen two national curriculums, new qualifications and school types, new accountability measures and a new funding formula.

Each of our letters addressed the intended or unintended consequences of policy changes on our subject. In order to prioritise our future communications with Damian Hinds, let’s briefly look at the focus for each of our past letters:

1. **To Maria Miller** (SOS for Culture Media and Sport) we urged that her department work with the DfE to place arts and culture in an equal footing within the national curriculum.
2. **To Michael Gove** we used our small-scale subject survey to evidence the impact of the EBacc.
3. Our rebuttal letter, to **Mr Gibb**, explained the national curriculum was no longer statutory in less than half of schools; we listed sector differences and identified a school that had reportedly removed art and design from the curriculum.
4. Another rebuttal letter followed, querying the DfE’s ‘selection’ of data.
5. Our fifth letter, to **Nicky Morgan**, conveyed dismay at her ‘Your Life’ speech and the assertion that the arts and humanities limit life choices.
6. Our final letter, to **Justine Greening**, identified the focus on core subjects in ITE and the impact of this focus on the quality and quantity of art and design in schools.

Addressing possible priorities, let's briefly summarise recent reports, research and issues, raised by past and present APPG speakers and in NSEAD's meetings with Ofsted:

1. From today, we can see there is a pressing need, an urgency for more subject-specific CPD, with the benefits, for our subject, for teachers and students, clearly evidenced.
2. a. We're yet to address Branwen Jeffrey's large-scale BBC report *Creative subjects are being squeezed*, published earlier this year. Their survey report could be used to frame the continued impact of funding cuts, as well as accountability measures, on the arts and on our subject.  
  
b. Under the same umbrella theme, it would be helpful to address, as Sharon did during Tuesday's parliamentary questions, Nick Gibb's recent announcement [10 April] of £96 million for talented 'arts' pupils. The headline noted 'music, drama and dance'. It neglected to list art and design, and that's because the 'additional' funding is largely allocated (94% of it) for music, dance and drama.

So, whilst we welcomed the announcement, 'why', we might ask, 'is there such an imbalance of spending?', and 'How will pupils even know they are talented when curriculums are so depleted of arts subjects?'

c. We may also wish to prioritise (and revisit) the issue of accountability, especially given Ofsted's recent research findings. Last October, Amanda Spielman, chief HMI, said: 'testing has come to mean curriculum' and that in some schools: 'lower ability students are not accessing languages and some arts subjects.'

With the impact of policies on the arts, now in clear sight of Ofsted, with accountability measures and funding cuts already impacting on the curriculum, with GCSE art and design numbers falling to the lowest level this century, we might begin by asking, Damian Hinds: 'What *will* our subject look like in 2020?'

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