



ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS

HOSTED BY
**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITS
SIX RESIDENT ORCHESTRAS

INTERNATIONAL PARTNER



PRINCIPAL MEDIA PARTNER

CLASSIC *f*M

ABO Annual Conference

EDUCATION

11.45am - 1pm

Sophie Lewis
Dame Rachel de Souza
Dr Adam Whittaker
Dr Anthony Anderson
Jillian Barker



Join the conversation!

@aborchestras #abo2026



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Music education landscapes and contexts

Dr Adam Whittaker and Dr Anthony Anderson
5th February 2026



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Context



A child cannot choose something they are not offered.



Workforce



Secondary Music Teachers

Year	Number of secondary music teachers
2011-2012	6,584
2012-2013	6,616
2013-2014	6,425
2014-2015	6,389
2015-2016	6,198
2016-2017	6,043
2017-2018	5,866
2018-2019	6,002
2019-2020	6,048
2020-2021	6,300
2021-2022	6,473
2022-2023	6,675
2023-2024	6,937
2024-2025	7,116

7 to 9

2010/11	6,160
2011/12	6,156
2012/13	6,171
2013/14	6,007
2014/15	5,977
2015/16	5,795
2016/17	5,682
2017/18	5,590
2018/19	5,739
2019/20	5,711
2020/21	5,931
2021/22	6,146
2022/23	6,324
2023/24	6,573
2024/25	6,741



- <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/school-workforce-in-england/2024?subjectId=5ccd25d3-4d20-47e5-05cb-08ddcde6ffca>

10 to 11

2010/11	4,605
2011/12	4,757
2012/13	4,825
2013/14	4,752
2014/15	4,706
2015/16	4,563
2016/17	4,430
2017/18	4,238
2018/19	4,258
2019/20	4,307
2020/21	4,341
2021/22	4,496
2022/23	4,513
2023/24	4,548
2024/25	4,652



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12 to 13

2010/11	2,727
2011/12	2,840
2012/13	2,851
2013/14	2,824
2014/15	2,788
2015/16	2,589
2016/17	2,393
2017/18	2,139
2018/19	2,066
2019/20	2,011
2020/21	1,935
2021/22	2,036
2022/23	2,006
2023/24	1,964
2024/25	1,926



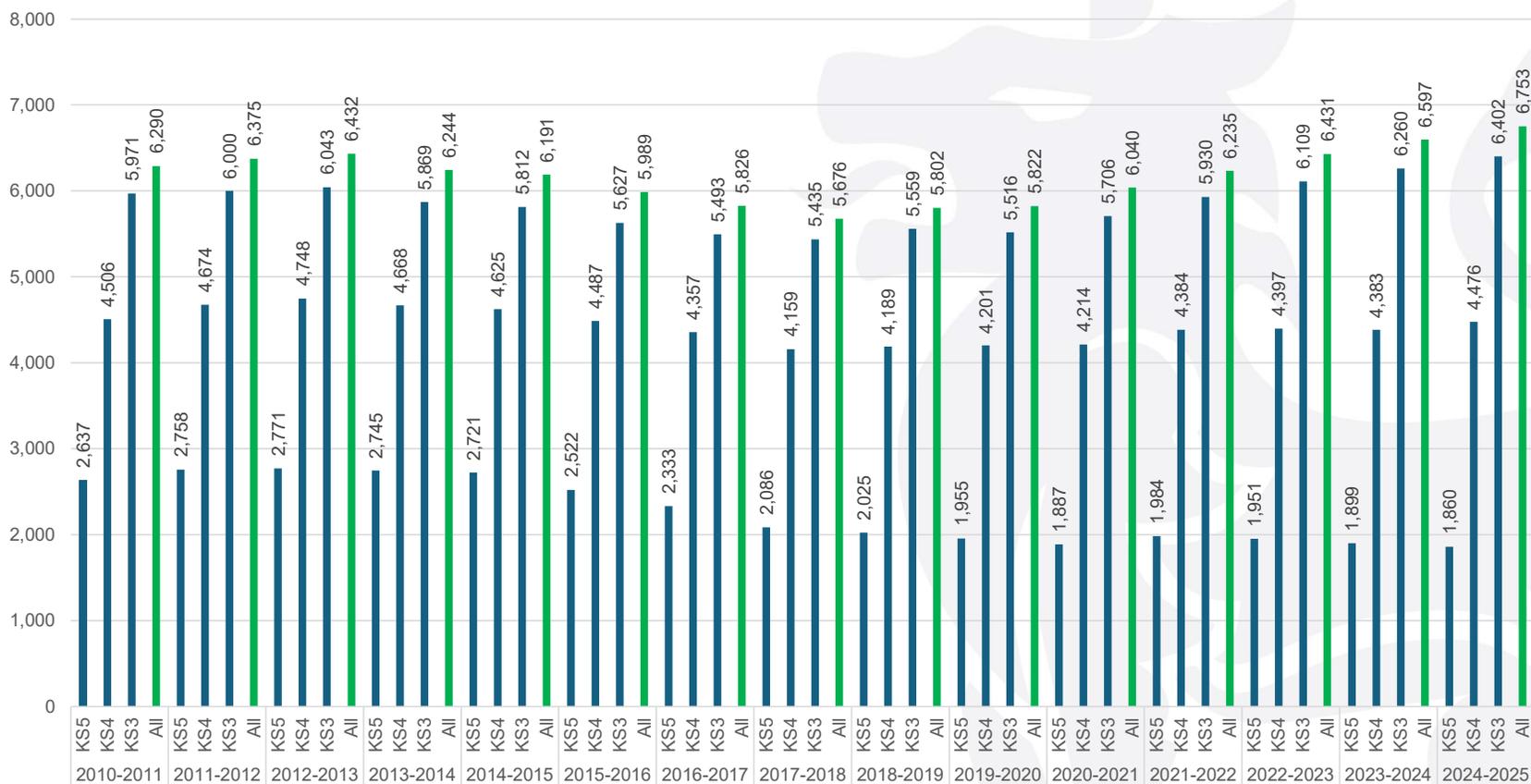
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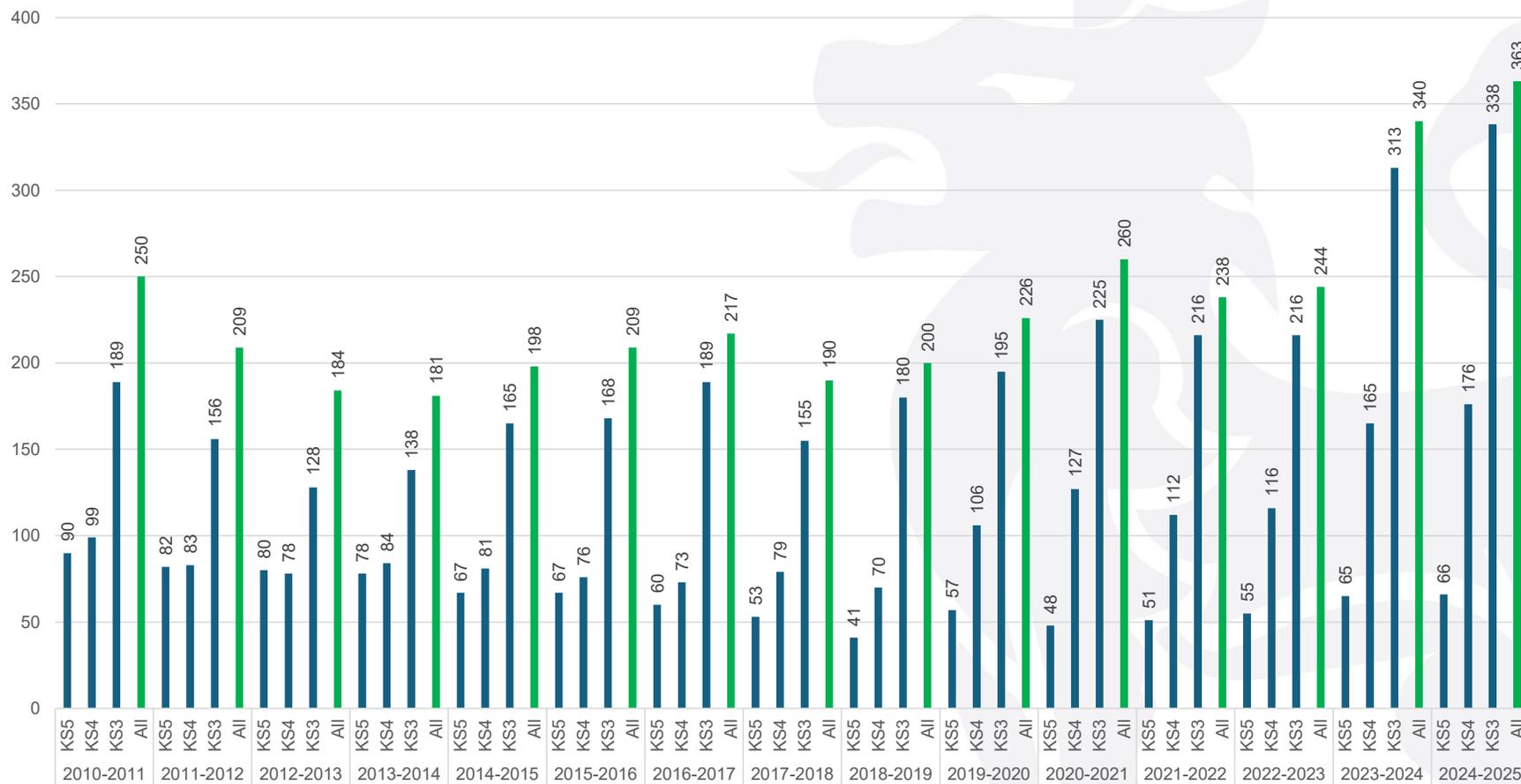
		Music
7 to 13	2010/11	6,540
	2011/12	6,584
	2012/13	6,615
	2013/14	6,425
	2014/15	6,389
	2015/16	6,198
	2016/17	6,043
	2017/18	5,866
	2018/19	6,002
	2019/20	6,048
	2020/21	6,300
	2021/22	6,473
	2022/23	6,676
	2023/24	6,937
2024/25	7,116	

12 to 13		
	2010/11	2,727
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	2022/23	2,006
	2023/24	1,964
	2024/25	1,926

Qualified secondary music teachers in England according to Key Stage



Unqualified secondary music teachers in England according to Key Stage



Inequalities

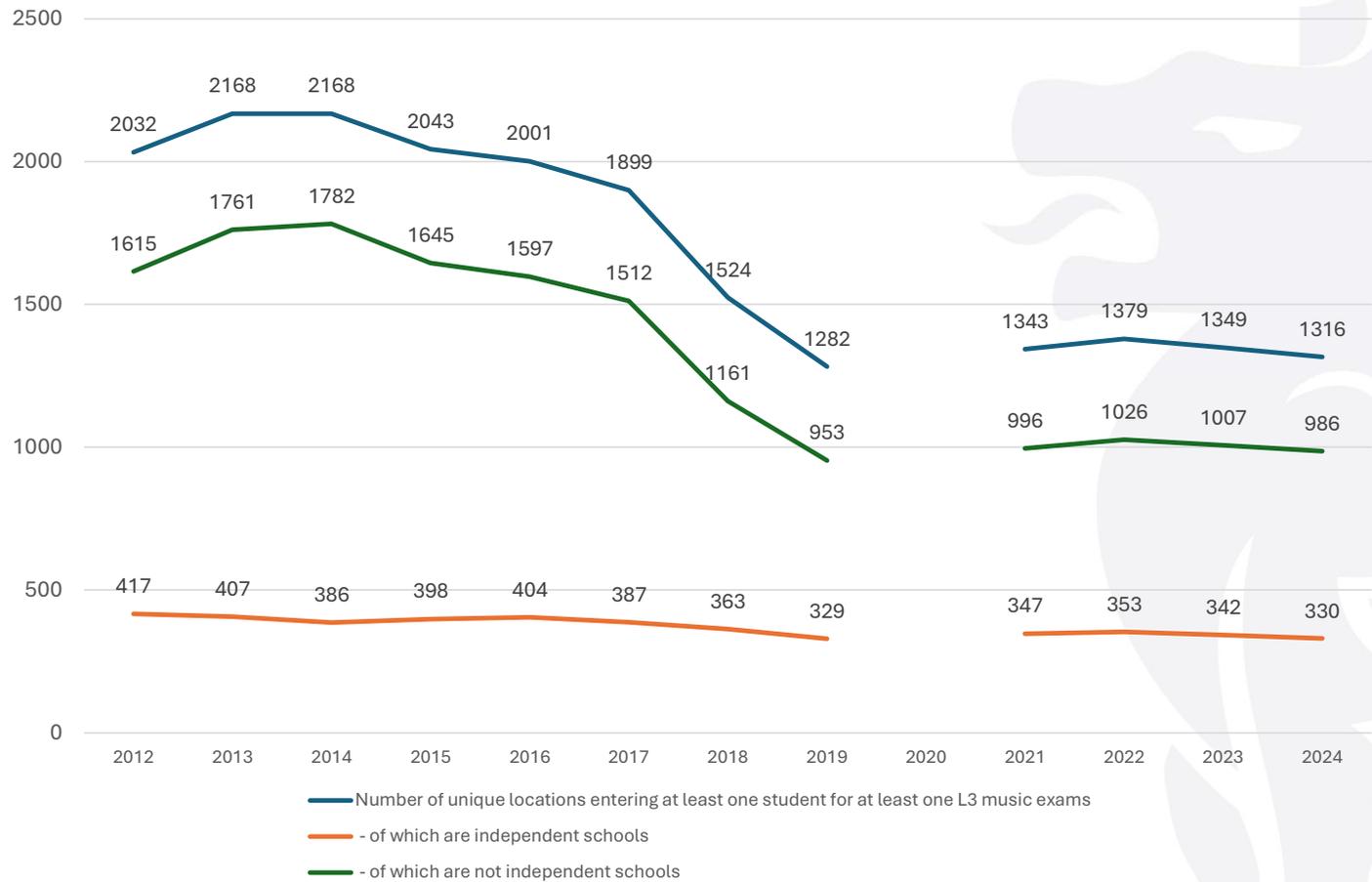


Table 1 – Proportion of state-funded institutions with entries in Arts subjects at Key Stage 4 by disadvantage quintiles

Subject	Qualification type	Quintile 1 (least disadvantaged)	2	3	4	Quintile 5 (most disadvantaged)
Any Music	GCSE	90%	78%	63%	50%	39%
Any Music	Technical Award	10%	19%	27%	30%	34%
Any Music	GCSE or Technical Award	93%	89%	84%	76%	70%

Source: [Curriculum and Assessment Review: Analytical annex to the final report \(2025\)](#).

Number of schools offering any Level 3 music qualifications – Tatlow, 2025



Ensembles



Current state of play

- **Music Hubs** are a leading provider for state schools. Hubs are monitored through an annual return, managed by Arts Council England.
 - This process collects information on the numbers of young people engaged in different activities, including instrumental learning, ensembles, as well as the ways that Hubs engage with schools.
- Data is **patchy** and does not offer **indicators of quality** or level in many cases

Group activities types	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Instrumental Group	11,554	11,738	10,964	10,924	11,401	10,875	10,493	8,982	4,154	7,580	8,367	6,649
Band - Jazz	565	550	488	499	470	456	480	437	254	373	355	
Band - Rock/Pop/Electronic	1,178	1,478	1,403	1,268	1,531	1,515	1,449	1,191	471	1,301	1,803	
Band - World/Diverse Music	950	910	878	756	841	868	728	534	255	493	406	
Brass Ensemble	1,154	1,147	1,082	1,091	1,047	1,038	1,028	853	351	631	643	
Folk/Mixed Ensemble				196	227	255	207	161	61	122	166	
Group - Acoustic Guitar/Classical Guitar	562	803	876	942	922	942	888	783	289	661	666	
Instrumental Groups												6,649
Keyboard Ensemble	321	343	265	268	322	308	334	256	98	205	238	
Orchestra - Large	630	686	616	630	707	606	627	548	280	436	452	
Orchestra - Mixed	579	568	619	551	654	583	533	489	229	451	484	
Percussion Ensemble	882	923	882	863	838	802	793	746	295	541	598	
String Ensemble	2,065	1,837	1,573	1,562	1,488	1,494	1,404	1,226	660	1,072	1,153	

Source: Music Hubs Data Dashboard:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrJoiMmY0MDg5ZGMtMGYwNi00Zjk3LTk3NTQtOWZmNmRkYzZlOTNiliwidCI6ImM3YTZmYzMyLTc1MzgtNGlwZS1hOTZhLTA1Zjg1NTAwN2MxMSJ9>

An example

- Data is collected on the number of ‘large orchestras’,
 - No way of knowing if they are playing at **beginner** or **advanced** levels
 - No way of knowing if they **rehearse** weekly, termly, more infrequently, on a one-off basis, or if children continue to play for a long time or stop straight away
 - No easy way to know how this **connects** to wider school music making or if this is led by a school music teacher, or an external provider
- There is an indicator of quantity, but that which is being counted covers a wide spectrum of activity. National data on **quantity** is **limited**, and **quality** is **non-existent**.

The National Centre for the Arts and Music Education

What could it mean for
orchestras?

18th March 2025

Press release

Young people to benefit from education boost

New package announced to support young people with high-quality arts education and enrichment activities as well as AI and tech opportunities.

Plans announced today include:

- The appointment of a new National Centre for Arts and Music Education to support the delivery of high-quality arts education through a new online training offer for teachers, promoting opportunities for children and young people to pursue their artistic and creative interests in school - including through the government's network of Music Hubs - and boost partnerships between schools and cultural providers.
- To support schools to offer pupils high-quality creative and other extra-curricular activities, a new Enrichment Framework will be developed in collaboration with a panel of experts. The Framework is expected to cover a wide range of activities which could be anything from sport to gardening, board games to school bands, or debating to volunteering.
- A new Digital, AI and Technology Task and Finish Group made up of sector and digital experts will also be established. The group will advise the government on what changes can be made to improve the AI and digital skills talent pipeline, prepare children and young people for the jobs of the future, and drive better teaching and learning through the use of AI and Technology. The group will report to the Education Secretary before the end of the academic year.

DfE Press Release,
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/young-people-to-benefit-from-creative-education-boost>

7th April 2025

- We have a written question, posed by Steve Darling (Liberal Democrat).
- Source: Hansard, Written Questions: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-10/36833>

Question



Steve Darling

Liberal Democrat

Torbay

 Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to enhance arts and culture in the national curriculum.

Answer



Catherine McKinnell

Labour

Newcastle upon Tyne North

 Commons

Answered on

7 April 2025

The department has announced a new National Centre for Arts and Music Education. The National Centre will promote arts education, including signposting to careers guidance and opportunities for children and young people to pursue their artistic and creative interests in school. It will drive excellent arts teaching through a new continuing professional development offer to schools and support partnerships between schools and cultural providers.

25th June 2025

- We have a written question, Baroness Redfern (Conservative).
- Source: Hansard, Written Questions: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-06-11/HL8368>



Labour

Life peer



Answered on

25 June 2025

This government believes that music is an important part of the well-rounded and enriching education that every child deserves, including those in rural areas. We will therefore give parents certainty over their children's education, including music teaching.

Music is already included in the national curriculum for pupils aged 5 to 14 for maintained schools. The government is legislating so that academies will be required to teach the reformed national curriculum, following the outcomes of the independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, due to report in the autumn.

To support music education in schools, the government provides £76 million per year grant directly to 43 Music Hubs partnerships across England. Each Music Hub Local Plan has an inclusion strategy that should set out how to respond to barriers based on their geographic area, including location and socio-economic challenges.

On 18 March, the department announced our intention to launch a new National Centre for Arts and Music Education, to help meet the government's ambitions for improved and more equitable arts education, including music. The National Centre will become the national delivery partner for Music Hubs. It will also support schools in the delivery of high quality arts education in schools across England, in both rural and urban areas, including through online training, local partnership and better information for teachers, parents and young people.

Answer



Georgia Gould



Labour

Queen's Park and Maida Vale



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Answered on

23 December 2025

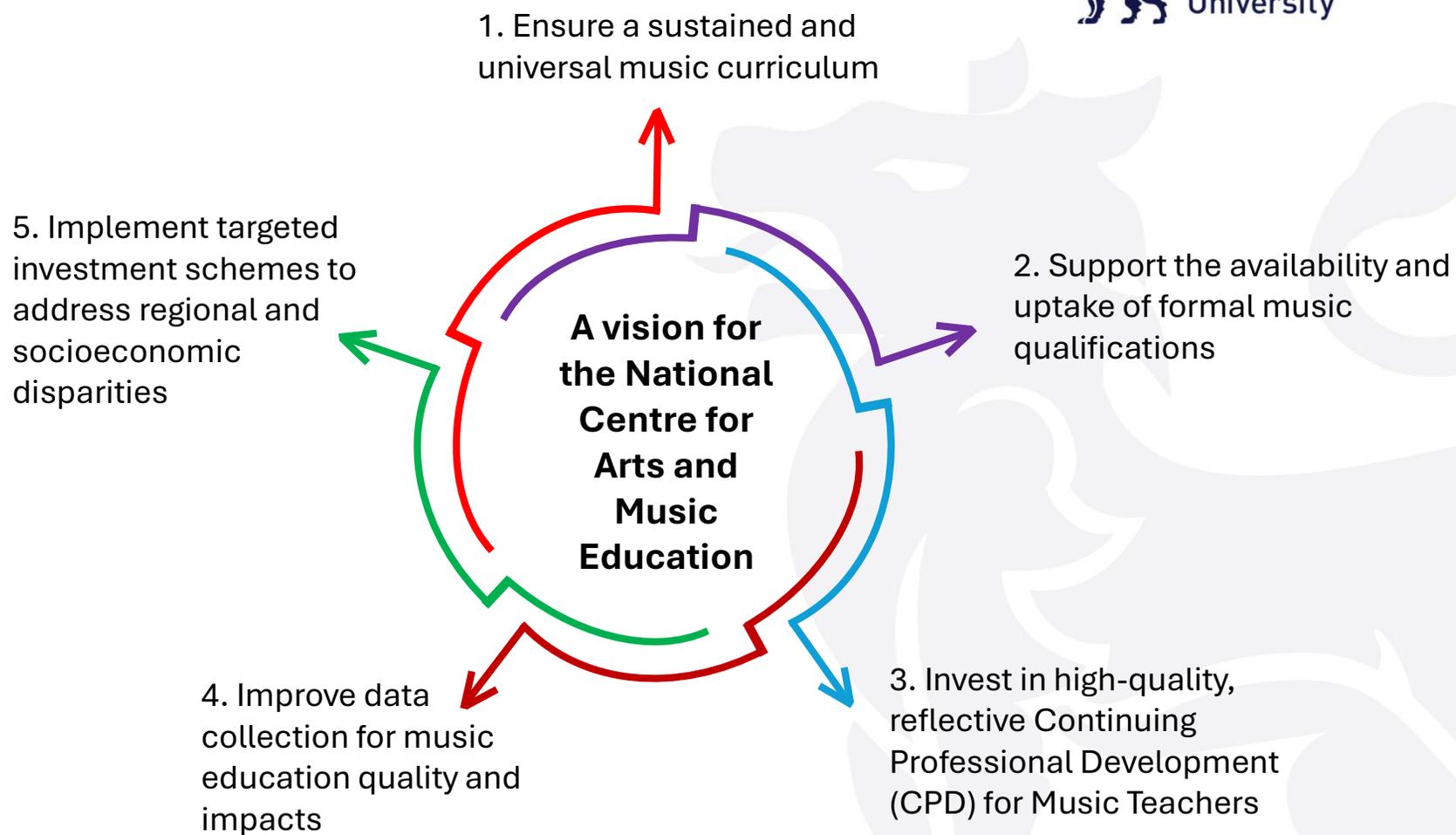
Education is a devolved matter, and this response relates to state-funded schools in England only.

On 5 November, the government issued the response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review, setting out the changes that will be made to the national curriculum, as well as reforms to qualifications, school accountability and enrichment. The first teaching of a refreshed curriculum will be September 2028, and will include improvements in music, art and design, dance in PE, and drama in English.

We will also consult on an improved version of Progress 8 that balances a strong academic core with breadth.

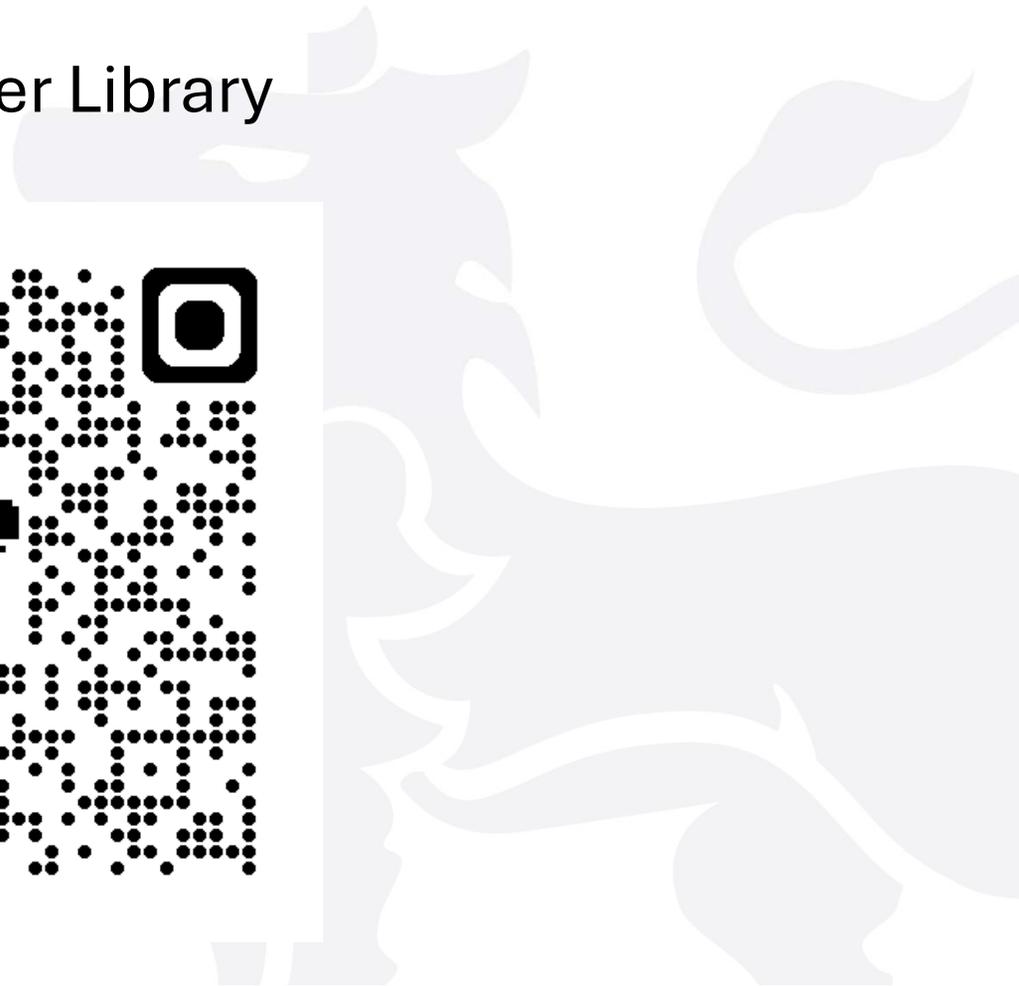
Next year, the National Centre for Arts and Music Education will support excellent teacher training in the arts, boost partnerships between schools and cultural organisations and promote arts opportunities.





(Anderson & Whittaker, 2025)

Briefing Paper Library



References

Anderson, A. & Whittaker, A. (2025). Proposals Summary. In: *A Vision for the National Centre for Arts and Music Education*. All Party Parliamentary Group for Classical Music. Millbank House: London. July 2nd 2025.

Anderson, A & Whittaker, A. (2025). *The State of Music Education in English Schools: A landscape briefing paper*. Birmingham: Birmingham City University. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15703736>

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Dr Adam Whittaker and Dr Anthony Anderson
5th February 2026

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A Purpose Led Approach

L&P Growth for Impact

Royal Ballet and Opera

Collective statement from Performing Arts

We Believe.....

Creativity for Every Child

Every child should have the chance to take part in high quality experiences of dancing, singing, making music, art and theatre throughout their school life

(THE ASK)

Because the arts inspire creativity, enable learning, build skills and support wellbeing

(THE WHY)

Preparing young people to thrive as active citizens, succeed in their future work and experience the joy that arts can bring

(BENEFIT FOR YP)

Creative arts will power UKPLC's innovation, growth and global role in 21 Century

(BENEFIT FOR UK)



RBO L&P Strategy: Catalyst for Creativity

2024 - 28

Four Goals for Change:

- Expand and deepen schools programme to counter decline of arts in schools
- Diversify talent pipeline in ballet and opera
- Counter perceptions of elitism by offering an inclusive and creative onsite offer to widen access to families and new audiences
- Strengthen story with impact, research and advocacy

Systemic Change

Embed Creative Learning

Diversify Talent

Widen Access



Framework for Change

Knowledge and Skills (Learning)

Lifelong Skills (Expressing)

Wellbeing

Connection to RBO (Inspiring)

Enriched learning
Creative Confidence
Opera and Ballet skills and knowledge

Critical reflection
Collaboration
Communication
Empathy

Confidence
Agency and Self-Expression
Pride and Accomplishment
Social Connection

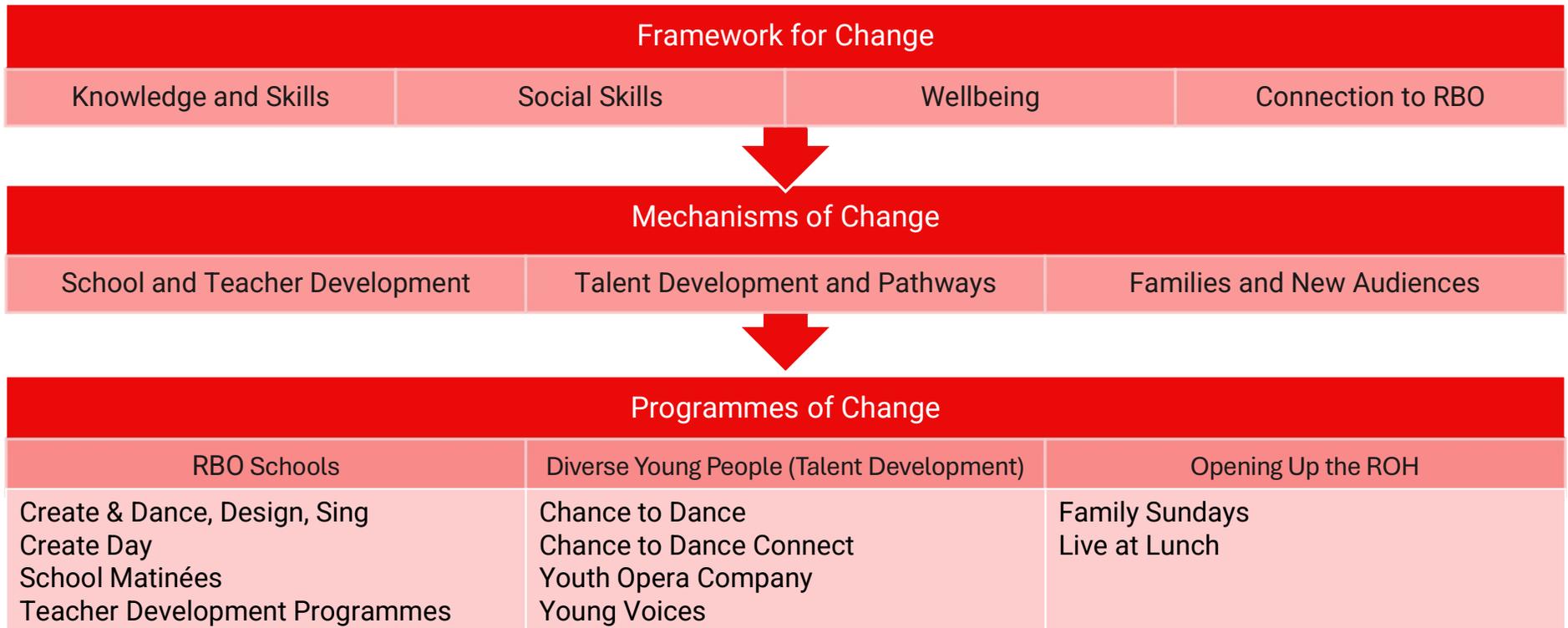
Belonging
Aspiration
Access



Schools, Teachers, Young People

Diverse Young People (Talent Development)

Families and New Audiences



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is at the heart of all RBO Learning and Participation work. Embedding excellent EDI and Youth Voice practice in our work is pivotal to our mission and a central to how we achieve the impact we do. Cross-team working groups work together to develop and delivery strategies for the ongoing development our EDI and Youth Voice practice.



National Impact: RBO Schools

Inspiring Creativity of Pupils

Programme

Create & Dance, Design and Sing
CPD training for teachers
Classroom activity
Live Lessons
Large scale events and culminations

Partnerships

Systematic model for Sport and Music partnerships in association with national partners

Promotion

New models for reaching schools

Syndication

Launched with Oak Academy hosting RBO Schools content

National Impact: RBO Schools

Building creative confidence of teachers

CPD on Create & Dance, Design and Sing

Cultural Champion for middle leaders

Leaders for Impact for senior leaders



Our Reach: RBO Schools

	2425 Totals	2324 Totals	% year increase
Schools	1909	1509	27%
Teachers	7266	5967	22%
Pupils	144,453	103,754	39%

*There are 16,743 state-funded primary schools and 3,456 state-funded secondary schools in England. Over 100 Local Authority areas

Total schools reached for all RBO programmes across England

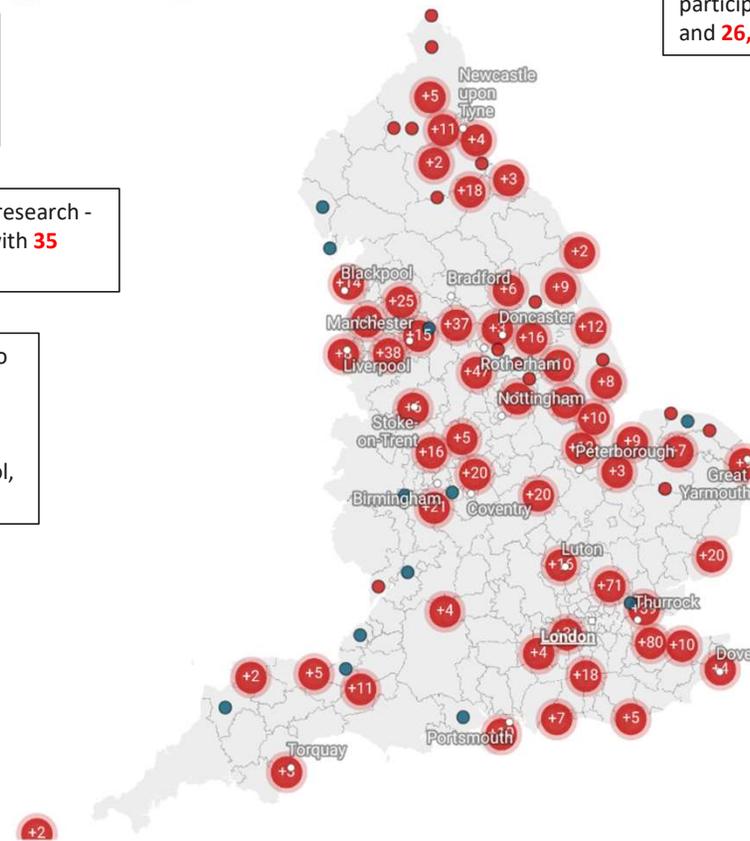


Impact in Schools Across Nation

Schools Reach in ACE Priority Areas 2425

39% of all schools reached were in ACE Priority Areas

■ Currently reaching ■ Not reached yet



Create & Sing – Manchester/London/Cambridge: Year-long United Learning project with an adapted performance of The Magic Flute involving **1,788** students from **51** schools

Create & Design - Rotherham: Programme development research - The impact of Create & Design on children's oracy skills, with **35** students and **2** teachers

Create & Design - Aberdare: Student Inspiration session to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the opening of our workshops in Aberdare, we held a tour, and a design workshop around costuming for local Welsh school, Oaklands Primary School, with **32** children and **2** teachers.

Create & Dance - Southwest (Devon, Exeter): Impact of Create & Dance on empathy and creative writing in Broadclyst Primary School involving **119** children

Design Challenge – Nationwide: **800** applications from **25** constituencies across the UK including **38** schools and **48** teacher participations

Create Day – Nationwide: Mass singing, dancing and design participation event celebrated by **239** schools, **1,502** teachers and **26,864** children

Sing, Dance, Leap – Bradford: Mass performance event celebrating the creativity of young people from Bradford involving over **2,000** children from **45** primary schools

Create & Dance - Grantham/Norfolk/Grimsby/Stamford/Leicester: Inspire+ collaboration to empower young people through a teacher led ambassador programme (Pupil Voice) involving **8** teachers, **8** schools and **380** students

Create & Sing - Isle of Sheppey (March): Collaboration with Kent Music Hub to present Sheppey Sings, involving **8** schools and **449** students



Nurturing Talent

Chance to Dance inclusive and creative practice for primary schools and private dance schools in 5 centres

Partnership with Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing to launch dance clubs

Connect with 52 young dancers of Global Majority Heritage

Young Voices and **Youth Opera Company** for musicianship and performing skills in young singers

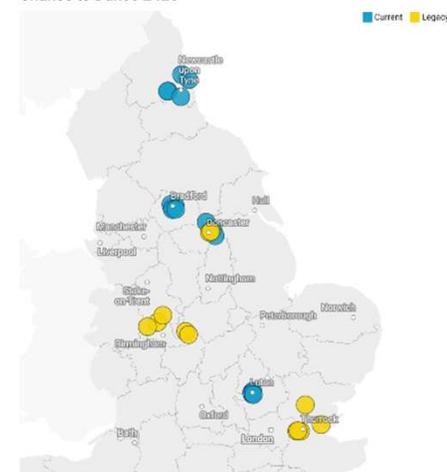
YOC Connect for singers of diverse backgrounds to enter vocational training

Who We Reach: Chance to Dance

Current

	Pupils	Schools	Private Dance Schools
Luton	470	5	4
Bradford	131	5	4
Doncaster	100	3	3
North East	100	5	4
Total	801	18	15

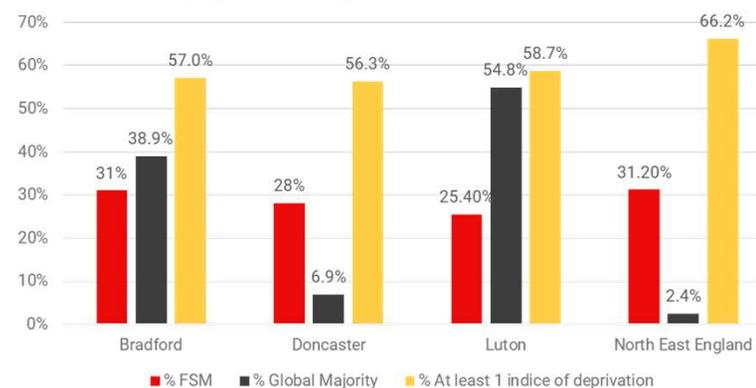
Chance to Dance 2425



Legacy

	Private Dance Schools	Private Dance Students
West Midlands	4	53
Doncaster	1	14
Essex	4	8
Total	9	75

Demographic Averages for Chance to Dance Areas



Who We Reach: Youth Opera Company

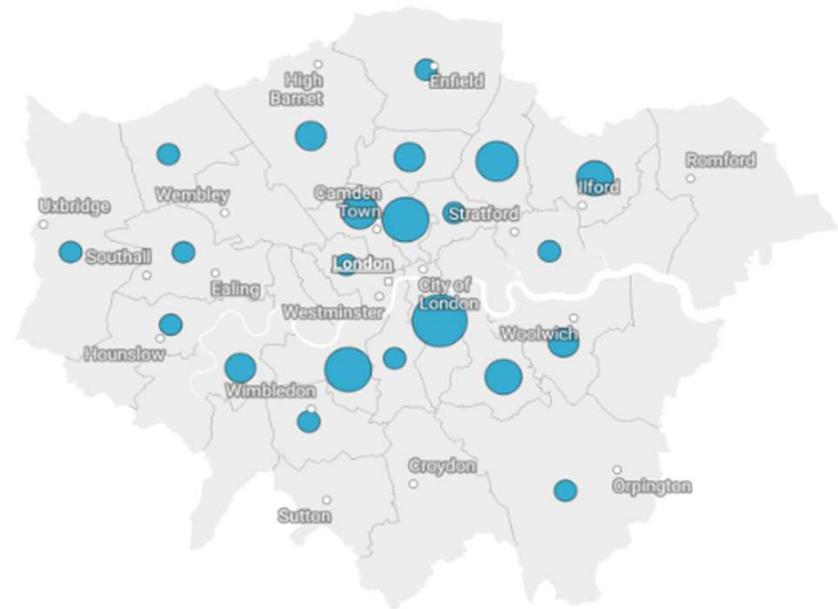
Youth Opera Numbers 2425

Young Voices	54
Youth Opera Company	65
Total	119

YOC Demographics

Female	51%
Male	49%
State Educated	77%
FSM	11%
Global Majority	49%
Additional Needs	15%

YOC Participants 24/25



Does not include 16 out of London Participants

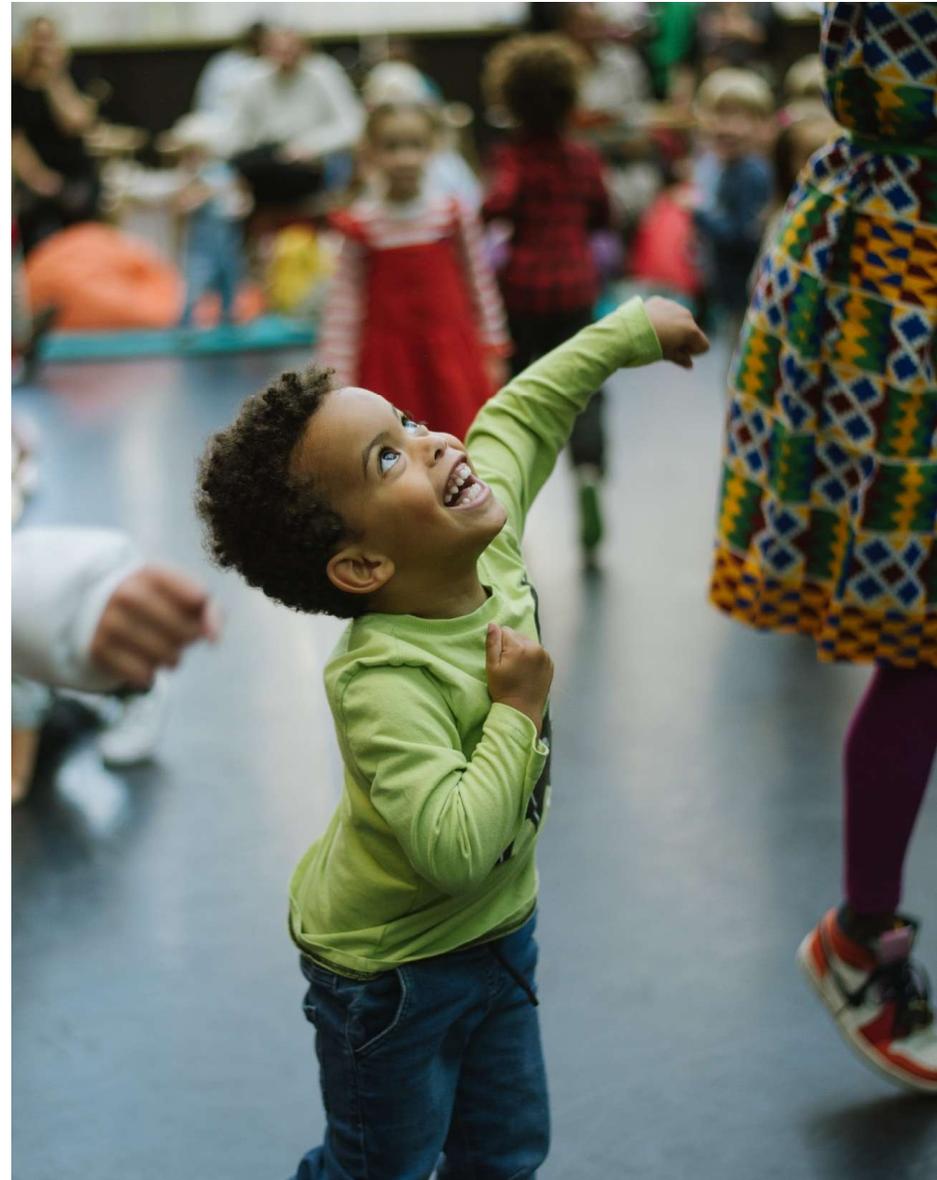
Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2018 • Created with Datawrapper

Daytime Events

Family Sundays of pop-up performances and workshops to inspire families with ballet and opera. Commissions with high levels of diversity in the stories we tell

Partnership with Westminster Community Services to bring in low-income families

Performances at Live at Lunch and Recitals at Lunch



Our Reach: Family Sundays

Family Sundays Insights Summary

Total Audience	13,481
First Time bookers	48%
Repeat bookers	52%
Capacity	99.9%



Net Promoter Score 73%



Global Majority Heritage 25%



Family make-up

44% - 2 children in their group

42% - 1 child in their group

14% - 3 or more children in their group

55% - 2 adults in the group

27% - 1 adult in the group

18% - 3 or more adults in the group



Impact, Research and Advocacy

Curriculum and Assessment Review
lobbying strengthens the arts in schools

Impact story tells one L&P narrative with quantitative and qualitative data

Wellbeing research by Place2 Be and Born in Bradford published

"I think it's amazing to be able to access those children that haven't got these opportunities particularly and for the ones that have, broadened their horizons even more." - Rotherham Teacher C&S

"In just a few short hours I learnt how not to shy away from the previous daunting prospect of creating dance within our school... I will teach them to embrace the concept that dance is a living breathing art form." - Teacher





"I felt like we were free doing what we want to do, and we kind of just got to express our feelings through dance and singing... And I learned that we can show our talent and let out the person we are... I really liked letting the music take control of me, and it's like I already knew the dance moves, and it was kind of just moving me." - Pupil

"It was wonderful to see the fabulous young people.... break two world records... and realising talents they might never have discovered if it wasn't for UK City of Culture..... Royal Ballet and Opera are working with thousands of young people across our district and making a real difference during our year Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture" - Leader of Bradford Council





That's RBO's story

What about our story?

We're Stronger Together...

Together we reach **16.3 million** people through our performances, over **132 million** through our digital performances, and **3 million** participants through our learning activities

What's Our Collective Voice?

Took a Collective approach to **CAAR**

Now **National Centre for Arts and Music Education**

Identify priorities for:

Strengthening teacher workforce

Influencing classroom curriculum

Building coordinated offer from cultural organisations





Thank You