



Supported by



Wiltshire Music Connect
Tony Spath, Chair of the Steering Board
ChairofBoard@wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk
www.wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk

14 July 2020

Michelle Donelan MP
61 New Road,
Chippenham, SN15 1ES

Dear Michelle,

I write regarding our concerns for the future of music in Wiltshire schools and for the valuable and highly skilled Wiltshire workforce that provides an increasingly broad range of tuition and learning opportunities.

Music is excellent for developing young minds, engaging the logical left and the creative right of the brain, enhancing progress across education, not just in music itself. There is a growing bank of [research](#) that shows learning an instrument can increase attainment and engagement in other subjects.

Wiltshire Music Connect is Music Education Hub for Wiltshire funded by DfE through Arts Council England and we have strategic remit *to support* music for children and young people in Wiltshire including its workforce. This is part of Wiltshire Council's Education & Skills Directorate but is governed by a Stakeholder Board of which I am chair.



In June, we launched **#DontDropMusic**, an upbeat, positive and optimistic campaign to raise awareness of continuing children and young people's music making opportunities in Wiltshire during the Covid-19 pandemic. **The campaign addresses schools, parents/carers and tutors and includes a short film** <https://youtu.be/KiCUDsbqgn4>

Last academic year 92% of Wiltshire schools engaged with one or more of our interventions which reached over 15,000 children & young people. We provide targeted subsidies to enable approx. 600 disadvantaged pupils to access high quality provision and provision has reached the majority of the county's special schools. Interventions usually take place through our extensive pool of **150+ freelance Associate tutors and organisations** of which most live and mainly work in the county – with an estimated turnover of £2.3m p/a.

Our Associates, for whom we are neither employer or agent, have been adapting their music education offers during lockdown. Many moved swiftly to online tuition and we've been working with them on developing strategies and skills to adapt and ensure offers are there for all children and young people in Wiltshire. However, our Associates have been losing significant income whilst working longer hours to ensure that their pupils are supported and can continue their musical learning. Faced with restricted opportunities to interact with potential new pupils for next academic year, they look set to lose more. We are concerned for their welfare and ability to survive as small businesses. The Government's Self Employed support grant has helped for some but we have significant concerns for the longer term.

We've welcomed the recent guidance from the DfE ([2 July 2020](#)) to help schools reopen and providers to return to a new normal. We're also pleased that the guidance reiterates the expectation for a broad and balanced curriculum. We also look forward to further clarity in music-specific guidance which will ensure that schools maintain their music offer as they reopen to all pupils in September.

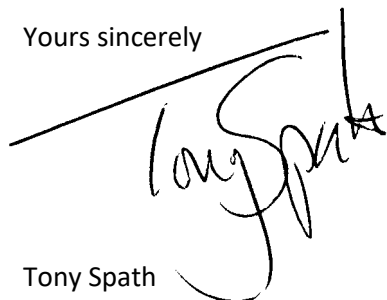
As schools are already be planning their curriculum for the next academic year, we ask that you publicly endorse the benefits of music education in and out of the classroom for all children and young people. Without this, there is a real risk that the valued tutors with whom pupils have established and trusted relationships may no longer be there at 'a later date' if schools feel unable to accommodate music from September.

The Government's investment in music education through the National Plan for Music Education over the past 7 years is in danger of being lost if provision cannot be rebuilt swiftly. So do please add your voice in helping to mitigate the threat to music education providers & organisations because of Coronavirus.

On behalf of the thousands of children, 239 schools and 100s of small businesses in Wiltshire with whom we work, we ask that you use your voice as our MP to ensure both the DfE and the DCMS are challenged to remember the importance of music education as their plans and policies develop and that you endorse our #DontDropMusic campaign in Wiltshire.

Thank you in anticipation for your support

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Spath', with a long horizontal line extending from the top left of the signature.

Tony Spath

Chair of [Wiltshire Music Connect Stakeholder Board](#) and Director of Music Connect CIC