



Supported by



Wiltshire Music Connect
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Dr Andrew Murrison MP
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Dear Dr Murrison,

Following my letter to you dated 14 July I wanted to update you regarding music in Wiltshire schools and the valuable and highly skilled Wiltshire workforce that provides it.

Clear, positive references to Music in Schools within recent [updates from DfE](#) have been very much appreciated but, as you'll see below, there is clearly some way to go and schools' interpretation of criteria can vary. The news for out of school hours provision, clubs groups and ensembles had been less positive and many providers have had to move to "plan B" since 5th November, we continue to support their work and hope to see them emerge from the 2nd lockdown being able to resume face to face provision into the new year.

We and our 150+ Associates, for whom we are neither employer or agent, welcome extended support for the self-employed and small businesses though some are still falling though the gaps in support structure. Some of our Associate Organisations have also benefitted from [Cultural Recovery Fund](#) support.

We continue to promote [#DontDropMusic](#), an upbeat, positive and optimistic campaign for **schools, parents/carers and tutors and have high levels of engagement with tutors and schools**. There are many positives that run alongside the gloom - our Research undertaken with tutors, children & young people and parents/carers has identified several things that will now, we hope, become part of the longer term music education picture in Wiltshire

- Greater levels of independent learning
- Embracing different ways of learning and new technologies
- Greater parental engagement in children's musical learning

And, as with our previous research, **the importance of music to wellbeing**.

We have been hugely impressed by the creative solutions that many tutors, organisations and schools have found to ensure that their pupils [#dontdropmusic](#). Here are some of the fantastic examples we've heard about in your constituency:

- Pupils at **The Minster CE Primary School** have been using Boomwhackers and xylophones instead of singing in assemblies.
- **Keevil CE Primary School** the children have even learned a sign language version of *Away in a Manger* for their nativity play.

- At **Kingdown School** pupils are being taught composition using online tools like BandLab
- **Wiltshire [Soundabout inclusive choir](#)** which is led by one of our Associates, now has 12 regular members, working with 9 parents, 10 volunteers, and 6 emerging choir leaders (with SEND) and has been featured on BBC News at 10, BBC Songs of Praise, and released [a single with The Kings Singers](#)
- **[Together](#) is a song commissioned for Wiltshire schools** to support the recovery curriculum. 2 Associate commissioned, using word ideas from Soundabout choir members. The song can be used as springboard to write your own lyrics, to improvise music in the middle instrumental section, or play along with instruments.

Despite all this, recent polls which we've undertaken in early November with Schools (102 responses) and with our Associate tutor pool (75 responses) suggest that there is still considerable educational and economic fallout for music education in Wiltshire because of COVID 19:

- 59% of schools told us **the amount of curriculum music being delivered has reduced.**
- 81% of schools told us **aspects of the music curriculum are not being delivered.**
- 96% of schools told us the amount of **singing taking place in their schools has reduced** and 74% told us that the **ensemble provision in their schools has reduced.**
- 37% of schools told us that the **number of pupils having peripatetic music lessons has reduced.** 23% of schools have *not* given permission for pupils to access peripatetic instrumental / vocal lessons online when needed.
- Between **890 and 1240 pupils are losing out on individual or small group tuition opportunities** across Wiltshire Schools. Bearing in mind the importance of Music to children's well-being, that should be of concern.
- **Up to £0.5m is being lost in the school-based tuition economy** over this academic year and is **adversely affecting approx. 89 small businesses** some of which may well not be there when schools want to reinstate provision. The average **loss per business would equate to between 18% and 25% income.**

Unlike our previous letter, we have no immediate call to action but wanted you to be aware of and consider these issues which impact upon your constituents.

We'll continue to update you in 2021 and thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely



Tony Spath

Chair of Wiltshire Music Connect Stakeholder Board and Director of Music Connect CIC