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Review of Music Education

I am delighted that you have agreed to lead a review of music education and I will be announcing today that I have asked you to take on this role. Your knowledge of the music sector means that you are well placed to look at how we can secure the best music education for all children and young people.

As you know, I have worked with the Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries in developing the remit and rationale for this review and he is fully supportive of you taking it forward.

The coalition government has signalled its firm support for music education, indicating that every child should receive a strong, knowledge based cultural education and should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument and to sing.

I believe that music is important for every child. I recognise that children and young people are involved in a vast array of excellent music making opportunities and are experiencing an excellent music education in many parts of the country – but I also
believe that there is much that can be done better to provide that level of excellence for every child.

I would like the review to be open and outward facing and to take account of the wide range of views and issues from across the music sector. There are, however, a number of assumptions that you should take account of when conducting the review:

- Government priorities recognise music as an enriching and valuable academic subject with important areas of knowledge that need be learnt, including how to play an instrument and to sing.

- Secondary benefits of a quality music education are those of increased self esteem and aspirations; improved behaviour and social skills; and improved academic attainment in areas such as numeracy, literacy and language. There is evidence that music and cultural activity can further not only the education and cultural agendas but also the aspirations for the Big Society.

- Public funding should be used primarily to meet the government priorities of every child having the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and to sing.

- This review should focus initially on securing the best music education for all children and young people (aged 5 – 19) but should also take account of and make recommendations as to how cultural education could be delivered, based on the proposed models for music.

- Timing is such that any change proposed is unlikely to be achievable from 2011-12 and therefore there need to be recommendations for a transitional stage to take us from the current to the future landscape.

- The focus should be on delivery models which meet the needs of the child or young person as defined by parents and schools rather than being supplier led.

- There should be a clearly defined journey of progression, including the
opportunities afforded by the current Music and Dance Scheme and the publicly funded national youth music ensembles.

- Recommendations should include thoughts on initial training and continuing professional development to improve the skills and confidence of classroom teachers to teach music (tackling the main Ofsted criticism of music teaching) as well as specialist teachers and professional musicians going in to schools.

- Ways of including high quality performance opportunities for children and young people should be put forward.

- The review should take account of music experience for children and young people both in and out of school.

- Recommendations should include thoughts on whether, and if so how, the pupil premium could be used to fund an approach which uses music to drive improvements across a school and wider into the community.

The Department, along with the DCMS, will provide you with the necessary support to run this review. I would welcome interim advice on the progress of the review, which should be followed by a final report at the end of 2010. We would then consult as necessary on any proposed changes which arise from your review, with a view to implementation from 2012.

With every good wish,

MICHAEL GOVE