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# The Expressive Arts within a new ambition and vision for schooling: a blueprint for change

**Understanding the problem: CLA 2024 Report Card**

**Finding the solution: CLA Manifesto Asks GE2024**

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Headline findings  
from  
The Arts in Schools  
report  
(2023)

1. **Arts subjects and experiences make a positive difference to learning and personal outcomes** for children and young people, providing them with skills for life and skills for work.
2. **Despite this, there is a lack of value ascribed to them within the state education system in England** in which they are devalued due to accountability measures that exclude them. And access is not equitable: we have a two-tier system, with the Arts more highly valued in independent schools.
2. **The schooling system itself is still running on outdated policies without a clear purpose** for what schools are equipping young people with, or why.

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## The purposes of schooling

- ❑ What are the purposes of education in England?
- ❑ Who should set them?
- ❑ How many should there be?

*'Looking beyond England, policy makers are now doing two important things: creating a national conversation about the purposes of their education system within a context of rapid change: and then matching curriculum to purpose.'*

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## A new ambition for schooling (in Wales)

**Four purposes** – the starting point and aspiration for school curriculum design in Wales: the aim of a school’s curriculum is to support its learners to become:

- ❑ **Ambitious, capable learners**, ready to learn throughout their lives
- ❑ **Enterprising, creative contributors**, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ❑ **Ethical, informed citizens** of Wales and the world
- ❑ **Healthy, confident individuals**, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

*“Other nations, such as Wales, have charted a different course, and have prioritised the Expressive Arts within the development of new and clearly defined purposes for schooling, recognising the value of these subjects for their young people.”*



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# CLA Annual Report Card 2024

- ❑ **Indicator 1:** GCSE entries for Arts subjects
- ❑ **Indicator 2:** A-Level entries for Arts subjects and progression to HE for Creative, Arts and Design subjects
- ❑ **Indicator 3:** Number of Arts teachers and hours of Arts subjects taught
- ❑ **Indicator 4:** Arts teacher recruitment and retention
- ❑ **Indicator 5:** The ‘enrichment gap’

*“We are expanding our reporting across five new key indicators to provide a detailed survey of children’s and young people’s access to the Arts through their schooling in England.”*

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## Definitions & Exclusions

### **Why having a named subject grouping matters:**

- **Expressive Arts** subjects as a defined curriculum area can sit alongside STEM, Languages, Humanities etc.

### **The ways in which some subjects get excluded:**

- Expressive Arts: excluded from the EBacc
- Dance and Drama: excluded from the list of Foundation subjects

### **Two of the reasons this lack of subject parity matters:**

- No Dance or Drama subject lead at Ofsted, so no parity at inspection level
- Poor government data set collection

*“Expressive Arts subjects have an important, evidenced and unique role in contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people, providing them with skills for life and skills for work. They make a powerful contribution to children’s and young people’s personal, social and creative wellbeing.”*



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CLA Report Card  
findings for  
Drama:  
2010/11-2022/23

- ❑ There has been an overall decline of 42% in the number of Arts GCSE entries since 2010; the drop-off in Drama is 39%
- ❑ In 2009/10 Drama made up 1.5% of all GCSE entries; that figure fell to 0.8% between 2009/10 and 2022/23
- ❑ 41% of schools no longer enter any pupils for Drama GCSE
- ❑ Between 2010/11 and 2022/23 there has been a 42% decrease in Drama A-Level entries
- ❑ The number of Arts teachers has fallen by 21% overall, and there are now 22% fewer Drama teachers
- ❑ The number of hours taught in Drama at KS4 fell by 30% and at KS5 by 37%

***“We now have a very clear view of what has been happening to Expressive Arts education in state schools over the past 14 years – since the introduction of the EBacc – and it is a stark picture of erosion and inequality.”***

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## CLA Evidence & Value Narrative work

The three types of CLA evidence – to which a social justice lens is always applied:

- ❑ Data-driven evidence of access and engagement, largely through schools (see our first annual **Report Card**, April 2024)
- ❑ Regular insights into the wider policy and practice landscape (see the latest news and latest thinking which we publish in our monthly **Newsletter** and share on social media)
- ❑ Data-driven evidence of the value of an Arts-rich education (through our Key Research Findings and the work of our **Evidence and Value Narrative Working Group** which will report later this year)



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## The Social Context

- **1 in 5** children have probable mental health problem (NHS)
- **4.3 million** children and young people in the UK growing up in poverty; close to **1 in 4** children eligible for free school meals (government statistics) up from last year
- **21.2%** of pupils regularly absent from lessons; more than **100,000** so-called 'ghost children' have disappeared from the education system altogether (Centre for Social Justice)
- UK ranked **lowest out of 24** European countries for the proportion of 15-year-olds with high life satisfaction (PISA)
- **Educational damage of Covid** set to last well into 2030s (LSE & Universities of Exeter & Strathclyde)

*“In parallel to the ‘attainment gap’, there is evidence of an ‘enrichment gap’, with young people from wealthier backgrounds having much greater participation in the Arts compared to their peers from disadvantaged backgrounds.”*

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# CLA MANIFESTO ASKS FOR GE2024

## Four foundational changes:

1. New **purposes** for education – with the Expressive Arts as one of the core curriculum areas mapped onto purposes
2. A minimum Arts **entitlement** within the school day & extra-curricular Arts as additional – and options for continued engagement outside of exams at KS 4
3. Overhaul of the systems of **accountability & assessment**
4. An entitlement to **teacher training and development** opportunities for Expressive Arts subjects

## Underpinning these system changes there will need to be a **commitment to:**

- A rounded ‘whole child’ and community approach – for the present as well as the future
- A focus on representation and relevance
- Cultural sector responsiveness to school needs

***‘We are in a time of crisis. The country is facing significant challenges, and short-term manifesto initiatives to boost Arts learning will be inadequate to meet the necessary ambition.’***



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What next?  
Organise and  
mobilise to advocate  
for change

- ◆ **The problem: use the CLA Report Card to highlight the scale of the problem**
- ◆ **The solution: share the CLA Manifesto Asks and link/add them to your own**
- ◆ **Tell your local candidates what changes are needed (scrap the Ebacc!)**
- ◆ **Ask them to pledge support for wider education system change**
- ◆ **Join us and get in touch:**  
**[info@culturallearningalliance.org.uk](mailto:info@culturallearningalliance.org.uk)**  
**[@CultureLearning](https://www.instagram.com/CultureLearning)**

**Sign up to the Cultural Learning Alliance to champion a right to arts and culture for every child: [www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk](http://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk)**