

Open Letter to Government: Why Art Education Needs to Change: Inclusion, Wellbeing, Employment & Creative Industries

As a Subject Association for Art, and as a Registered Arts Education Charity, AccessArt invites you to sign the open letter below. We currently have over 1300 signatures and will be sending our letter to the press very soon. Please do sign now – our combined voice will carry greater weight.

Please do share this page within your networks and on social media, thank you.

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Open Letter to Keir Starmer Prime Minister, Bridget Phillipson Secretary State for Education, Lisa Nandy Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Dear Members of Parliament,

With the Interim Report of the Curriculum and Assessment Review imminent, experts and advocates of arts education understand the significance of this opportunity. Will the government demonstrate that they have listened to the powerful, combined voices of experts in the field, and understood the unified message: that the current Curriculum approach – the “knowledge-rich” mantra, the unnecessarily stringent approaches to testing, and the unfair bias placed on schools by the EBacc and Progress 8 – is failing to provide all pupils with a fit-for-purpose arts education.

We are deeply concerned that if the Review decides the arts in schools are “good enough” then a once in a lifetime opportunity will be missed and the Government will fail to meet its own commitments.

We need to hold Keir Starmer, Bridget Phillipson and Lisa Nandy to account, and remind them; we are looking to them to demonstrate the curiosity, courage and creative thinking we so badly need to nurture in our children to responsibly prepare them for their futures.

We remind the government of their verbal commitments:

Inclusion

“... A review of the curriculum to put arts, sports and music back at the heart of our schools and communities where it belongs.” [i]

“The arts, creativity, drama, music – they must be available to every child, to us all. Excellence is for everyone, and background must be no barrier to opportunity.” [ii]

‘I will help working-class pupils defy the odds to succeed – just as I did’ [iii]

Wellbeing

“That’s why thriving and belonging will feature so prominently in our work in the opportunity mission, hand in hand with attainment... Healthy, happy children coming to school ready to learn – if we get this right, those children will achieve time and again... The best schools understand this. They also understand that it’s not easy, it’s not soft.” [iv]

Employment

Alongside CEO’s of AI companies, the government’s own website says that in preparing for the workforce of the future, *“creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence are still absolutely vital.”* [v]

Creative Industries

“Labour will deliver a broader curriculum, to tap into the unbelievable creative talent of all our young people.” [vi]

“Every young person must have access to music, art, design and drama. That is our mission. Because we know that for our creative industries to flourish, every child needs to be given a chance.” [vii]

It is time for us to create a rigorous, fit-for-purpose, value-led arts education for all pupils. It is time for the government to connect education back to heads, hands and hearts, and value the arts alongside all other subjects, ensuring high quality arts education is a mandatory part of all regular curriculum entitlement for ALL pupils.

Where people are feeling fear, art can help people process and express.

Where people are feeling fragmented, art can help people connect.

Where people are feeling despair, art can create optimism.

Where people are feeling disempowered and unheard, art can empower.

Paula Briggs, Co-Founder, CEO and Creative Director AccessArt

[ii] Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, X, 14th August, 2023

[iii] Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, The Guardian, 20 July 2024

[iv] Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, Confederation of School Trusts' Conference, November 2024

[v] <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/01/what-ai-means-for-jobs-and-how-were-preparing-the-workforce/>

[vi] Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, The Rest is Politics, June 2024

[vii] Keir Starmer, March 2024