



‘We’re all in this together’: Enabling access to music education through cross-sector collaboration

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Access to music education across schools is currently uneven and inconsistent. While some pupils benefit from high quality music provision – including instruments, tuition, and performance opportunities – others face significant barriers due to disparities in funding, resources, and institutional priorities.

A wide body of research provides clear evidence that music education plays a vital role in

- Supporting holistic child development
- Enhancing confidence, self-expression, creativity and a sense of belonging
- Promoting mental health and wellbeing
- Improving academic attainment
- Developing transferable skills such as discipline, collaboration, and critical listening

A lack of access to music education reinforces broader social and educational inequalities among pupils/schools.

Sustaining Arts, Culture and Creative Experiences in Schools

This brief is informed by collaborative research led by local cultural education partner (LCEP) REACH and YSJU academics.

The project brought together **schools (leaders, teachers and pupils), arts organisations, council leadership and academics** in York to generate practical insights that could inform more equitable and effective provision of creative education in schools.

Participants met in February 2025. Schools created art pieces inspired by reflective research questions, which were then used as a springboard for an afternoon of discussion.



Recommendations

Strengthen cross-sector collaboration

Build sustained collaborations between schools, the music sector, music charities and hubs and Council-funded organisations to support long-term investment in music education.

Centre student and educator voice

Actively involve pupils and teachers in shaping music education to reflect diverse needs and experiences to ensure policies surrounding music education accurately reflect the needs of pupils and teachers.

Enable equitable access in the local community

Bring professional musicians into schools and local communities; or consider a centralised local arts fund that is accessible to children, their parents, and their teachers.

Embed arts education into everyday school life

Integrate arts into the curriculum through dedicated time, access to specialist practitioners, and ongoing teacher development (CPD).

Call to action

How might the City of York work together to enable better access to music education across and within all communities? What does it mean to share resources? How could music hubs, concert venues, organisations, teachers, community musicians and schools better share them?

Following the principles of asset-based community development, which focuses on identifying and mobilizing existing resources, the next step is to form an action research group of people interested in making music education more accessible.

Education leaders, policymakers and cultural organisations are urged to actively engage in and support this initiative. Their participation will ensure that future policy and investment are evidence-led, inclusive and responsive to local needs. This will enable resources to be directed where they are most needed.

For more information access:

- [Sustaining Arts, Culture and Creative Experiences in Schools Report](#)
- [Creative and Cultural Education Research Day Reel](#)

To discuss ideas on how to begin the research group contact Dr Sarah-Jane Gibson: s.gibson1@yorks.ac.uk

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