



The Arts Pledge

EVIDENCE REPORT
THE ARTS PLEDGE
AUGUST 2026



Cultural Learning Alliance Report Card 2026

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The Cultural Learning Alliance's 2026 Report Card provides an important national picture of children and young people's access to arts education in England. Drawing principally on national datasets, alongside new survey evidence from 2,900 primary teachers, it follows arts provision from primary school through GCSE, post-16 and higher education, while also examining the arts education workforce.

The report is especially significant because it demonstrates that access to arts education is not distributed equally. Its findings show an 'Arts entitlement gap' beginning in primary school and continuing as young people move through the education system. Around one in four primary teachers report having less than an hour of timetabled arts education each week, while 43% say that their school works with no external cultural partner to support its arts curriculum. The report also finds that pupils eligible for free school meals are under-represented in every arts subject at GCSE.

The longer-term picture remains concerning. Entries for expressive arts GCSEs have fallen by 41.7% since 2009/10, while arts A-level entries have declined by 25% since 2011/12. Schools in the most deprived fifth of local authorities are also considerably more likely to have no GCSE Music entries than those in the least deprived areas. Although some recent indicators show modest improvement, the report makes clear that the effects of reduced provision and participation continue to travel through the education system.

For The Arts Pledge, the Report Card reinforces a central principle: creativity may be universal, but opportunity is not. A child's access to an arts-rich education should not be determined by family income, geography or the priorities and resources of an individual school. Closing this entitlement gap requires more than isolated activities. It depends upon sustained leadership, specialist expertise, a broad curriculum, meaningful enrichment and strong partnerships between schools, artists and cultural organisations. The report provides both a compelling evidence base and a call to action. It challenges all those involved in education and culture to ensure that every child can participate in, create through and progress within the arts—not as an optional addition, but as an essential educational entitlement.

CLA Report Card 2026

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