**Together we CAN make a difference…**

….and NOW is the time to do it!

At the recent Westminster Education Forum Seminar reviewing the new curriculum for Art and Music there were many positive messages and several clear implications for action. The gauntlet was thrown down. ***It is up to our own sector to accept the challenge and improve quality.*** That means you and me taking responsibility, not saying someone else ought to do something about it!

The difficulty arises from the fact that those same freedoms that enable schools and good teachers to provide an excellent music education also provide the opportunities for poor schools and less confident teachers to continue with poor practice. Mark Phillips, Senior HMI, said “in schools that are most successful, the music curriculum knows no bounds.” We should set out to stretch pupils when they require challenge and support them when they need help. The same applies to schools. Hubs can and do provide that challenge and support – but not all are yet confident or able to do this.

We were presented with evidence that a good national curriculum, Ofsted inspections and funding all help and we do have a great deal of excellent practice. But the same evidence also showed that these policies, inspections and funding have not effected sufficient change for all young people over the past 20 or so years. So what can we do? How do we learn from best practice and from the past? How do we implement change where change is needed?

In best practice there is a clear distinction between the hub (all those who provide music education in an area) and the lead organisation (which provides strategic leadership). Potentially this can get confusing as many lead organisations also provide music education in their area. Even the same individual can provide both strategic and operational leadership. Indeed, there are arguments for why this can be a good thing. But that individual must be clear which hat he or she is wearing, when, and make sure that this is also clear to those with whom they are communicating.

As a top priority, the lead organisation should ensure that someone with sufficient seniority and authority engages systematically with all schools in the area for which the hub has responsibility. That person or those persons need to seek to engage with a person in each school who also has sufficient seniority and authority in the school to effect change where change is needed. This engagement involves carrying out a needs analysis for the individual school, (most schools do this for themselves anyway, but some will need help). The sum total of these analyses provides a picture of the needs analysis for the area, which can, in turn, be translated into an action plan with priorities for the whole area. Initially this plan will cover the 2 remaining years to 2015 for which there is reasonable certainty about the funding, and, in less detail, the next steps for 2015 to 2020 by which time the National Plan for Music Education should have become a reality for all young people.

If a school is not ready to have this conversation, leave the invitation open and offer it again at least once a term or agree to talk to them again next year. Change only happens when people take ownership for their own actions and responsibilities. Hubs cannot change schools any more than teachers can learn for their pupils. Let’s make the good school excellent and help those who want to improve to do so. Those who want to cherry-pick services, who don’t prioritise music for all will come knocking on your door soon enough – especially if their lack of engagement and poor practice are not rewarded. There aren’t enough resources to go round so let’s ensure what we do have is used effectively to bring about change for the better.

Can’t see what this means for you? Get in touch if you think I can help. [halla@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:halla@globalnet.co.uk)