[Your name and address]

[Name of Headteacher/ Chief Executive of Academy / School governor]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name],

**Will you protect this important contributor to pupils’ wellbeing and learning?**

I recognise the pressures that you face at this time, but I know that you have always been willing to listen to the views of parents and students.

I’m writing as a concerned [parent of a student at your school / member of the local community etc] to ask you to **take steps to ensure that music education remains a key part of the curriculum and out-of-school activities**.

I recognise that there are many reasons why you may feel unable to continue some music lessons or activities. But I believe that this could cause irreparable damage to the students and school. There is also expert advice available to help you to continue music. I’ve outlined both below.

**Music fulfils many of the key expectations of government** [delete and edit the following as appropriate – see links below]

I’m reassured to see that, in its [guidance to schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#section-3-curriculum-behaviour-and-pastoral-support), the Department for Education has asked that you prioritise the most important components for progression **rather than remove subjects;** only suspend subjects **for some pupils in exceptional circumstances;** and that **the curriculum should remain broad, so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including … the arts.**

I’m also pleased to see that music can fulfil a number of the key expectations of the Department for Education for curriculum, behaviour, and pastoral support (see p3).

I welcome the large number of head teachers and school leaders who have said that **music will play a vital role in returning school life to normal** and ensuring everyone has the best chance of catching up. [or replace with your own local quote]:

***“Music and the arts are the bedrock of academic success.***

***Reducing these will have a negative impact on children's wellbeing,***

***resilience and ability to learn. Our school was in special measures. Because of the music and arts-based curriculum, we're now in the top two percent.***

***Music has allowed pupils to focus and learn for longer stretches of time***

***and much faster. It's also helped with language and literacy,***

***behaviour and school culture.”***

Naveed Idrees, Feversham Primary Academy, TES headteacher of the year 2019

***“Music is central to our vision of a well-rounded education that sets up children for life. We see astonishing effects on wellbeing and behaviour, academic achievement, literacy and numeracy - both individually and collectively. Most of all, though, we value Music as an important subject and discipline in its own right, and every child should have access to it as part of their education.”***Mark Neild, Deputy CEO, David Ross Education Trust

However, I am concerned to hear that some school leaders intend to focus on core subjects at the expense of creative subjects.

**Reducing music could cause irreparable damage to students and our school**

Prioritising some subjects at the expense of music will be damaging to students, in particular those who are most vulnerable and least engaged in learning.

They will lose an aspect of school life that gives them a sense of **belonging and purpose**; something that they can **succeed** in. Some may never catch up, and become more disillusioned with learning and with life.

All students will lose an aspect of school that supports their **wellbeing and resilience**, improves **school culture** and enables them to come together, celebrate, and **feel part of a school community.**

Those students who are likely to study at GCSE or A-level in the future, or already are, will be **at risk of lower grades** due to missed music learning and the impact on their growth as musicians and mentors through extra-curricular activities.

For primary students in particular, research has proved that **music causes clear improvements in cognitive development: in particular around language**. And no other activity has been found that connects all parts of the brain with such accuracy, speed and flexibility – meaning that **musically trained young people have learning advantages**. But for these effects to happen, **they must have regular, sequential music learning:** stopping music for a period or only offering it for 10 weeks of every year means they will lose out on these benefits.

**Music can still happen: and your leadership in this area is of vital importance to our pupils and school**

I hope that as a community, we are able to say that our school took leadership in protecting music. So I am asking that your governors and leadership team to take action to protect this important contributor to each young person’s life and learning by:

1. **protecting the amount of time and budget** given to music lessons, groups and ensembles
2. **making sure your music lead is aware** of the Can Do Music website (see below) and is in touch with the music tutors who were teaching in your school, and the people running any afterschool groups/ensembles, to work together on a safe return and/or any online offer they may have, as well as any Service Level Agreements
3. **encouraging your music lead** to take advantage of and promote music opportunities within and outside the school, including:
	* contacting your local music education hub or music service to ask how they can help
	* promoting any subsidies available to pupils facing financial barriers (eg Pupil Premium, music service or music education hub bursaries)

**Advice and resources to help you continue music are available on this website, run by Music Mark, the UK association of music education, the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Music Teachers’ Association:**

[**www.candomusic.org**](http://www.candomusic.org)

Thank you for your time and attention, and I look forward to receiving your response and reassurance.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your email address]

**Further information**

**The argument for music – from young people**

Countless youth consultation and evaluations tell us that **students see music as critical to their resilience, wellbeing, and engagement in learning**. *The Sound of the Next Generation*, Youth Music and Ipsos Mori’s research study of 1,000 young people (2020), found that music is young people’s favourite pastime, equal to gaming and ahead of sport, drama, dancing, and arts and craft.

The final three quotes are taken from Sound of the Next Generation:

 *“I suffer from really low self-esteem and it made me feel differently about myself, I felt I was in a safe haven, all the other problems about school and friends weren’t there it felt peaceful.” Quote from Music Minds evaluation report, The Music Works, Gloucestershire.*

*“When I go to my music nurture group I feel more relaxed and I feel more free, in that school.” Quote from young person involved in Hertfordshire Music Service’s music nurture groups*

*“I was in a terrible place, really depressed. I don’t feel anywhere near as bad as I was back then. I used music as a tool to express myself, to talk without having to say anything to anyone.” Chi*

*“[Writing songs with my siblings] helped us to understand things about what happens with parents and stuff and helped us to understand how other people feel.” Shelby*

*“I enjoy it because I make lots of friends, it makes me work with them all the time, never leave them, play all the time music, never give up with them, always stay with them.” Filip*

And we know that music learning, like all creative arts, provides the skills required for the 21st century workforce**: emotional intelligence, communication and teamwork, persistence and resilience, critical thinking and problem solving**. They also shape the way our students understand themselves and the world around them: **developing the whole student**.

**The evidence for music – from neuroscience**

***“Any activity that enhances social and emotional contact with other human beings is enormously brain-building … The brain’s frontal lobes are responsible for our empathy, our social decoding, our problem solving, executive functioning and decision making. So it’s not just about the music itself, it’s not about social contact itself, it’s actually about building a brain that is well equipped for life.”***

Jo Stockdale, Well Within Reach, formerly known as Child

Learning & Development Advisory Centre – quoted in Sound of the Next Generation

You’ve probably heard about the many research studies that point to the impact music can have. We know more now than ever before about this, thanks to new developments in neuroscience. These are showing how music learning can lead to significant improvements in:

* **Social skills** – prosocial behaviour, sense of belonging, non-verbal communication, empathy, self-regulation and impulse control
* **Executive functions** – resilience, independent learning, focused attention, inhibitory control, creativity and divergent thinking, cognitive flexibility
* **Literacy** – reading and listening, language acquisition and syntax, attention, comprehension
* **Numeracy** – task switching, cognitive processing, numerical cognition, divergent thinking, memory retention and retrieval

**Further evidence:**
VIDEO: Snapshots of some of the research from Dr Anita Collins: <https://biggerbetterbrains.com/resource_hub_type/videos/>

BOOKLET (download): **10 things schools should know about music** from Music Mark, the UK association for music education <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/10-things-schools-should-know-about-learning-music/>

BOOK (download): **The Power of Music** by Dr Susan Hallam <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/the-power-of-music/>

**NOT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE LETTER:**
Links to information about schools from government departments – these will be updated, do check the latest information:

* Department for Education: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>
* Education Authority Northern Ireland: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/education-restart>
* Scottish Government Learning Directorate: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020/>
* Wales: <https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>