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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Great Smith Street,
London, SW1P 3BT

3rd December 2014

Dear Nicky,

As Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Arts, Craft and Design in Education, I write regarding your recent speech at the launch of the Your Life campaign, and to convey my dismay at your assertion that the arts and humanities limit the life choices of young people compared to maths and the sciences.

While I agree that our workforce needs to be skilled in the sciences, maths and engineering in order for the UK to remain competitive in the global labour markets, and I welcome the move to see 50 percent of young people studying STEM subjects, especially girls, this should not be at the detriment of arts subjects, especially when we have seen a significant and welcome growth in the creative industries (which according to the latest official DCMS figures now contributes 5.2% GVA to our economy) in recent years.

Our creative industries and those employed within them, from film and TV directors to fashion designers and games designers, are renowned the world over, and if we downgrade the importance of arts subjects in our schools then we will inevitably weaken our talent pool and smother the growth of this booming sector.

The arts not only offer a path to employment in our creative industries, but also develop skills needed in other sectors; they allow children and young people to develop higher-level thinking skills and creativity, through giving them the opportunity to analyse, design and create pieces of art as part of their courses, experiences which can then be applied in later life to overcome difficult situations within the work place.

Further, whilst readiness for employment is important, it should not be the sole purpose of our education system. Our schools should be opening up horizons, nurturing imaginations and exposing children to viewpoints which might challenge their preconceptions about the world; what other subject can do this more than the arts, which provides children with the opportunity to engage with different cultures from across the world and the ability to reflect on emotions, thoughts and concepts, such as tolerance and self-expression?

The arts, along with the study of them, feed our soul and remind us of our capacity as human beings to produce awe-inspiring pieces of work based on our perception of the world around us. If we continue to denigrate these subjects within state schools, we will face a scenario where our national culture will only reflect the elite of our society, as it largely already does, rather than the diversity of talent and creativity within our population, and patronage of the arts will also suffer as a result.



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I therefore hope you will reconsider your comments, and commit to ensuring that schools offer high-quality arts education as part of the wider objectives of meeting the needs of the economy of the future, and of helping to create well-rounded citizens.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sharon Hodgson".

Sharon Hodgson MP
Chair, APPG for Arts, Craft and Design in Education