

# Power of violin helps transform problem school

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Education Correspondent

An inner-city secondary school that transformed behaviour and results after giving every new student a violin and three years of music lessons could see its success replicated across the country.

Andrew Lloyd Webber and Nicola Benedetti are patrons of the scheme, which is being expanded beyond London for the first time and ultimately aims to reach every school in England.

Jenny Smith, head of Frederick Bremer School in Walthamstow, east London, which has run the scheme for five years, said: "The school is unrecognisable from where it was in 2014. We are celebrating the best results the school has ever had. Music is thriving and it is infectious. Music is absolutely at the heart of the school, and not an add-on."

Truda White, a head teacher who founded the Music in Secondary Schools Trust to help turn around her struggling school, said producing top-class musicians was not the main goal. Children learnt to co-operate, concentrate, sit still and cherished their instruments so much that if a fight broke out in the playground they would carefully put them down first before joining in, she said.

Ms White was the head of a challenging school in Islington, north London, for 12 years. She successfully sought funding from a charity to introduce classical music lessons to pupils "equal to the best in the country". The school became outstanding under her watch.

She said: "Music wasn't optional, it was part of the core programme. If they for-

got their instrument they were in trouble."

People warned her that children would damage, lose or sell the instruments but the vast majority were protective of them and some said they loved their violins "like a baby".

After she retired as head teacher, the trust was set up with the help of Lloyd Webber. She added: "Music is transformative, playing in an orchestra teaches teamwork, resilience and interdependence. I wanted them to learn that, unlike the lesson from celebrity culture, you get there through work."

Deronne White, 22, is a fourth-year student at the Royal College of Music, playing classical flute. He grew up in a single parent family in Hackney, east London. Free music lessons were introduced at his school when he was 12 and less than three years later he achieved a grade eight with distinction.

He said: "I think music has kept me safe. I was so focused on playing the flute. It was and still is my absolute passion. My mum knows it's been my salvation and has kept me out of any trouble."

It would cost about £400 million for every child in England to benefit from the scheme. Ms White acknowledged that one difficulty with extending it was a lack of teachers.

So far more than 8,000 children aged 11 to 14 have benefited from the free weekly group music tuition and instruments. The main sponsors include the

Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, Charles Wolfson Charitable Trust and the Dame Alice Owen Foundation.

Arts organisations have rallied against the reduction in music and drama in many schools. Critics blame budget cuts and the pressure of government performance targets, which are based on pupil's grades in core subjects.

Deronne White, a flautist, says that music has kept him safe

