

***Musical perseverance and progress in the context of a four-year
funded instrumental scholarship programme in London for
young musicians aged between 7 and 14***

Executive Summary of Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts (Music Education)

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Background

In 2010 the Greater London Authority commissioned Professor Susan Hallam of the Institute of Education to undertake a London-wide strategic review of music education in the capital. The published findings from this review identified that ‘the provision of music education – and instrumental training in particular – is inconsistent and patchy. There is an overview of where gaps in provision may be’ (GLA, 2010, p.9). The report concluded there were several gaps in provision for young people in London, notably: access to further instrumental tuition for children from low income families, once Whole Class Ensemble Teaching (WCET) programmes had ended, and wider provision for growth and partnerships across the whole of London.

Following the GLA review, and further development by the GLA Music Education Programme and Steering Group, the Mayor of London’s Fund for Young Musicians was launched as an independent charity in 2011. Now known as the London Music Fund, its vision is that every child who demonstrates significant ability, enthusiasm and commitment in music is given the opportunity to develop their potential. This work is undertaken through a variety of programmes; through a four-year Scholarship programme for primary school children from low-income families, and through funding wider collaborative partnerships, both through music hubs, with professional arts organisations, and most recently, working with grassroots music providers within the community. Since 2011 the London Music Fund has supported over 600 young musicians through its four-year Scholarship programme, and funded over 50 inspiring projects, having a significant impact on music education in every London borough. In 2021 the London Music Fund was named winner of ‘Outstanding Musical Initiative’ at the Music & Drama Education Awards, for projects or organisations who have had a demonstrable impact on large numbers of young musicians.

The London Music Fund Scholarship Programme

The four-year Scholarship programme is for children between Key Stages 2 (aged 7-11) and 3 (aged 11-14) who have shown potential and commitment to learning a musical instrument but whose families are unable to afford the ongoing costs of tuition. The programme offers two hours of extra-curricular music-making per week (in addition to school-based activity), including an instrumental lesson (either small group or one-to-one), ensembles at a suitably and progressively challenging level, instrument loan if

needed, and access to performances and workshops. The four-year award covers the sometimes-difficult transition from primary to secondary school. In addition to the musical delivery outlined above, the programme offers each child a Mentor within their Music Service – an individual independent from their school, instrumental teacher and family – to advise and guide their musical journey. Children are nominated to the London Music Fund every spring, by their primary school, and must show both musical potential and commitment, alongside clear financial need.

The data

This study intended to answer the research questions outlined below, via desk-based secondary data analysis relating to information held on each London Music Fund Scholar over the twelve terms of the Scholarship, from 2011 to 2019 inclusive. The data were collected from a population of 338 Scholars who took part in the Scholarship programme in this period. The final data selected did not include Scholars who transferred between music services within the duration of their four-year award (7), children who withdrew for reasons such as gaining a music Scholarship to independent or music schools or gaining places at junior conservatoires (10), or children who moved away from London during the course of their award (13). Subsequently, 308 cases remained and were included within this study. For the research questions which related to graded instrumental exam-based progress, only those records with grade data associated were analysed (298).

These data were examined in detail and used to identify the ‘participant variables’ outlined in detail below. The ‘outcome variables’ for a series of statistical tests were as follows:

- **Progress**, as defined through the measure of instrumental grades taken or indicated by teacher assessment, and the difference between the start and end point. In addition, where known, the classification of the grade achieved (pass, merit or distinction) was added to provide finer levels of gradation.
- **Perseverance**, as defined through the percentage of the total Scholarship completed.

A list of the 'participant variables', and how they related to each research question, is outlined below:

Research Question	Participant Variable
<p>1. What effects do selected aspects of a child's learning environment and musical tuition have on a) perseverance as defined through percentage of the total Scholarship completed and b) progress as defined through grades?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the participating Music Service? • Starting Grade as reported at nomination • Initial tuition group size at nomination • Average size of tuition group during Scholarship • Scholarship instrument learned • Length of time learning prior to starting Scholarship • Participating Scholarship cohort (year of award) • Evidence of Other Musical Learning (at nomination) • Any additional (further) instrument learned during the Scholarship • Parental reports received during the Scholarship • Percentage of London Music Fund 'Playing Days' attended
<p>2. How do School factors impact on a) perseverance as defined through percentage of the total Scholarship completed and b) progress as defined through grades?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary School URN / APS14-15 • Secondary School UPN / 5 A-C GCSEs • Percentage of annual school reports received • Academic year at start of Scholarship • Change of Instrumental Teacher at Year 7 (transition to secondary school)
<p>3. What impact do selected achieved social characteristics have on a) perseverance as defined through percentage of the total Scholarship completed and b) progress as defined through grades?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the Scholar in receipt of Free School Meals / Pupil Premium funding (FMS/PP) • Will the Scholar need to borrow a musical instrument?
<p>4. To what extent do selected ascribed characteristics impact on a) perseverance as defined through percentage of the total Scholarship completed and b) progress as defined through grades?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnicity • Special Educational Needs/Disability (SEN/D) • Age in months at start of Scholarship • Sex (male/female)

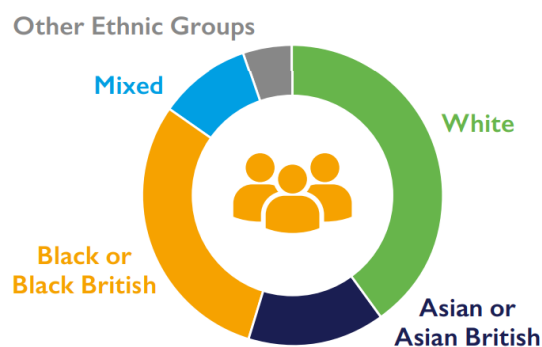
Results

A series of non-parametric statistical tests were identified as most suitable, notably: Mann Whitney, Kruskal Wallis and Kendall rank correlation coefficient tests. To adequately compare all the test results, it was necessary for each outcome to be converted to an appropriate effect size. Cohen's *d* was identified as the most widely used standardised effect size within the field of education. The effect sizes were ranked in order of magnitude, so it became possible to see which of the participant variables had stronger associations with the two outcome variables, that is, the larger the effect size, the greater the effect of that variable on either Scholarship duration or grade progress overall.

The general data relating to this group of young people are listed below. These relate to the full 338 children who took part in the programme between 2011-2019, and therefore include the very small number of records that were not appropriate for use in this study for reasons noted above, and used here to provide a contextual overview of the scholarship participants as a whole for reference purposes.

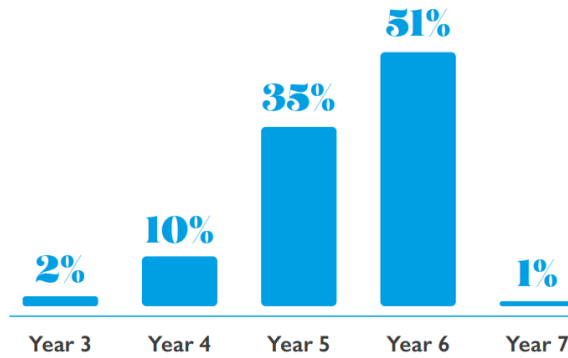
Ethnic breakdown

60% were from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse backgrounds:



Academic Year at Start of Award

86% of Scholars were in School Year 5 or 6 (aged 9-11) at the start of their award:



Sex of Scholars (male/female)



Receipt of Free School Meals

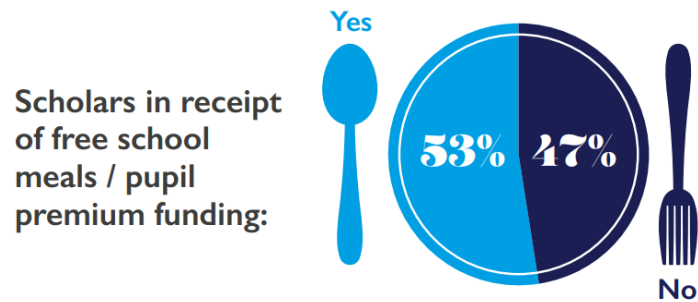


Table 1: Effect Sizes (Cohen's *d*): Outcome Variable: Scholarship Duration

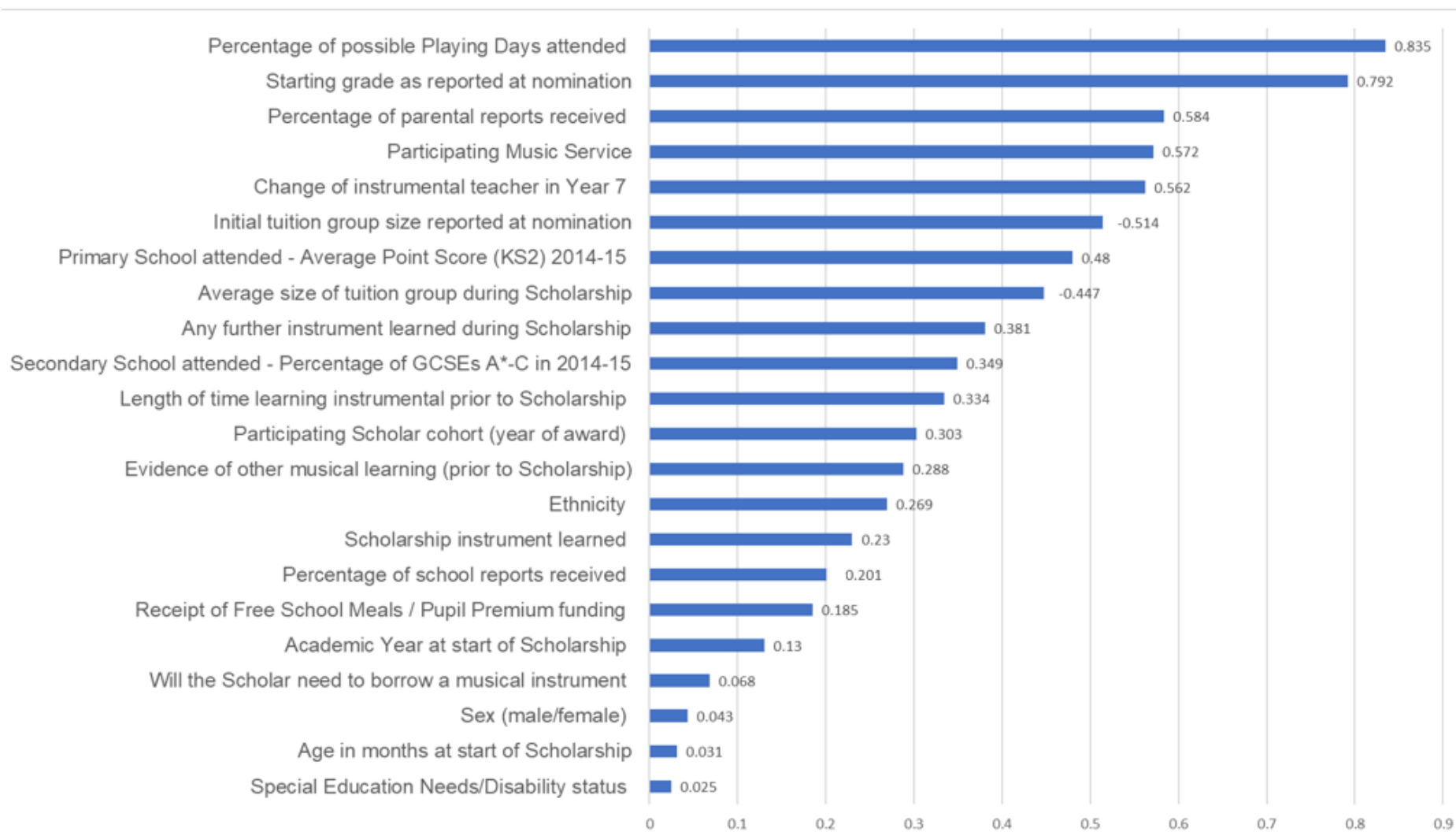
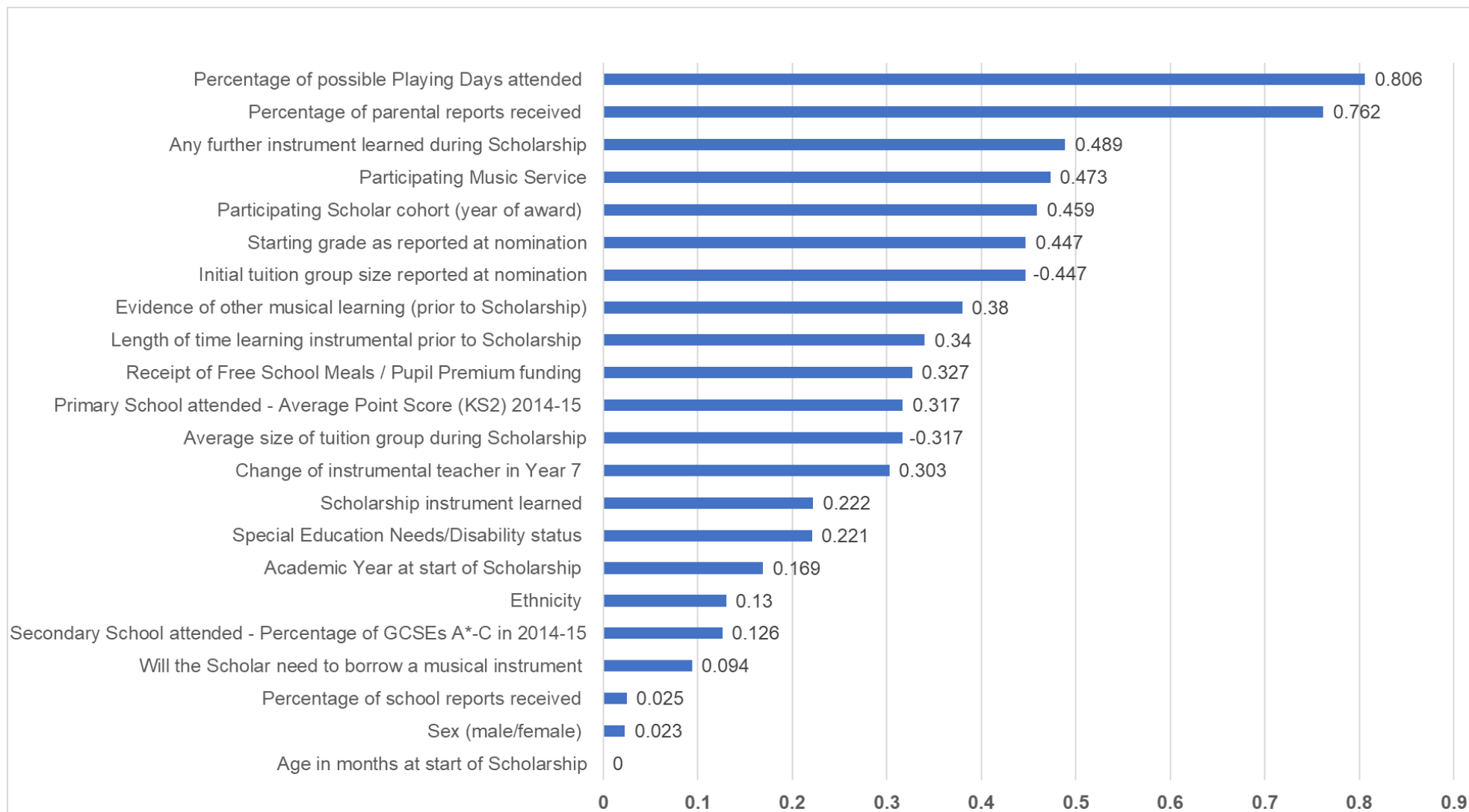


Table 2: Effect Sizes (Cohen's *d*): Outcome Variable: Scholar's Grade Progress Overall



Summary, and reflections on the findings

The key findings are listed below:

- The most significant effect size for both progress and perseverance was attendance at Playing Days, followed by percentage of parental reports completed. This suggests that Scholars who have a supportive family environment (for example in enabling them to attend workshops in central London at weekends) do better overall.
- Scholars who started the programme at a higher grade, and with a greater length of time learning behind them, were more likely to have made greater progress throughout their award, although length of time learning (prior to starting the programme) does not have as strong an association as starting grade - this shows that while there is a clear association with a longer time learning prior to starting the programme having an overall impact, it is not as strong an effect size as the reported starting grade.
- Evidence of other learning (prior to Scholarship), and Scholars who played an additional instrument during the programme were both shown to have a moderate effect, suggesting that children who have previously been exposed to musical activities, or come from more musical families, were more likely to make identifiable progress on the programme.
- The reported starting grade of Scholars (as noted at nomination, by the instrumental tutor) appears to have a strong positive association with Scholarship duration overall, that is, children who are at a higher grade at the start of the programme are more likely to continue for longer. However, the effect of starting grade on grade progress overall is more moderate, suggesting that positive grade progress throughout the programme is not determined by a higher starting grade;
- The two results that relate to tuition group size, both the initial tuition group size at nomination, and the average size of tuition group during Scholarship, have medium effect sizes relating to both Scholarship duration and grade progress overall—both suggesting that the smaller the group size the more positive the association. These results should be taken into consideration as

many children nominated to the Scholarship programme are either coming directly from WCET programmes, or follow-on programmes in smaller groups.

- The average size of tuition group during Scholarship appears to have a similarly positive effect on both the Scholarship duration and grade progress overall - potentially because as Scholars progress become more adept in their music-making, moving to one-to-one tuition is a more direct benefit.
- The 'participating music service' delivering the Scholarship programme does show a medium association with both Scholarship duration and grade progress overall, as does the Scholarship cohort. That is, Scholars have historically tended to do better in some music services than others, and Scholars in later cohorts tend to do better. It is important to view this data historically, in the context of a period of significant change for music services in 2011/12, and also noting a number of changes over the last decade which have improved delivery. In addition, as the programme developed, the London Music Fund and all partners became more adept in both delivering the programme and identifying children who would benefit the most.
- The instrument played by the Scholar had very little effect on both progress or perseverance. This potentially links back to the work of the Whole Class Ensemble Teaching programmes, where a wide variety of instruments are available to most children.
- The Scholars' academic year at start of award shows a very small effect, showing that there is no association with the academic year at start of award and positive outcomes. These results are not surprising, as the majority of Scholars are in Years 5 or 6 at the start of their award as is often necessitated by the introduction of WCET in Years 3 and 4.
- Contrary to expectations, changing instrumental teacher in Year 7 had a moderate to strong association with both progress and perseverance. That is, students who change teacher in secondary school have more positive learning outcomes overall. The findings of the present study link to literature which suggests that students who experience multiple teaching relationships develop greater autonomy over their own learning and develop skills to adapt to new teaching methods.

- The effect sizes relating to receipt of Free School Meals / Pupil Premium funding (FMS/PP) are surprisingly small which suggests that Scholars not in receipt of FSM appear to make marginally better progress and have greater Scholarship duration overall, though the impact is not substantial. One possible reason for this is that all children on the Scholarship programme are from identified low income families, that is, all participants are from similar backgrounds and therefore the differentiation of being in receipt of Free School Meals is not that significant.
- Similarly, the Scholars' need to borrow an instrument had a very small effect size, potentially also for the reasons set out above, as 80% of children on the programme needed to borrow an instrument.
- Overall, nearly all 'ascribed' characteristics (age, sex, ethnicity or special educational needs/disability) had very small effect sizes. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that there was no perceived association with the effects on either Scholarship duration or grade progress. Once again, these results are surprising, as several commentators have noted that many of these groups are often cited as being causes for under-representation in music education.

Implications for practice

For the London Music Fund, there are many practical implications which we can take forward from these findings. In particular, the annual programme of Playing Days – originally conceived as a 'nice to have' has shown significant impact on supporting Scholars in their musical journey. Since the workshops were first developed, we have continued to develop them further with financial and musical support from our partners in ABRSM, who have worked with us to develop these workshops into significant educational tool for the programme. Bearing in mind the issues noted around hidden barriers and access, the organisation may wish to consider a more focused series of workshops throughout the year, but in regional venues, to enable children and families who may not be able to get to central London on a Sunday morning to take part. Such regional Playing Days may be held across the academic year in north, south, east and west London, with the aim to bring as many Scholars together as possible for a gala performance in central London each summer. In

addition, the London Music Fund can examine data regarding attendance at Playing Days in more detail, for example where there may be particularly low take-up in some boroughs, and work with mentors to address barriers to access. A survey to parents could be utilised to try to gather information on what barriers are perceived to participation.

It is clear that the role of Scholarship Mentor is significant, particularly in supporting families with additional needs such as access, disability or language. The London Music Fund can work with the network of Scholarship Mentors, as has been previously undertaken with a Mentors' Workshop, to share best practice, support music services in developing this role, and ultimately support more Scholars through the programme.

In a wider context, the Scholarship programme was designed to be a replicable model that could be shared nationally. The findings in this study will support potential new organisations in future to develop a Scholarship programme in their locality, if need has been identified. In addition, the positive message surrounding the transition year, and change of instrumental teacher in Year 7 may have implications for music educators generally. Finally, the positive message from the findings around the small impact of ethnicity, sex, age, instrument learned, SEN/D and Free School Meals / Pupil Premium indicate that the London Music Fund has, in many ways, achieved what it set out to do in 2011.

Remaining questions and suggested further research

It is worth noting that this study was compiled retrospectively working with data that was gathered in 2011, before any possible research had been suggested. If this study were to be undertaken again, a number of different questions might be asked in order to gather additional data around the family circumstances such as income bracket, education level of parents, number of parents in the home, and languages spoken, in order to ascertain a more deeper understanding of the socioeconomic background of participants.

Regarding potential for future research, there are two main areas to consider: a possible extension of the research in this present study, and potential for additional research in particular areas.

With reference to an extension of the present study; there is the possibility to undertake future longitudinal research with a number of the first cohort of children who began their programmes in 2011 and 2012, a number of whom are now at university and beginning to consider their future careers. In addition, the present study considered cohorts up to 2019, as these had completed (or had the potential to have completed) the full four years. To date, a further 92 children have completed the programme in 2020 and 2021, with another 200 either part-way through the programme, or due to start in September 2021 (and complete by July 2025). If, for example, the organisation chooses to introduce a scheme of regional Playing Days, would this have a similar positive impact on the current cohorts?

With regards to potential research in other areas identified in this study, researchers may wish to consider examining in more detail the concept of Year 7 transition and teacher continuity, the issue of tuition group sizes post WCET and the impact on learning, what is meant in more detail by the concept of “parental support” and how it is developed and reinforced, and what is meant by ‘motivation’ in children and its association with Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’; that is, where do children find their personal motivation for learning, if not within their microsystem of family, school, and friends.

Conclusion

Over the last decade, the London Music Fund has supported thousands of children in music education, be it through the Scholarship programme as discussed in detail in this study, or through countless projects and collaborations with music services and professional arts organisations. Many children who took part in the programmes are now studying at junior and senior conservatoires, specialist music schools, and are taking part in national ensembles.

In many respects, therefore, London Music Fund has achieved what it set out to do in 2011, in hoping to enable more children from low income families and under-

represented backgrounds to access sustained, high-quality music education, though there is still work to be done. The findings in this study will no doubt contribute enormously to the development of the programme over the next decade and beyond, and will, in turn, support thousands more young musicians in future.