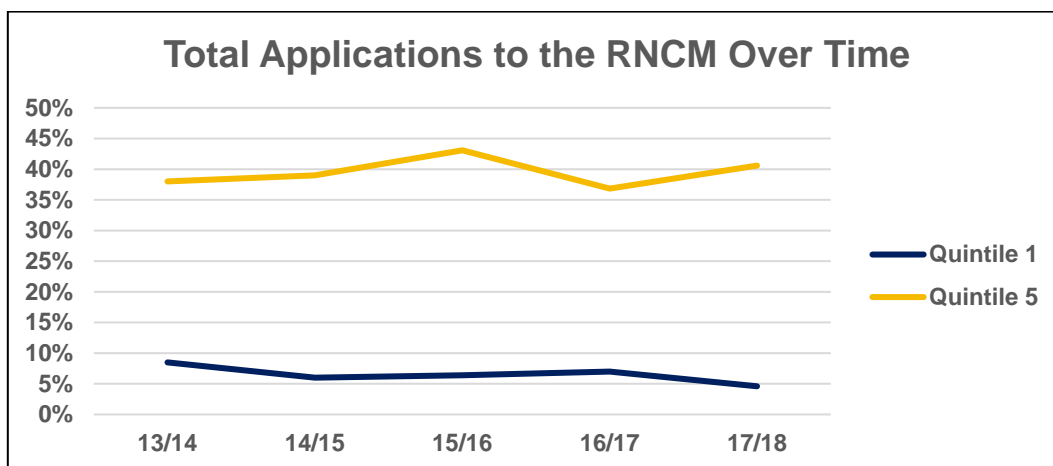


## 1. Assessment of performance

The Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) is one of the world's leading conservatoires, fostering a culture of musical and artistic excellence, openness, exploration and individual development within music performance and research. Its vision is to redefine the conservatoire as a centre for artistic innovation and creativity, inspiring and empowering all of its students, irrespective of their backgrounds to excel, to reach out and transform the lives of others and to lead and shape the music industry of the future. The College's Access and Participation Plan for 2020/21 sets out its ambitious five-year continuing commitment to student access, success and progression, and to raising attainment in general to Higher Education (HE), which is central to its overall mission.

### Introduction

- 1. As a specialist monotechnic institution the total number of students at the RNCM is small, with an average, over the past five years, of only 474 UK undergraduate students (2013/14-2018/19).** Statistical analysis and inference on small sample sizes (in this case number of students) lacks reliability, making it difficult to draw robust and valid conclusions. In the case of the RNCM, figures expressed as a percentage often represent a very small number of students (less than five). This is exhibited in the OfS data dashboard where there are numerous gaps due to the low student numbers not meeting the threshold for publication. To create as clear and true a picture as possible, additional deeper analysis of the OfS dashboard data has been conducted where necessary.
- 2. The RNCM, as an institution committed to the development of the highest level of artistic excellence, has one major criterion for entry to its programmes, namely, an appropriate level of musical ability and potential, as assessed at audition.** Such standards can only be achieved through access to high-quality musical training and education from a very young age, many years before contemplating study at a conservatoire. The recent Incorporated Society of Musicians report (State of the Nation, Feb. 2019) outlines the challenging national picture for music education in the UK, with highly significant falls in the uptake of both GCSE and A-level Music over the past eight years, as well as a steep decline in the number of trained music teachers in the workforce. A hidden consequence of this has been the disproportionate impact on underrepresented groups entering the UK's leading conservatoires which is now becoming evident. The data reflects a steady reduction in UK undergraduate applications to the RNCM of 15% (115 applicants) between 2013/14 and 2019/20, with applications from POLAR quintile 1 reducing, and those from POLAR quintile 5 rising in the same period (as shown in the graph below).



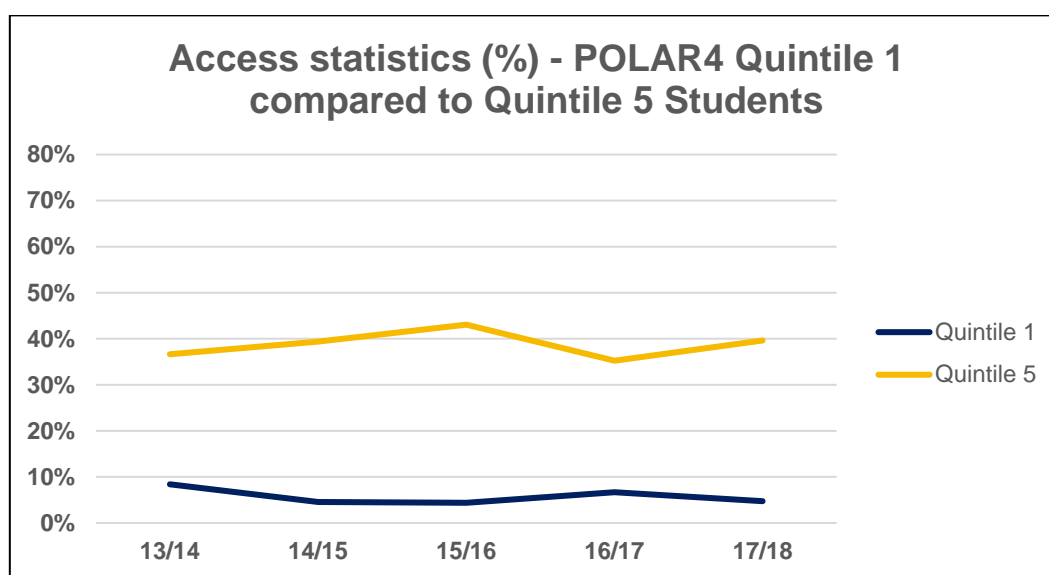
The decline of music education in state schools is a major concern for the RNCM (and the conservatoire sector generally) as it represents a threat to the continuing supply of talented, suitably qualified applicants from a broad section of society and will inevitably add extra challenges to the development and realisation of access and participation targets over the coming 5-10 years.

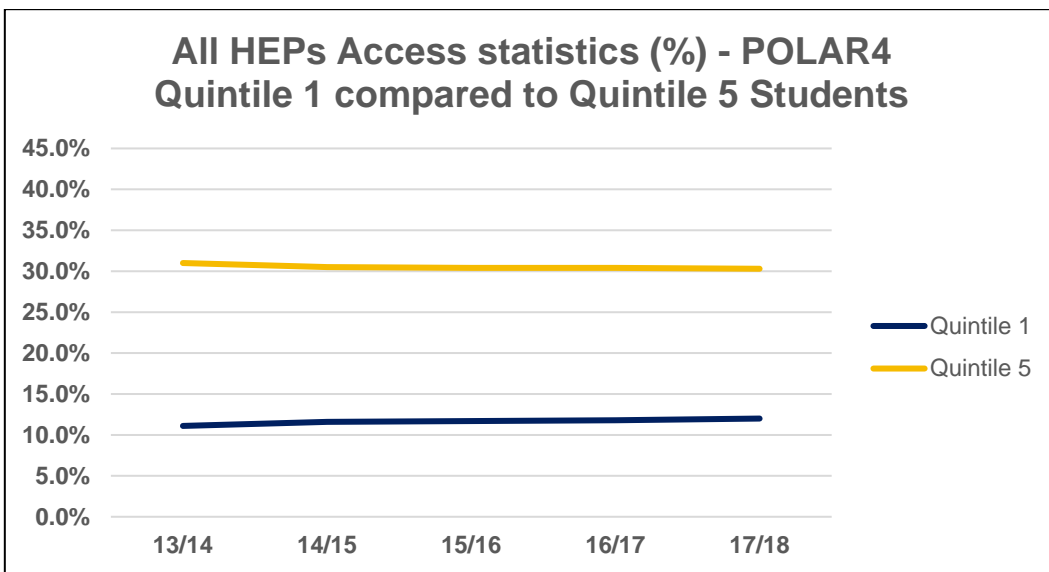
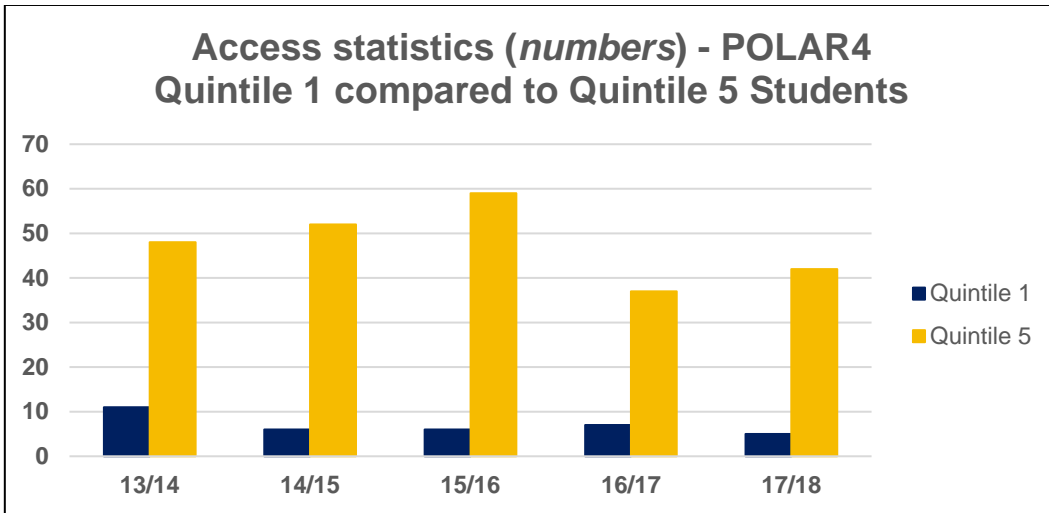
- 3. The primary strategic focus for the RNCM is on increasing access of underrepresented students to the institution.** The analysis of data from 2013/14 onwards demonstrates the RNCM's particular and consistent strength in student success (at a five-year average of 95.05% continuation rate) and progression, with access for underrepresented groups (particularly from POLAR4 quintile 1 and IMD quintile 1 consistently being the more challenging area of the student lifecycle.
- 4. Given the specialist nature of the RNCM, any meaningful and realistic approach to access and changes in the representation of underrepresented groups has to be built strategically over a long term of 10 years or more.**

Outlined below is the RNCM's analysis of the OfS five key areas of underrepresented groups:

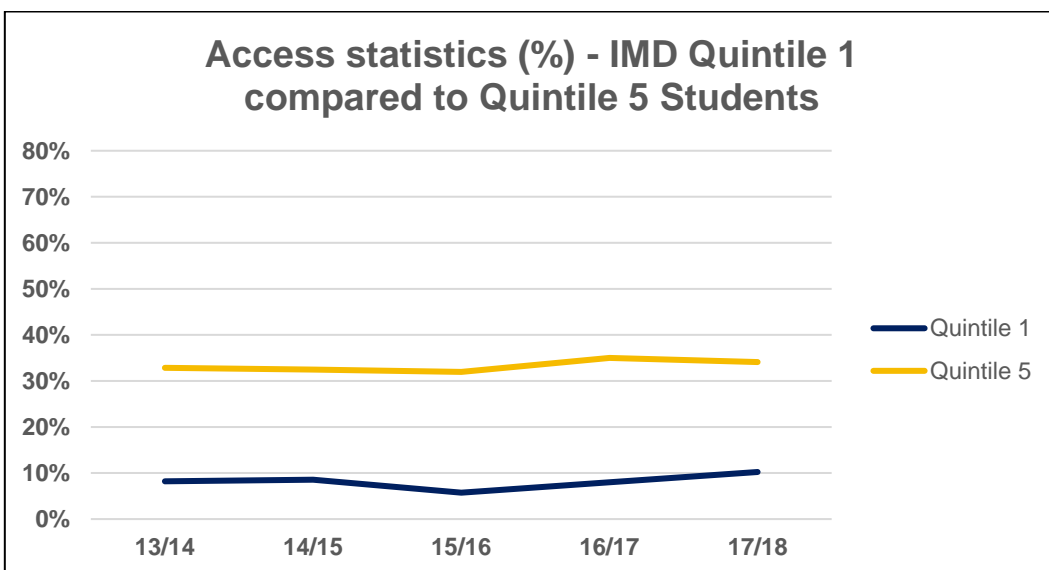
### 1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

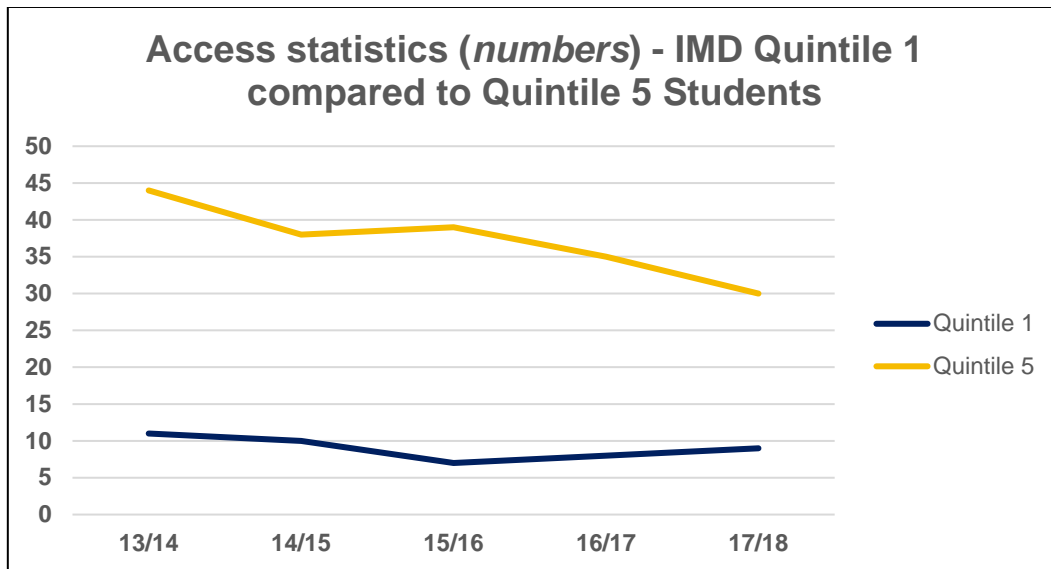
**Access** - the two graphs below outline the RNCM's position with regard to access for POLAR4 students (% and numbers). There is a significant % gap between students from quintile 1 and quintile 5 from 2013/14 to 2017/18; however, it needs to be noted that this data represents a very small number of students. The RNCM recognises the specific challenges in this area, especially when compared with the third graph below outlining data for all English higher education providers which shows a smaller gap in relation to access to higher education between POLAR quintile 1 and 5.





The two graphs below show the gap in access between students from IMD quintiles 1 and 5 (% and numbers). Although the % point gap has narrowed very slightly over the past five years, this is an area that is a specific challenge for the RNCM to address over the years of this plan.





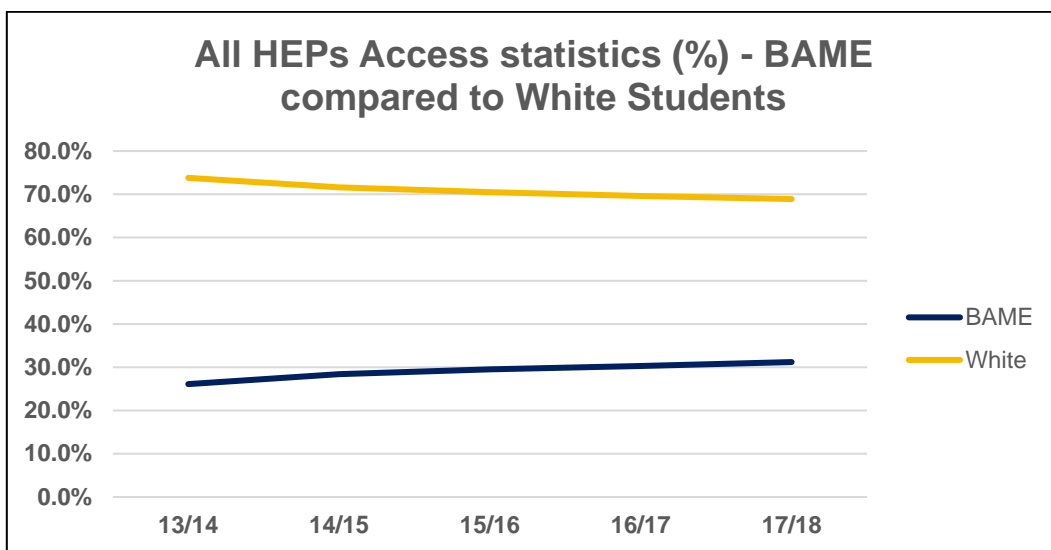
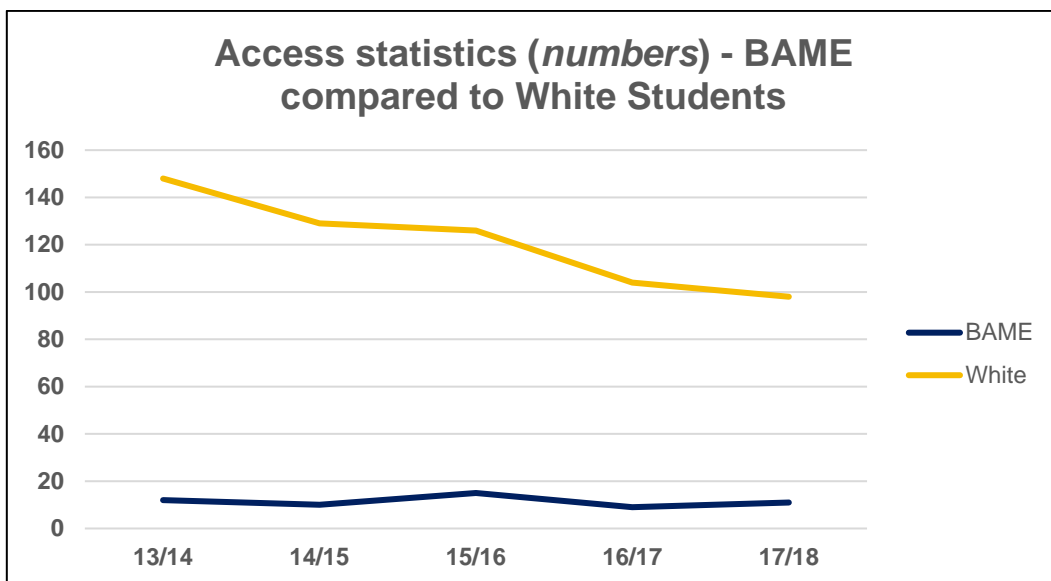
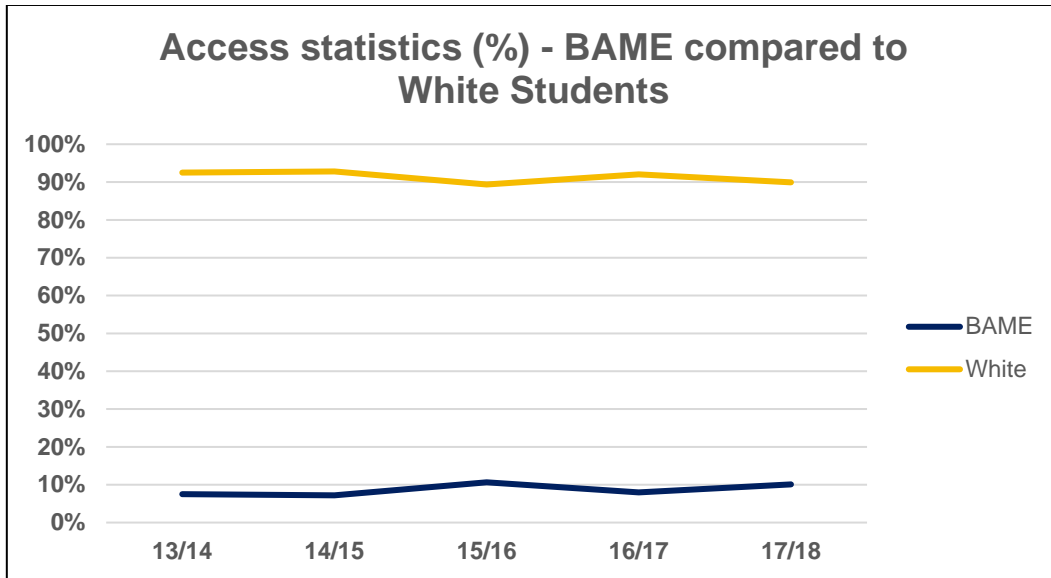
**Success (non-continuation)** - the RNCM has an excellent continuation rate for both POLAR4 quintile 1 and IMD quintile 1 students over the past five years, which is 100% or close to it for most years.

**Success (attainment)** - the percentage attainment rates are continuously high for both POLAR4 quintile 1 and IMD quintile 1 students over the past five years, with only a very small number receiving less than a 2:1 over this period.

**Progression** – the progression rate for POLAR4 quintile 1 and IMD quintile 1 students is continuously high over the past five years with only a very small number over this period not progressing to high-skilled employment or further study.

## 1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

**Access** - the first two graphs below outline the gap in access for white and BAME students, expressed as a percentage and student numbers. There has been a gradual improvement over the past five years with the percentage point gap narrowing from 85% to 80%. A comparison with the overall Higher Education Provider (HEP) split of 18-year-olds however (in the third graph below) shows the RNCM to be behind the sector average, though the population average for 18-year-olds sits at 84% white. Given the challenges in ethnic diversity being faced across the wider classical music profession, the College intends to keep it a priority to narrow the gap between white and BAME students over the coming years, as outlined more below.



**Success (non-continuation)** - continuation rates are 100% for BAME students over this period.

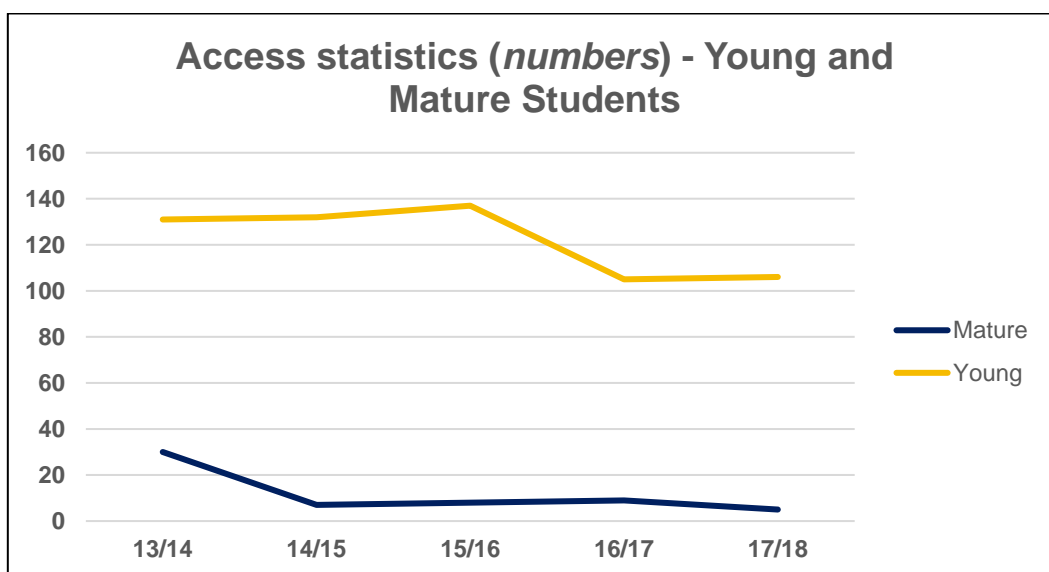
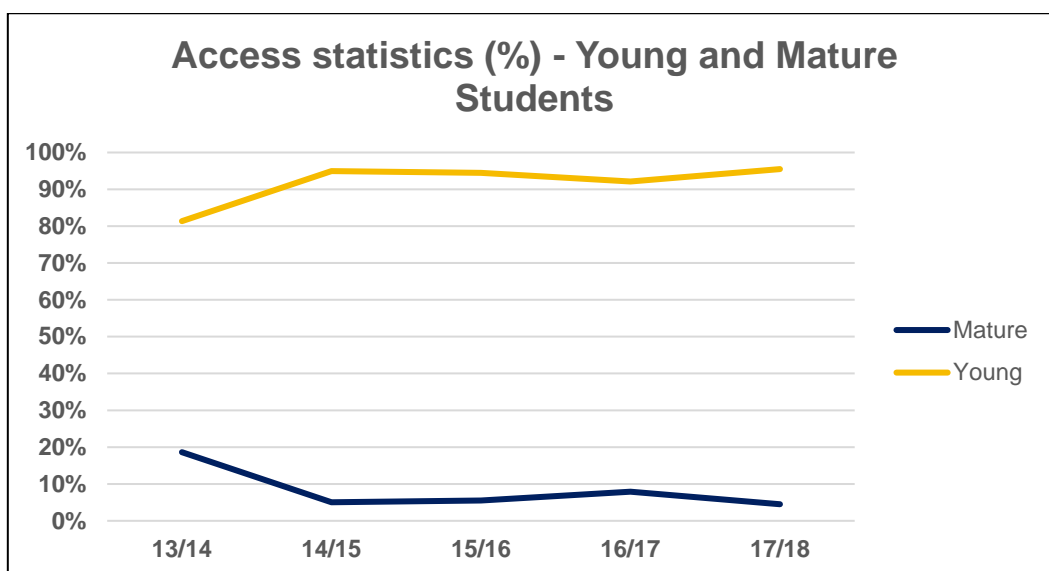
**Success (attainment)** - apart from in 2013/14 when just 50% (5) of BAME students achieved a first or 2:1, the attainment rate over this period has remained at 100% or just below.

**Progression** – there has been a 100% progression rate for BAME students over the past five years. This reflects the strong support which the RNCM gives all students during their time of study and in preparation for professional life.

The number of BAME students at the RNCM are too small to allow a disaggregation into different categories.

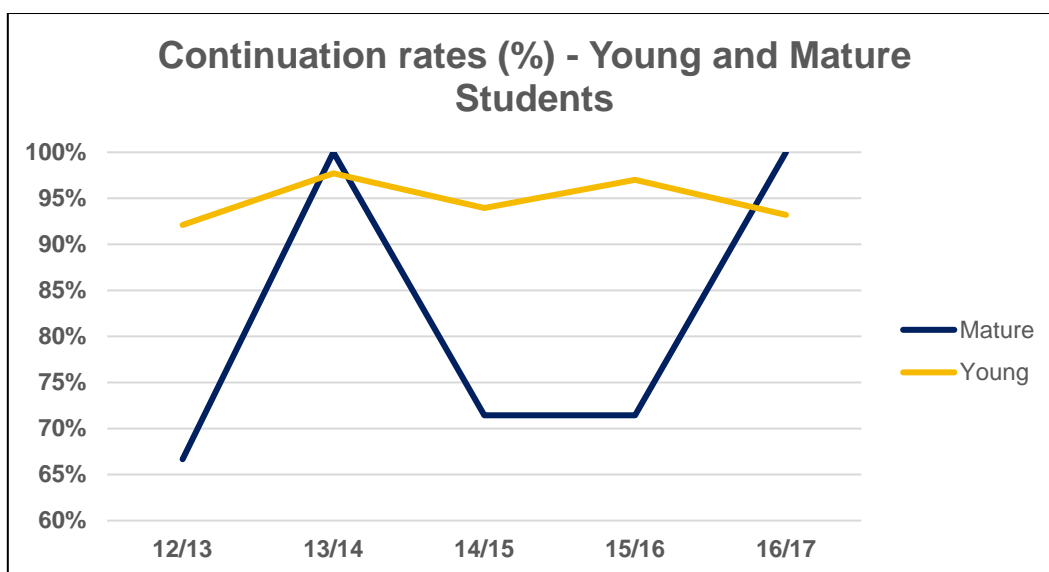
### 1.3 Mature students

**Access** - the graphs below shows the gap between mature and younger students at the RNCM since 2013/14. Although this gap remains fairly constant at around 95% (the second graph once again indicates the small numbers) it is important to note that due to the College’s specialist nature, the recruitment of mature students is not a strategic priority. Mature students tend not to choose to pursue a career as a professional musician, as those entering the profession will typically seek and require continuous intensive training through from pre-tertiary to tertiary level. The numbers of those wishing to embark upon studies later in life, when a career change to train as a professional musician within a conservatoire setting would not normally be a realistic option, are therefore limited.

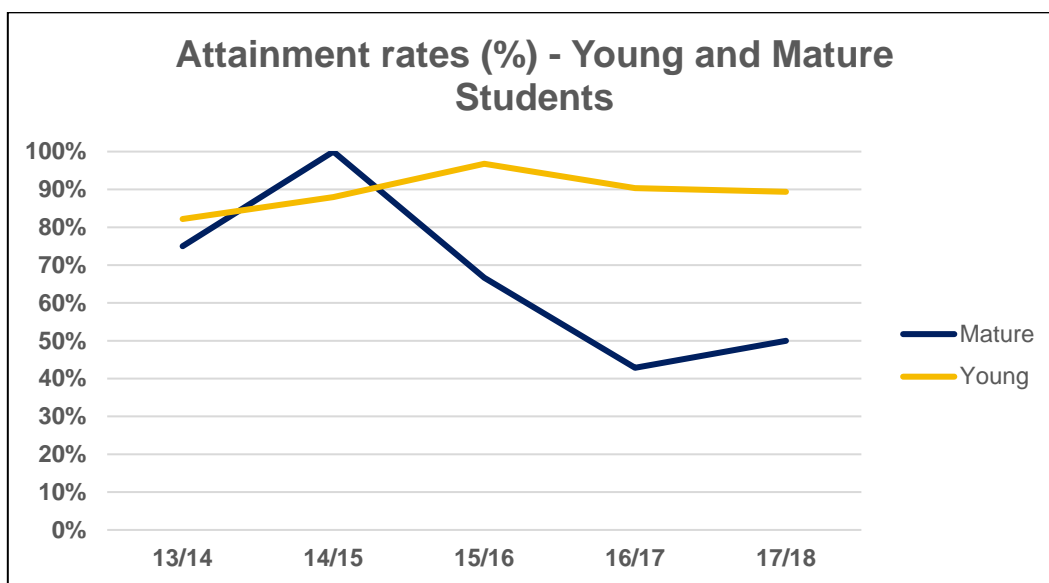


**Success (non-continuation)** – although based on very small numbers, the graph below shows a trend towards improvement in the non-continuation rates between young and mature students, due to the strong

educational, pastoral and career's support the RNCM provides to all of its students while studying at the College.



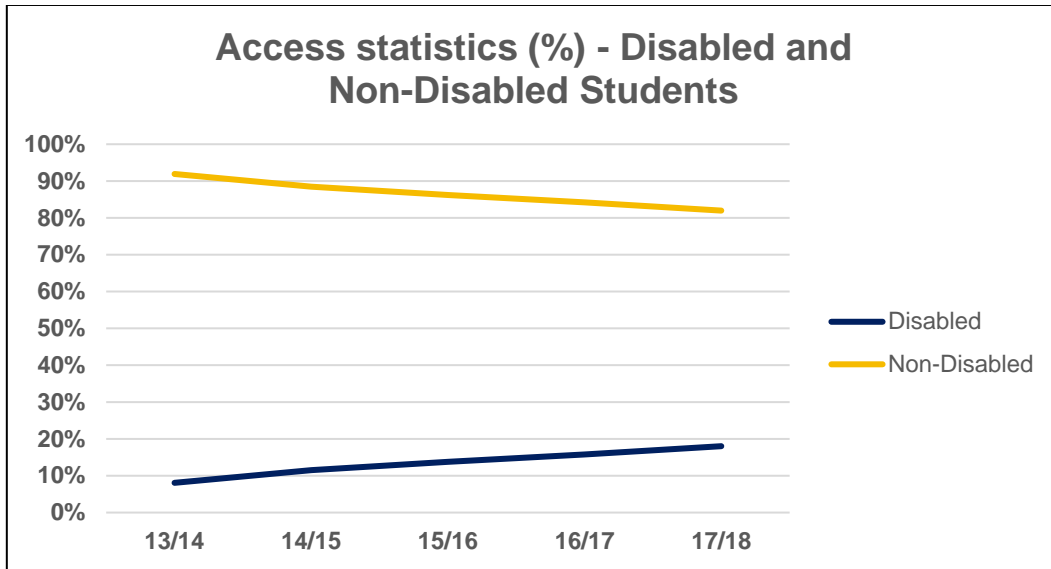
**Success (attainment)** – although the percentage point gap in attainment (shown in the graph below) does initially look significant, it needs to be interpreted with caution as the numbers are extremely small, with 50% mature in 2017/18 representing only a tiny number of students.



**Progression** – the RNCM has a very strong progression rate for its mature students, with close to 100% entering highly-skilled employment or further study.

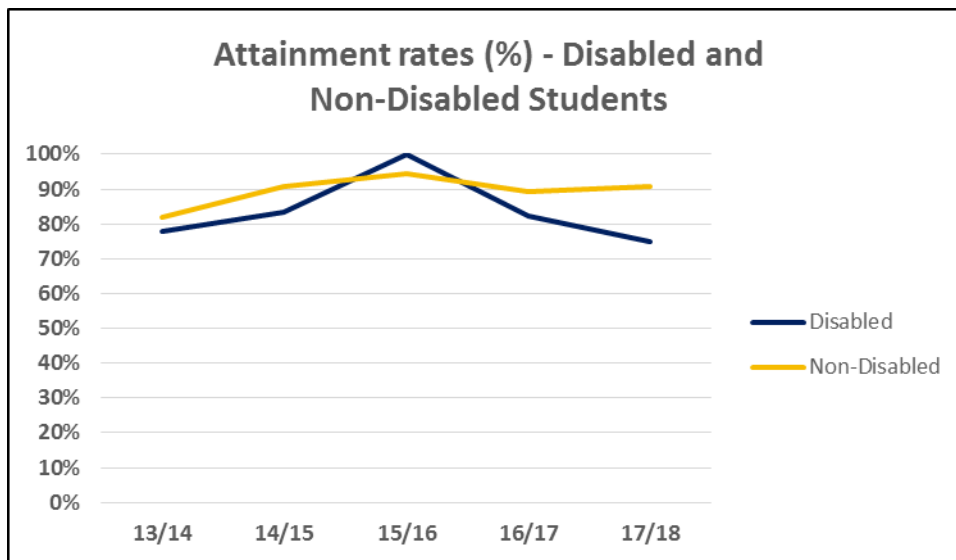
#### 1.4 Disabled students

**Access** - the graph below shows a steady and sustained improvement in the number of disabled students entering the RNCM since 2013/14. This reflects the College's commitment to equality and inclusivity, its ethos of openness and the successful institutional work being done in this area to support disabled students throughout their programme.



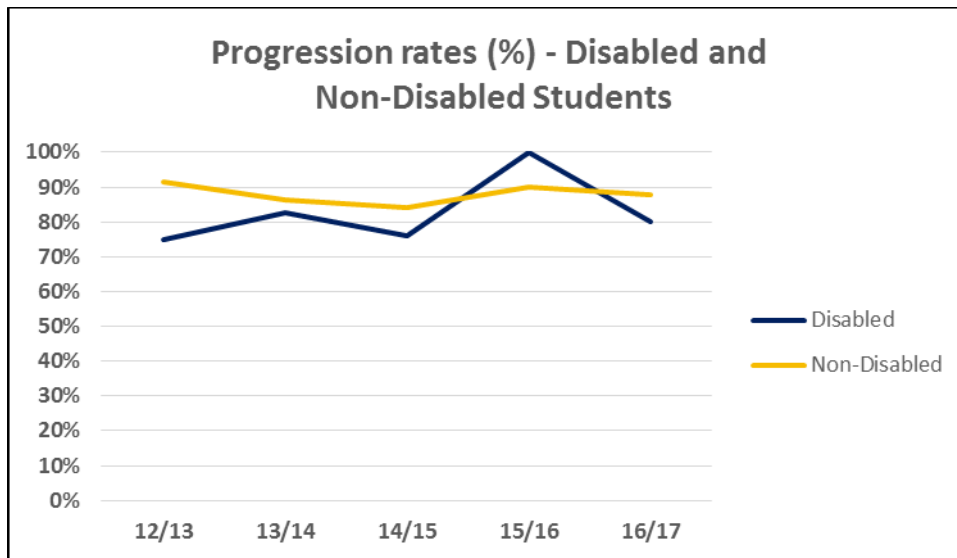
**Success (non-continuation)** - internally-derived data shows an excellent continuation rate for disabled students, this being 100% for the past few years.

**Success (attainment)** - although numbers are small there is a gap in degree attainment between non-disabled and disabled students with between 16% and 25% (5 students) of disabled students between 2013/14 and 2017/18 achieving below a 2:1. However, further disaggregation of the data shows that these students have 'hidden' cognitive and learning difficulties or a mental health condition, rather than physical disabilities *per se*. This is an area in which the RNCM has already invested heavily and will continue to do so, as outlined later in this document.



**Progression** – data reveals fluctuations in the gap between non-disabled and disabled students in terms of progression, with between 17% and 25% (very small numbers in each case) of disabled students between 2013/14 and 2017/18 not progressing to further study or highly-skilled employment, the majority of these students having cognitive or learning difficulties. Whilst these numbers are very low the RNCM nevertheless takes the support of this area very seriously and is committed fully to supporting these students to progress to their chosen career or further study.





### 1.5 Care leavers

**Access** – numbers are too small to provide any statistically reliable information for the past five years

**Success (non-continuation)** – despite very small numbers, and none in some years, there has been a 100% continuation rate for any Care leavers who have attended the RNCM over the past 5 years.

**Success (attainment) and progression** – there have been no Care leavers recorded at the RNCM with regard to attainment or progression in the last five years.

Given the nature of the RNCM's specialist educational activity, there is limited impact the Institution can make realistically in this area. Nevertheless, through the many pre-tertiary measures mentioned later, the College is continuing to reduce any barriers to access.

### 1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Given low numbers of students at the RNCM as outlined above, an analysis of the intersections of characteristics will not present any statistically reliable or meaningful data for the RNCM to consider.

Nevertheless, the continuing work the RNCM is undertaking as part of its key strategic measures, mentioned later (in particular with Pathfinder), is helping the College develop a stronger detailed understanding of intersections of disadvantage, particularly around ethnicity and deprivation.

### 1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

The specialist nature of the RNCM requires the development of musical skills over a long period starting early in the pre-tertiary years. Other groups facing barriers to access to HE (such as refugees, carers etc.) are less likely to have had the opportunity to develop these skills. This, together with the small total number of students at the RNCM, negates against analysis of data around these other groups. The collaborative work which the RNCM is undertaking over the coming years, particularly in close connection with regional hubs and schools, will enable the development of a clearer understanding of the specific challenges these groups face, and the possibility for creating future interventions to help remove any barriers they may have to HE.

#### Summary of success to date:

- Excellent outcomes for underrepresented groups in general in relation to student success and progression (barring some minor concerns to watch in connection with disabled students)
- A clear narrowing of the percentage gap in access between white and BAME students
- A clear narrowing of the gap in access between disabled and non-disabled students
- A high proportion (77%) of RNCM students from state schools
- A high proportion of students (61%) from the North of England

## **2. Strategic aims and objectives**

The RNCM has a clear and ambitious long-term strategy for change in order to eliminate the barriers for underrepresented groups coming to the College despite the challenges in the music sector as a whole, as outlined above. The primary focus of this work is in the area of access, as the RNCM has a very strong record on success and progression. The College's access work is carried out primarily by RNCM Engage, the College's pre-tertiary learning and participation and community department. RNCM Engage has its own strategy, one of the central aims of which is to create focussed progression pathways in music for underrepresented groups from first contact right up to conservatoire level, raising attainment and encouraging applications to the RNCM and higher education in general.

### **2.1 Target groups**

Taking into account the small specialist nature of the RNCM and the inherent challenges this poses with respect to financial and human resources, and having analysed the key areas in need of support above, the College aims to prioritise its activity on the following focussed target groups over the duration of this plan:

- 1. Students from POLAR4 quintile 1 – access**
- 2. Students from IMD quintile 1 – access**
- 3. BAME students - access**
- 4. Disabled students – success (attainment)**
- 5. Disabled students – progression**

### **2.2 Aims and objectives**

The College has committed to the following five key priority aims over the duration of this plan:

1. Reduce the gap in access between students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 5
2. Reduce the gap in access between students from IMD quintiles 1 and 5
3. Reduce the gap in access between BAME and white students
4. Eliminate the gap in attainment between abled and disabled students
5. Eliminate the gap in progression between abled and disabled students

The following key strategic objectives relate specifically to aims 1 and 2:

- By 2020 create longer-term, sustained and more-focussed access projects to tackle and strengthen musical progression routes into the College's wide-ranging portfolio of pre-tertiary activities (e.g. Junior RNCM (JRNCM), Young Projects, Young Strings, and Young Company as outlined below) and on into the senior RNCM, to identify talent from underrepresented groups, and to further strengthen the network of clear feeder organisations and pathways into JRNCM and RNCM
- Over the next five years, work more closely and strategically with the RNCM's unique network of professional partners in order to enhance, complement and supplement the access work already taking place in Manchester, Greater Manchester and across the North of England
- By 2020 create a more sophisticated understanding of the optimum points for effective and smart intervention, while avoiding duplication of effort with partners
- Over the next five years use the RNCM's influence and networks to help create more significant sectoral change
- By 2025 reduce the gap in access between BAME and white students so that there are no gaps between any groups of BAME students and the population splits for those groups (for 18-year olds in the UK).
- By 2020 create an enhanced internal process within the College to develop a shared understanding of data and more effective ways to collate evidence and analyse impact
- By 2022 increase the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering JRNCM
- By 2020 focus targeted access interventions on young people from BAME, IMD quintile 1 and POLAR quintile 1 backgrounds

The following key objectives relate to aims 3 and 4:

- Over the course of this plan continue to create enhanced bespoke support for students with disabilities through the College's Personal Learning Plans (PLPs)
- By 2021 develop a more joined-up cross-College approach to the support of students' health and well-being, with a particular focus on mental health support

Description of key targets	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
To reduce the gap in entry rates between POLAR4 quintile 5: quintile 1 students	35%	34%	32%	30%	28%	25%
To reduce the gap in entry rates between IMD quintile 5 and quintile 1 students	24%	23%	22%	21%	20%	19%
To reduce the gap in access for BAME and white students	80%	79%	78%	76%	73%	70%
Eliminate the percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between disabled and non-disabled students.	16%	14%	10%	5%	0%	0%
Eliminate the percentage difference in progression between disabled and non-disabled students.	8%	6%	3%	0%	0%	0%

### 3. Strategic measures

#### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

##### Overview

Strategic measures around access, success and progression (which are available for all students but are of particular benefit to students from underrepresented groups) are already clearly built into College strategies, in particular its Learning and Teaching Strategy, Engage Strategy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, with leadership being provided from Board level down, across all senior leadership groups.

##### Alignment with other strategies

The College has a very active Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum, comprising staff from across College and a diverse range of students, and has recently rewritten and refocussed its objectives. Many of these particularly complement the aims and objectives of this Access Plan and include a commitment to the following:

1. Increase the overall numbers of BAME applicants from current 17% to 25-30% by end of 2021/22
2. Ensure Honorary Awards given by the RNCM have balanced representation
3. Increase the number of BAME performers and collaborators in the performance programme by 50% by 2020
4. Increase the number of BAME-related partnerships by 50% by 2020
5. Establish high profile BAME Ambassadors/Mentors to support the RNCM in its access activities

## Strategic measures

As outlined above, the primary ambition for the College over the course of this plan is to increase access for underrepresented groups to the RNCM. Barriers to musical progression have been well-documented in several major reports on music education published over the last couple of years (reports from the Royal Philharmonic Society (Musical Routes, 2015), ABRSM (Making Music, 2014) and Dr Christina Scharff (Equality and Diversity in the Classical Music Profession, 2015) and more recently Music Education: State of the Nation (ISM, January 2019)). These reports conclude the following:

- Children from lower socio-economic groups continue to be significantly disadvantaged compared with peers from more affluent backgrounds
- The cost of learning to play an instrument is a significant barrier to participation in music education and training
- Gender, ethnic and class backgrounds do affect musicians' ability to access the sector and succeed
- There has been a huge decline in uptake of Music at GCSE and A-level over the past five years

The following three flagship projects have been developed by the RNCM in response to this research evidence to help achieve its aims and objectives particularly around access for underrepresented groups (targets 1 and 2)

### 1. Pathfinder programme

Pathfinder was conceived during Spring 2016 as a means to enable young musicians aged 10-16 to overcome financial, social and cultural barriers to progressing musical talent. 200 students (aged 8 to 18) study at the weekly Junior RNCM for talented young musicians. About 35% attend independent schools and over half rely on bursaries to pay their fees. In contrast, our outreach projects engage with children and young people across Greater Manchester, of diverse ethnicities, economic groups and levels of musical experience and participation. However, there is limited evidence as yet of the young people participating in our outreach projects then progressing onto more advanced RNCM activities for young people, despite their low-cost and the participants' obvious interest. These barriers to progression are particularly problematic for young people who have shown demonstrable musical interest and ability. In such cases, their development can be slowed – or halted altogether – by a fragmented music education landscape that relies on the financial means, knowledge of the opportunities available and the confidence to seek them out.

The RNCM Pathfinder programme was therefore established, with partners the Greater Manchester Music Hub (the consortium of 9 Manchester music services) and the BBC Philharmonic, as a targeted intervention to support talented young musicians from Greater Manchester who, for a range of social, economic and cultural factors, are unable to realise their musical talent and sustain their passion for music. By working with the GM Music Hub and its staff who are 'in the field' training young musicians at schools in Greater Manchester, Pathfinder identifies those young people for whom the programme could have a transformational impact, leading to sustained musical progression. In turn, the BBC Philharmonic can provide vital insights from the perspective of the classical music industry and a range of inspiring opportunities for the young people to experience, learn from and be mentored by leading professionals.

The ultimate aim of Pathfinder is that, following participation in the programme, the young people can develop their musical engagement independently and that they will feel confident, supported and motivated in their music-making and their ability to engage with education and learning.

The Pathfinder project has achieved some significant success for young students recently who would otherwise have not had access to the RNCM as follows:

- To date five students identified through Pathfinder have accessed, or will access, the JRNCM and have received bursary support which is essential to their attendance
- In 2019 the first students identified through the Pathfinder programme will progress to the undergraduate degree programme at RNCM

The RNCM plans to build on the success and learning of the Pathfinder project with additional partners throughout the life of this plan.

## 2.RNCM Young Company

Begun ten years ago with the ambition to reach young people in deprived areas who had little or no experience in music and the performing arts, this is the RNCM's free, open-access musical theatre youth group for 13-18 year olds that meets weekly, with a particular emphasis on underrepresented students from NCOP schools. It provides a year-long programme of skills-training in singing, acting and dance for up to 60 young people. The group is mentored by RNCM students and works alongside industry professionals from directors and choreographers to lighting, costume and set designers. The programme also raises awareness of career progression and provides audition training. The programme has run successfully for the past 10 years and participants have gone on to study at such institutions as the RNCM, Guildhall School, Northern Ballet School, University of Cambridge and University of Birmingham. Two participants have also recently entered the RNCM. Evaluation over past years has fed back into future projects and has shown the value of the project for progression as one participant outlined below:

*"I have been attending RNCM Young Company for three years. I belong to lots of other groups but at the RNCM I get better training and the performance opportunities are much better. I like working with the RNCM students and have learnt a lot from them in terms of my singing and acting ability, and also on how to be a confident performer. I am now considering courses to apply for at university and have already received lots of advice on places to consider and audition tips. I will be the first person in my family to go to university and being with students at the RNCM has made me realise that this is what I want to do."*

## 3.RNCM Mentoring and Guidance programmes

In 2018.19 the RNCM developed a new series of mentoring and guidance programmes specifically to enable clearer progression routes into the College for young people from POLAR4 and IMD quintiles 1. The following projects were put in place:

**General HE Visit Days, and specific music days** - these are days for Yr11 to Y13 and cover general advice and information on higher education. They follow a set plan used by all the Manchester HEIs including sessions on finance, application forms, choosing where to study, plus a tour of the RNCM building and Halls of Residence.

**Subject Specific visit days tailor-made for NCOP schools** - these days are for Y11 – 13 who are interested in following a career in Music, Theatre, Dance, Musical Theatre or Popular Music. They are tailor-made to fit a school group and cover areas such as audition technique, confidence building, improvisation, voice projection, stage presence, costume design, set design, stage management, lighting, and production management.

**Composing for GCSE and A Level** - this is a tailor-made project offering composition support for GCSE and A Level music students, designed to fill the gaps in the decline in specific teaching in this area with a focus on workshops and one-to-one support from RNCM students.

**RNCM Mentoring programme** - In partnership with the RNCM SU BAME society, students will mentor young people from a BAME background.

Although these schemes are in their infancy (and will be developed further over the course of this plan) they already have shown a visible impact in confidence and ambition of the young people involved. When they started, none of them had an understanding of university life and no ambition to get there. At present all now say they understand the benefits of going to university in terms of career progression in the arts and will apply this autumn. All of them will be the first in their family to do this.

*“Since attending the RNCM I have more confidence and a better understand of the process of applying to university. I have learnt about the finances and what it’s like to be a student. Through talking to my mentor understand that applying to university will help my prospects in the future.”*

The three flagship projects mentioned above will all have longer term outcomes evaluation embedded in them (as mentioned more below in the evaluation section), enabling participants’ feedback also to have an influence into their future design and development.

The table below outlines additional specific funded measures which the RNCM is undertaking with a particular emphasis on tackling the gaps in access for POLAR4 and IMD quintiles 1 and 5:

<b>Introduction to Music projects (first contact)</b>				
<b>Project / measure</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Measurement / evidence</b>	<b>Timescale to impact RNCM access</b>
<b>Childrens' Opera</b>	Annual creative project with RNCM students working with about 160 underrepresented children from four primary schools on a new musical production to be staged in the RNCM Theatre.	First introduction to RNCM and general attainment	Qualitative feedback from participants	10 years
<b>Young Explorers' Concerts</b>	Orchestral performances designed to support the music curriculum. Each concert is preceded by morning workshops designed to raise awareness of careers in orchestral music, concert production, and music within the curriculum. They also provide an opportunity to meet with and talk to music students, learn about university life and sample a range of orchestral instruments. Schools attend in groups but students can also attend with their families.	First introduction the RNCM and general attainment in music	Uptake of free tickets (100 per show) for underrepresented school groups. Sales in general (usually 400-600)	10 years
<b>Family Day</b>	A large-scale, one day event for families to come to the RNCM, see students in action and experience a day of music-making.	First introduction to RNCM	Sales of c.620 tickets	10 years
<b>Open rehearsals</b>	Each year the RNCM works with 4 local schools and bring them into the building to watch rehearsals, meet players, discuss music and ask questions.	First introduction to RNCM	Qualitative feedback	10 years
<b>Engage Pass</b>	This ticket scheme is aimed at young people in Greater Manchester from selected postcodes, schools and community groups. The Pass is designed to encourage young people and their families to come along and experience music at the RNCM for free.	First introduction to RNCM and raising aspirations for RNCM	The booking codes will help differentiate between bookers and will provide data to report more effectively on engagement with underrepresented young people.	2-3 years

<b>Progression projects</b>				
<b>RNCM Young Projects</b>	These are a series of open access workshops for young people aged 6 to 18, learning some of the rarer instruments. The workshops are twice a term and are open to everyone with no charge. At present the College doesn't collect any evidence around progression into HE for these projects but intends to begin tracking of participants in Autumn 2019.	Provide a clear pathway into HE and the RNCM	Pre and post questionnaires	3-5 years
<b>Annual Conference</b>	A day of panel discussions and workshops for up to 500 participants delivered by representatives from leading PA institutions.	Provide a pathway into HE and the RNCM	Pre and post questionnaires	2-3 years
<b>RNCM BAME ambassadors</b>	Create a group of BAME international artist ambassadors that can influence and help drive change at the RNCM	Create a culture that values and exhibits greater diversity	Greater visibility of BAME artists and role models in the programme	5 years



### Curriculum, pedagogic and student support:

The initiatives to be undertaken under this element of the plan are driven by the College's key educational goals within its overarching Strategic Plan 'RNCM 2020', these being:

- develop flexible programmes of study which respond to demand and to the learning aspirations of the individual
- develop entrepreneurship, professional placement and project-based learning opportunities across the curriculum
- enable students to develop the breadth of skills needed to establish and sustain freelance careers in the music industry
- develop a Professional Mentoring Scheme to engage students with alumni, raise aspiration and build important networking opportunities
- use graduate destination data to inform curriculum design and development
- embed music industry feedback into annual and periodic programme reviews

This strategic direction will continue to be a responsive approach to the demands of prospective students from all backgrounds and circumstances, manifest in the continuing diversification of the musical styles available in the College's programme offer, including early music, jazz and popular genres.

The RNCM has a very strong track record for both student success and progression due to having advanced support in place for all students and the bespoke, individual support provided for all students by their main tutor. The College has in place an extensive range of measures designed to ensure that students remain on their programme through to completion. Whilst not designed specifically for those from under-represented groups, these measures are of particular benefit to them, and will be reviewed regularly in line with the projected increase in underrepresented students:

- **Attendance Monitoring** - this is universal, with registers taken and non-attendance followed up for all formal classes, from one-to-one instrumental tuition to larger academic studies classes as well as performance activities, with electronic registers used where possible. This greatly improves the timeliness of reporting capabilities allowing any follow up with a student to be swift. Non-submission of work is also closely monitored and immediately followed up. Both of these can be early indicators of disengagement by a student.
- **Weekly one-to-one classes** with principal study tutors form a key part of the College's pastoral system, supported by course leaders, year tutors and Heads of School as appropriate.

The College has identified the support of disabled students as one of its key aims in this plan (targets 3 and 4) and has recently placed the support of mental health and other disabilities central to its strategic mission, investing in a new post, a lecturer in Musicians' Health and Wellbeing (the first of its kind in the UK conservatoire sector), to drive a culture change across the organisation. In addition, the College has the following health and wellbeing support systems in place:

- **Student support service** - the College operates a student support service that provides wide-ranging support to all students including a high-quality specialist counselling service (with increased capacity in recent years). This is open to any student needing assistance and is especially helpful to students experiencing mental health issues through their time at College. Approximately 11% of the student body access the counselling service each year. The student support service provides reference to specialist medical support services for musicians through organisations such as the *British Association of Performing Arts Medicine*.
- **New specialist NHS support service in collaboration across the Greater Manchester HEIs** – the RNCM is proud to be part of this ground-breaking new national initiative to provide bespoke mental health support services for students studying across Greater Manchester.

Complementing the RNCM's already extensive counselling, mental first aid and pastoral support mechanisms, this service will offer 24/7 crisis mental health support for any student studying in the region. The RNCM also will be offering specialist research in relation to the performing arts.

- **Personal Learning Plans (PLP)** - the College currently has 112 students with a PLP. The PLP is a short, summary document which details the disability/condition(s) and how they affect a student. It identifies recommended reasonable adjustments to meet the College's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. It is prepared by the Learning Support Tutor (LST) in collaboration with the student, involving staff in Schools as appropriate. It is not designed to replace the need for a Personal Evacuation and Emergency Plan (PEEP), which is the responsibility of the Health and Safety Advisor, who will consider special measures such as building or residential accommodation adjustments.

### Employability:

Employability and preparation for the profession are central aspects of the RNCM's training from the day students enter the College. Below are a few of the areas in which the College assists all students to progress from their programme into the wider music industry:

- **Professional skills sessions** - RNCM students undertake professional skills sessions as part of their programme. Students have opportunities to develop their skills in teaching and creative and professional practice, fulfilling the College's mission to train the next generation of dynamic and entrepreneurial music educators and practitioners. This is designed to support students' professional development in the diverse, but complementary, areas of their musical lives. In the third year of the BMus undergraduate programme, this work develops into a compulsory placement for all students with a range of professional partners and for students in their fourth year into an Independent or Collaborative Project as a means to develop their initiative, entrepreneurship and employability skills, enhancing their portfolio of career-focussed experience.
- **Professional Experience Schemes** – each year the RNCM provides well over 400 professional experience opportunities for students to participate in auditions, education projects and public performances in the UK and Europe with a whole range of professional partners. It offers an unrivaled breadth and depth of immersive learning experiences that develop the skills, 'real-world' experience and contacts needed to secure opportunities once they have graduated.
- **Careers Advice** - the provision of careers advice at the RNCM is distributed across a number of areas. Students receive specialist discipline-related guidance from their principal study tutors and all other members of academic staff with whom they work closely, including their Head of School and his/her Deputy, members of the RNCM's Professional Engagements Team and the College's professional orchestral management and engagements teams. In addition, there is a mentoring system which facilitates students' direct and indirect access to relevant library resources, RNCM staff, and (where appropriate) external individuals. RNCM students also have access to a generic Career Advice Library at the University of Manchester.
- The **Professional Engagements Department** arranges student placement and performance opportunities within venues and spaces external to the College. The team co-ordinates in excess of 350 paid engagements on behalf of music societies, clubs, companies and individuals throughout the year. This provides students with the vital and valuable experience of being a 'working musician', preparing them for their future careers. The Professional Engagements Department also runs *Sound Advice*, a bespoke careers service for RNCM musicians (students and recent alumni). Students and recent graduates receive weekly job

bulletins, updates on arts and music-related activities, and have their details added to the musicians' database in order for potential employers to be able to contact them about performance work. The Department also offers advice to students and graduates on a variety of subjects from CV writing and bid preparation to completing a tax return.

### Collaboration:

Collaboration with an extensive network of external partners is at the centre of the RNCM's strategy for Access and Participation work. In order to achieve its strategic aims and objectives around students from BAME and POLAR4 quintile 1 background, over the span of this plan, the College will focus its collaborative work in three main strategic areas – music education hubs, local regional arts organisations and key school partners:

#### **Music Education Hubs**

As the RNCM is a single-subject institution, independent sponsoring of a non-specialist music school would not be the most effective or impactful way to achieve its aspirations for access. It makes greater sense, therefore, strategically to reach out to a much larger number of pupils who are interested in music across Greater Manchester and beyond through the vehicle of music education hubs, and the network of schools with which they engage. The RNCM plans to be increasingly proactive in the scope and impact of its work (with the measures outlined above) through greater targeted involvement with music education hubs to which it is already affiliated to help develop and support talent from underrepresented groups:

- **'One Education (Music)'** is responsible for pre-tertiary music education in the City of Manchester and showcases a wide range of musical and vocal events for young people, schools and families. The RNCM Deputy Principal (Performance and Programmes) is a member of its Strategic Board.
- The **Greater Manchester Music Education Hub** is a ground-breaking confederation in terms of its scale and ambition, and brings together nine music services within Greater Manchester, the region's three professional orchestras, Chetham's School of Music, and a range of other public and private providers. The RNCM Principal is a member of the Hub's Partnership Board.
- The RNCM currently also has relationships with **Love Music Trust**, the **Northamptonshire and Derbyshire Music Education Hubs**, and the **Isle of Man Music Service**.

#### **Manchester and Northwest Arts organisations**

The RNCM has very strong partnerships with all the North West professional performing groups – BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé, Manchester Camerata, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Psappha, Opera North and Royal Northern Sinfonia. Each of these organisations has its own advanced and extensive community and schools' work, and over the next ten years, the RNCM plans to work in a closer and more strategic way with them to help achieve its ambitions in Access and Participation, and to create a more joined-up landscape for the improvement of access to music education across the North of England. The RNCM also works regularly across the City of Manchester with other arts organisations such as HOME, Manchester International Festival, Community Arts Northwest and the Royal Exchange Theatre. In addition, the Deputy Principal sits on Manchester's Cultural Leaders' Group, which has an ambition to bring together learning and participation work across the city in a more strategic fashion, and the RNCM Head of Learning and Participation sits on the Manchester Creative Learning Network, a strategy group made up of all the Manchester arts organisations.

Working in close collaboration with its unique network of professional partners across Manchester and the North West, the RNCM is investing in activity that complements the work of others in the region, using its specialist expertise to fill the gaps that exist and support progression to higher education. One example of this is the RNCM's contribution to the new 'Choral Leadership Network' being established by the Hallé, where it will train specialist vocal directors who can lead and develop choirs of all ages and backgrounds, encouraging individuals to consider pursuing their musical studies at higher education level. Another is a developing collaboration with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra to identify a clear progression route for young disadvantaged and BAME musicians from their *In Harmony* project into advanced training.

### **Manchester Schools (primary and secondary)**

At present the RNCM already works with young people in around 90 primary and secondary schools on an annual basis. Over the course of this plan the College intends to build closer and longer-term strategic partnerships with a smaller number of these schools to enable more effective impact, greater attainment in music and the stronger potential for a more effective pathway for talented students into RNCM Young Projects, JRNCM and the RNCM. To help tackle the decline in Music A-Level uptake, the College has also recently started a partnership with Sandbach School and Love Music Trust to create a specialist Music A-Level course, and is in the process of developing further A-level support with other hub partners.

In addition to the above, the RNCM's other important strategic partnerships and collaborations enable it to broaden its influence on the direction of the pre-tertiary music education ecosystem:

### **The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM)**

As one of the four independent Royal Schools of Music that own ABRSM, the world's leading grade and diploma examining body for music, the RNCM plays a wide role nationally and internationally in supporting progression and attainment in music. With the support of the RNCM, ABRSM has recently developed a new online learning and assessment resource for popular music students, which sits alongside its portfolio of open access learning resources for schools and individuals. A new scheme being launched in Autumn 2019 will enable 10 organisations per annum to receive funding to support innovative schemes focussed explicitly on access and participation.

### **Specialist Music Schools (pre-tertiary)**

The College has a Memorandum of Understanding with Chetham's School of Music, Manchester, where a significant number of students are in receipt of bursaries through the Government's Music and Dance scheme, which incentivises Chetham's students to progress to the College for their higher education. The RNCM Principal is a member of the School Board of Governors, advising on strategy and future permanent progression activities. The RNCM also has strong links with the other specialist music schools in the UK, including Wells Cathedral, Purcell and St Mary's, which similarly are designated Independent, albeit a very high proportion of their students are supported by the Music and Dance Scheme providing high levels of financial assistance, including free places, through means-testing.

### **Conservatoires UK**

Conservatoires UK (CUK), chaired by the RNCM Principal, is strongly committed to access and participation and to identifying and implementing targeted interventions to address the specific challenges in the performing arts. Recognising that interventions by individual CUK members will support recruitment to all of the UK's conservatoires, concerted efforts are being made to commission collective research and to share best practice in the interests of the CUK membership as a whole.

Recent examples include the commissioning of a bespoke piece of research from Universities UK on BAME applicants, which formed the basis of discussions at the last CUK Conference and has led to the formation of a new CUK Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum.

CUK has been invited to contribute to Arts Council England's planned work on Diversity and two CUK members, including the RNCM Principal, were invited to sit on the Department for Education's Expert Steering Group which is developing a model music curriculum for state primary schools. CUK has engaged with Ofsted to encourage the inclusion of performing arts in its new more holistic inspection regime, and with the Russell Group to raise the status of the performing arts at A-level as facilitating subjects for entry to the UK's prestigious research-intensive universities.

### **OfS National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)**

From 2017/18, as part of the NCOP, the RNCM has played a key role in Greater Manchester Higher, a group of higher and further education institutions tasked with delivering a broad programme of activities across the North West to encourage those from disadvantaged backgrounds to consider application to university. The RNCM Head of Learning and Participation is Vice Chair of the Greater Manchester Higher group and sits on the Steering Group for the region. The strategic aim of the group is to:

- Raise the HE participation rate for learners from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 in Greater Manchester
- Increase the proportion of Careleavers from Greater Manchester who progress to HE

The partnership does not currently have the regional data that will enable the setting of collaborative targets in these areas but has committed to developing and delivering these during the first year of this plan.

### **Partners to help specifically with ambitions around BAME student access**

The RNCM, in addition to its own project work, has recognised the need to develop new partners to help tackle the issues of the small number of BAME applicants and entrants, and realises the essential importance of partnership in achieving this culture change. The College recognises that this is a long-term, but vital, ambition and the following strategic collaborations have been initiated to help this area:

- Joint collaborative conference on diversity in composition with BBC Radio 3
- Joint Pathfinder project with the BBC Philharmonic with a specific focus on BAME participants
- Collaboration with London Music Masters to create a new app to tackle unconscious bias, particularly around BAME
- Connections with the Chineke Foundation, who are actively challenging diversity in the Classical Music sector

### **Contextual information**

The RNCM seeks to ensure that all applicants to the College are assessed fairly and holistically, and therefore has recently refined its use of contextual data, to allow a consideration of additional information that provides a more complete picture of the educational and social circumstances that underpin students' applications and performance at audition. The College will use the following types of contextual data as a means of establishing the most in-depth profile of an applicant:

- **Geo-demographic data** – the socio-economic characteristics of an applicant's local area, and the rates of progression to higher education in an applicant's local area
- **School/College data** – the GCSE performance of an applicant's school or college
- **Individual circumstances** – whether an applicant has spent time in local authority care

This information is intended to give an audition panel an holistic picture of an applicant, and the context within which their musical achievements to date have evolved.

### Alignment with other work and funding sources:

It is important to mention the RNCM's junior school (JRNCM), one of the key feeders and drivers for access for underrepresented groups for the College. JRNCM offers a high-quality music education experience on Saturdays to approximately 200 students under 18 each year. The catchment area of attendees extends as far as The Isle of Man, Scarborough and Anglesey. To address the inequalities of instrumental/vocal tuition in pre-tertiary education, the College makes available funds from additional fee income to support pupils from state schools and disadvantaged backgrounds annually, and JRNCM has a culture to encourage all students to progress into higher education. Over recent years JRNCM students supported by the Access Fund have gone on to study at the RNCM and other UK conservatoires, and to study music and other subjects at leading universities in the UK or abroad.

### Financial support:

In order to attempt to reduce any financial barriers to entering the RNCM and to achieve increased access and success for students from the lower quintiles of POLAR4 and IMD, the College will continue to provide the below financial support to applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds. Given the small numbers of students at the RNCM, the OfS Statistical Toolkit is limited in its use. Nevertheless the College sends out regular surveys and interview questions to students to monitor and evidence the effectiveness of the financial support it provides. The respondents have replied noting that the support has enabled them to afford to participate with fellow students, concentrate on studies without worrying about finances and helped them feel less anxious than they would otherwise have felt:

- **Bursaries and scholarships** - the College currently provides scholarship and bursary support to students at a level in excess of £1.2m per annum, from a range of sources, not only to aid access but also success during their time of study. Over the course of this plan, the College is committed to expanding the level of endowments to enable the bursary and scholarship scheme to continue to grow. In line with ambitions to increase the number of students from low participation neighbourhoods, the College will continue to monitor the levels of bursary support allocated and will expect an increase in this area over the coming years.
- **Audition fee refund** - audition fees will continue to be refunded to applicants whose families are in receipt of means-tested state benefits. An audition fee is payable on application through UCAS Conservatoires, the Conservatoires UK Admissions System (formerly CUKAS), which will be refunded. In addition, the College will refund up to £50 of the cost of travel to an RNCM audition to such applicants.
- **Advice Auditions** - the College also provides Advice Auditions to those unable to access specialist support and guidance, providing feedback and an audition fee deduction if they then progress to a formal application.
- **ABRSM financial support** - ABRSM offers six programme-length scholarships each year for students at the College (two of which are available specifically to UK undergraduate students). These scholarships help remove financial barriers to higher education and assist these students in concentrating on their studies. In addition, ABRSM's continuing annual donations have enabled the College to develop significant initiatives over the years that relate specifically to access (and success and progression), directly benefiting students in need and enhancing their employability. Because of the College's strategic connection to ABRSM, it has been able to influence such projects as 'Classical 100', an ABRSM free online resource for bringing classical music to primary schools across the UK.
- **Junior RNCM (JRNCM)** - The College currently provides bursaries to approximately 52% of students entering JRNCM - 40 supported by the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS), and 64 by the College itself. The College also acknowledges that some pupils, especially those playing shortage instruments such as oboe, bassoon, French horn, viola and double bass, may require

additional support and guidance prior to entry to the JRNCM. Funds will continue to be directed towards workshops and other events which raise the aspiration of these young musicians and guide them towards application for the JRNCM when appropriate.

- The College is also committed to the continuation of a fund for instrument purchase in order to address the problem of the inadequacy of instruments for many young musicians. The College will continue to contribute an amount of up to £20,000 per annum into this fund, which will finance the cost of providing good quality musical instruments to JRNCM students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Many of the measures outlined in the table above – such as the Pathfinder scheme and Young Projects – also provide full financial support to students on these programmes.
- External funding received for Learning and Participation projects enables the College to engage more widely and effectively with young people and their families from a BAME background and from the lower quintiles of POLAR4, by offering activities and events free of charge.

### **3.2 Student consultation**

The RNCM is structured to enable and encourage a strong input from the student voice on all matters, including this document, with student representation on all the main committees, including the Board of Governors. There are numerous channels for students from a wide range of backgrounds to present their views, particularly on access and participation. The College works closely and constructively with a very active Students' Union (SU), which offers support to all students whilst at the RNCM. The SU President has an open and regular dialogue with the Principal and senior leadership at the RNCM and represents the students on all of the College's Committees. These range from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programme Boards. S/He is also a member of the Board of Governors. The Principal and SU President jointly chair the Student Experience Forum, which is open to all students and allows them to voice any concerns or questions they may have about pastoral and operational (non-academic) matters.

The RNCMSU has a number of societies which students can join, further encouraging engagement and involvement in student life. These range from health and sports activities to cultural events and professional development, and a recently-formed BAME society. There is an expanded team of SU representatives (Welfare, Diversity, Education, Activities and Community) offering advice, information and opportunities for meetings to any student who wants to discuss any issue.

New students (first year undergraduate and postgraduate) are offered places on the SU Mentoring Scheme prior to the beginning of each year. Each new student is allocated at least one current student to assist them in their transition into becoming a full-time student at the RNCM. The RNCM, together with the SU, organises a 'Health, Safety and Wellbeing Week' each year at the end of October. Student consultation on this document has resulted in the discussion of creating a plan to increase awareness among staff in general about the welfare support available for students, the year tutor system and how to refer a student they might be concerned about. A key part of the discussion was also around the method for including all staff as a key part of the College's pastoral system. These developments will be put in place by the start of this Access plan (2020.21 Academic year).

### **3.3 Evaluation strategy**

#### *Strategic context:*

The RNCM Engage Management Group, which is the driver of the College's main access projects (where the main aims of this Plan reside), discusses evaluation and the effectiveness of measures and programmes on a regular basis. A number of different methods of evaluation and data collection have evolved over previous years. New strategic thinking around evaluation and data will, however, through the course of this plan, commit additional budget investment in this area to secure external, long-term

and more cohesive and holistic evaluation across all the College's access projects and activities. As an interim measure, a new system will also be set up in the coming year to create a better, centralised overview of data in this area, linking more closely to related research activities at the College.

*Programme design:*

At present, evaluation specifically on impact and outcomes is built clearly into the design of most, but not yet all, of the RNCM's access and participation programmes. With its newest programme, Pathfinder, a stronger evidence-based approach has been followed, seeking to ensure that the impact can be fully evaluated, in particular around progression into JRNCM and the RNCM. The College aims to ensure that all of its activity is evaluated in this more systematic way in the future.

*Evaluation design:*

The RNCM currently employs different methodologies for evaluation depending on the nature of the project or activity in question, often dictated by the criteria set by external project funders. At present, evaluation of access projects is undertaken in response to identified gaps and barriers to musical development which then in turn informs future work. It is often both a mix of qualitative and quantitative feedback and may include pre- and post- activity questionnaires, verbal and written feedback, focus groups and case studies, as well as number of participants. The outcomes are fed into an overall monitoring database overseen by the Head of Learning and Participation, which breaks down data on projects into different categories to expedite monitoring against target. The feedback received from the participants - young people, school staff and others - highlights where the College is successful in creating valuable experiences, and feeds directly back into the development of future projects and into the strategic monitoring of the new Access and Participation Strategy.

As part of its NCOP programme the RNCM intends to start collecting data also through HEAT (Higher Education Access Tracker) within the next two years, as soon as it is available for reporting. In addition, by the commencement of this plan in 2020.21, the RNCM will begin to track and monitor participation in its learning and participation programmes more systematically through the Tessitura database used to collect Box Office data. This will enable a more evidence-based approach to evaluation of programmes of activity, ensuring programmes that really deliver the impact and outcomes sought are maintained and developed.

The College has recently engaged an external evaluator to review the pedagogical approach of Pathfinder, with a view to building a similar pedagogical process across all the main flagship Access projects. Next Academic year a separate external evaluator will be embedded in the programme to assess impact, with the long-term aim being to embed an action-research evaluator into the three main programme areas.

*Evaluation implementation:*

Because of the long-term nature of the RNCM's access work, which takes up to 10 years or more to have any impact on recruitment, it has been challenging to create a model to track the longitudinal impact and outcomes of measures. The strategic changes outlined above will enable the College now to create a more reasoned, long-term approach to the evaluation of all its key programmes.

*Learning to shape improvements:*

The RNCM is committed to sharing freely the learning from its access work, both internally at key committee meetings, and externally at conferences and other meetings with partners. It is able to attribute clear impact to certain areas of its work and has a clear strategy to build on best practice. The RNCM has also been proactive in coming forward with an expression of interest to contribute in due course to the work of the Evidence and Impact Exchange.



### **3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan**

The Deputy Principal (Performance and Programmes) has overall strategic responsibility for the RNCM's Access and Participation Plan. The College's internal RNCM Engage Working Group, which is the primary cross-College forum for this work, comprising representatives from JRNCM, Creative Professional Practice, Registry and Learning and Participation, analyses data quarterly, and reviews progress against targets, making changes, where appropriate, to the interventions created. The Deputy Principal reports the outcomes to the College's Executive Committee (twice a year), and through this Committee to the Board of Governors (four times a year), which has expressed strong support for, and interest in, Access and Participation. Students have the opportunity to contribute to the monitoring of the plan through the various committees outlined above.

### **4.Provision of information to students**

Appropriate information about this Access and Participation Plan will be made available and published on the College VLE and website. Additionally, the website includes clear information on all forms of support available at the College. A section of the website, entitled 'Fees and Funding', provides details of tuition fees, audition fees, scholarships and bursaries and external funding sources for prospective and current students. Furthermore, details of the bursary scheme, together with a bursary application form, are sent to all eligible applicants offered a place. The RNCM is completely committed to supporting students from underrepresented groups, and, in order to attempt to reduce cost barriers of entry to HE, will continue to provide financial support for audition costs incurred by applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds.

All UK / EU undergraduate students with an assessed household income of under £40,000 are eligible for a bursary and will receive the award each year of study, as long as they remain eligible. In the academic year 2019/20 the College will provide bursaries of £1,490 for those students in receipt of full state support and a bursary of between £510 and £1,490 for those whose family income is greater than £25,000 but less than £40,000. The 2019/20 full award amount has increased 4.7% on 2018/19 figures. Throughout the course of this plan the College will continue to develop its support in this area, and at a minimum will commit to a similar level of bursary support each year.

---

## **Annex 1 – Variation to Access and Participation Plan 2023/24**

### **1. Introduction to variation**

The recent Incorporated Society of Musicians report (State of the Nation, Feb. 2019) outlines the challenging national picture for music education in the UK, with highly significant falls in the uptake of both GCSE and A-level Music over the past eight years, as well as a steep decline in the number of trained music teachers in the workforce. RNCM research has demonstrated that challenges in transition and progression still exist for those who cannot access opportunities outside of school, whether due to geographical, social, cultural or economic barriers (Henley and Barton 2022).

The primary strategic focus for access and participation at the RNCM is on increasing access of underrepresented students to the institution and to enable pathways for transition and progression into different higher education and employment routes.

The secondary strategic focus for access and participation at the RNCM is on maintaining our excellent record of support for underrepresented students, ensuring that their continuation, progression and success is no different to other students.

#### **1.1 How we will do this**

- We will build on our work with schools to include a programme of work to raise attainment and support transition and progression in a targeted and focused way (our schools strategy)
- We will build on our world-leading degree programmes to develop flexible and diverse provision to cater for a different student population (our academic strategy)
- We will make continuous improvements to our academic and wellbeing support, ensuring successful participation for all students and targeted interventions for underrepresented students as necessary (our student support framework)

#### **1.2 How we will know this works**

- We will ensure our work is evidence-informed so that our education strategy is research-informed, research-driven and research-generating, utilising our institutional strengths in music education research and contributing to knowledge to support other institutions in their work (our music education research strategy)
- We will ensure that we understand how far we are meeting our aims and objectives through both impact and process evaluation (our evaluation programme)

## **2. Measures**

### **2.1 Overview**

Strategic measures around access, success and progression (which are available for all students but are of particular benefit to students from underrepresented groups) are already clearly built into College strategies, in particular its Education Strategy, incorporating the Engage Strategy and embedding Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, with leadership being provided from Board level down, across all senior leadership groups. The approach is operationalised through a matrix of integrated strategic measures:

- Schools Strategy
- Academic Strategy

- Student Support Framework
- Music Education Research
- Evaluation Programme

These strategic measures will ensure that we can meet the Office for Students priorities for Access and Participation for 2023/24.

## 2.2 Alignment with other strategies

As described in our Access and Participation above, the College has a very active Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Forum, comprising staff from across College and a diverse range of students, and has recently refocused its objectives, continuing to provide guidance and challenge, aligning its objectives to key institutional strategies for Education, Research and Artistic Strategy.

## 3. Strategic measures

### 3.1 Schools Strategy

Collaboration with an extensive network of external partners is at the centre of the RNCM's strategy for Access and Participation work. We have developed a framework for our schools strategy based on three areas of work – raising attainment, addressing barriers, and workforce development, carried out over four areas of focus – popular music, brass, voice and instrumental. The schools strategy comprises two elements: what activity we are doing and where we are working. This activity feeds into our Junior RNCM programme, where there is proven success for underrepresented students and considerable bursary support available, which in turn acts as a feeder to our institution as well as other conservatoires and universities.

#### *What activity we are doing*

These areas of focus have been identified as strategic areas to target particular populations of learners, such as white working-class boys, ethnically diverse learners and those from lower income families. Our current RNCM pre-18 programmes, including new work aimed specifically at raising attainment, are outlined in the matrix below.

	Raising attainment	Addressing Barriers	Workforce Development
Popular Music	Young Artists	Young Artists Pathfinder BAME ambassadors	Education Partnership Days (PGCE)
Brass	Engage Brass Young Brass Curriculum Link – Sandbach, Dark Peak	Pathfinder Mentoring BAME ambassadors	Education Partnership Days (PGCE) Engage Brass
Voice	Adopt a School Young Voices Curriculum Link – Sandbach, Dark Peak	Pathfinder Mentoring BAME ambassadors Pathfinder – National Youth Choirs of Great Britain partnership	Education Partnership Days (PGCE)

		BAME ambassadors	
Instrumental	Young Strings Young Projects Curriculum Link – Sandbach, Dark Peak Composing workshops	Pathfinder Mentoring Pathfinder – Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra partnership BAME ambassadors	Education Partnership Days (PGCE)

*Young Artists:* a new collaboration with multi academy trust United Learning to provide a programme of study for popular music. This programme was piloted in Spring/Summer 2022 and launched in September 2022. 50% fully funded places are for underrepresented young people, funded by Sony's Social Justice Fund.

*Engage Brass:* a new intervention involving collaboration with community brass bands to support attainment and raise the quality of provision through workforce development

*Young Brass:* a new programme to be piloted during 2022/23 to raise attainment, show career pathways and break down barriers

*Adopt a School:* building on our existing school visits programme, we will pilot an 'adopt a school' programme to build sustainable raising attainment work. In 2022/23, we are working with three secondary schools, one in our close community, one in Greater Manchester and one in Yorkshire.

*Young Voices:* a programme to raise attainment in singing

*Curriculum Link:* a formal partnership, currently with one secondary school and one music service, to provide mentoring and curriculum support up to key stage 5.

*Pathfinder:* a fully funded, programme of individually tailored activities for young people who experience social, economic and/or cultural barriers to music education. This programme is approaching its fifth year and has been successful in supporting students into and through our Junior RNCM programme and on into undergraduate courses at the RNCM and other HE institutions. Two key partnerships with the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra have enabled us to extend our Pathfinder work beyond the Manchester city region.

*Education Partnership Days (PGCE):* our specialist instrumental teaching PGCE programme, in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University is a key site for workforce development. As well as the PGCE itself, the RNCM hosts termly partner days for all placement schools as part of school INSET training.

*Mentoring Programme:* RNCM students mentor young people from a BAME background. In partnership with the SU BAME society.

*RNCM BAME ambassadors:* a group of BAME international artist ambassadors that can influence and help drive change at the RNCM

We believe strongly that our students should be involved in our Access and Participation work. They are role models for future students and, as many of our students progress into freelance work and employment involving education, they will develop the skills needed to continue vital Access and Participation work after their graduation. RNCM students are actively involved in these programmes either through placement opportunities within the curriculum or as co-curricular work leading to educational gains beyond their degree programme. Evaluation and feedback show us that working with our students in these programmes is one of the key aspiration raisers for the young people we work with.

*Where we are working*

We are currently mapping our Access and Participation activity to create a mechanism for identifying areas at risk of low pre-18 attainment so we can work in a targeted way. It is important that we build partnerships that are meaningful and work in areas where there is a likelihood of success. We are working with the Greater Manchester Civic University Agreement to map education attainment across Greater Manchester and this will feed into the work of GM Higher, using Uniconnect funding, to identify where new interventions are needed. Once we have the Greater Manchester Civic University Agreement map of education attainment, we can overlay the map of our work so we can make decisions as to where we build new partnerships and create a 'cold spot' strategy for work in Greater Manchester.

Beyond Greater Manchester, we are developing new partnerships with Multi Academy Trusts. The National Youth Choirs of Great Britain partnership, mentioned in the matrix above, is in collaboration with a Multi Academy Trust in Yorkshire. We have evaluated this pilot and are now moving to build on this work to create a sustainable intervention.

### *Junior RNCM*

As described in the main Access and Participation plan, the RNCM's junior school (JRNCM) is one of the key feeders and drivers for access for underrepresented groups for the College. JRNCM is a Centre for Advanced Training and offers a high-quality music education experience on Saturdays to approximately 200 students under 18 each year. The catchment area of attendees extends as far as The Isle of Man, Scarborough and Anglesey. To address the inequalities of instrumental/vocal tuition in pre-tertiary education, the College makes available funds from additional fee income to support pupils from state schools and disadvantaged backgrounds annually, and JRNCM has a culture to encourage all students to progress into higher education. Over recent years JRNCM students supported by the Access Fund have gone on to study at the RNCM and other UK conservatoires, and to study music and other subjects at leading universities in the UK or abroad.

### *Raising aspirations*

In addition to targeted work to raise attainment, address barriers and develop the music education workforce, we will continue to provide aspiration raising opportunities, as follows:

*Visit days:* advice and information on higher education including sessions on finance, application forms choosing where to study and a tour of halls of residence.

*Performing arts visit days:* tailor made days to fit a school group and cover areas such as audition technique, confidence building, improvisation, voice projection, stage presence, costume design, set design, stage management, lighting, and production management.

*Family days:* large-scale, whole day events for families to come to the RNCM, see the students in action and experience a day of music making.

*Children's opera:* Annual creative project with RNCM students working with about 160 underrepresented children from four primary schools on a new musical production to be staged in the RNCM Theatre.

*Young explorers concerts:* Orchestral performances designed to support the music curriculum. Each concert is preceded by morning workshops designed to raise awareness of careers in orchestral music, concert production, and music within the curriculum. They also provide an opportunity to meet with and talk to music students, learn about university life and sample a range of orchestral instruments. Schools attend in groups but students can also attend with their families.

*Open rehearsals:* Each year the RNCM works with 4 local schools and bring them into the building to watch rehearsals, meet players, discuss music and ask questions.

*Engage pass:* This ticket scheme is aimed at young people in Greater Manchester from selected postcodes, schools and community groups. The Pass is designed to encourage young people and their families to come along and experience music at the RNCM for free.

*Annual conference:* A day of panel discussions and workshops for up to 500 participants delivered by representatives from leading performing arts institutions.

### **3.2 Academic Strategy**

Building on the work in curriculum, pedagogic and student support described in our main Access and Participation Plan, we are developing our academic strategy to work toward new qualifications that enable underrepresented groups of students to study at conservatoire. We have charted our research strengths, our academic strengths and our reputational strengths to bring together a set of principles for developing new courses. These principles underline the small and specialist nature of our institution, with a focus on applied research that has a direct impact on the industries that we serve underpinning curriculum design, and teaching at the intersection of scholarship and employment in professional standard spaces. Using these principles as a basis for decision-making, we will explore the opportunities for developing technical qualifications. However, this is reliant on our estate and we are therefore focusing on investment in our facilities to ensure that we can provide the most outstanding learning experience.

### **3.3 Student Support Framework**

In 2021/22 we launched our Student Health and Wellbeing Hub. This hub brings together both academic and professional service expertise in the field of student health and wellbeing and creates an integrated service to support students through their degree programmes. Bringing together all our support services, including wellbeing advisers, counsellors, Alexander Technique (support for physical and mental health), language support, learning support, disability support, research in musicians' health and wellbeing and health and wellbeing teaching, in an academic-led hub allows us to provide and tailored support provision for our students that has a direct impact on supporting their academic attainment. The has also allowed us to develop a new student support framework so we can provide targeted interventions for those in need and can provide tailored support for students from our Access and Participation populations.

### **3.4 Music Education Research**

The RNCM has a research strength in the field of Music Education Research. We are using our Music Education Research expertise to engage in knowledge exchange activities to support others in their mission to reduce inequalities in music education as well as underpin and strengthen our own work. Research into the barriers to music education conducted by the College's Professor in Music Education and Director of Programmes, who is the strategic lead for Access and Participation work, has provided the basis for the development of our Engage Strategy for increasing participation in music education, including higher music education. This supports both the Office for Students' Access and Participation priorities as well as the Department for Education's National Plan for Music Education, which now includes providing accessible pathways into higher education and into employment.

The Engage strategy is built on five areas of work:

- Capacity building and sustainability
- Youth Voice
- Partnership working
- Progression routes
- Workforce development

These are directly mapped onto the barriers identified in published research (Henley and Barton 2022 *Time for Change? Recurrent barriers to music education*) and provide the strategic drivers to underpin our schools strategy and build meaningful interventions that will work.

The new work described above in our schools strategy matrix is the result of our Engage Strategy. In addition, during 2022/23, the RNCM are developing a Youth Council to provide youth governance for all activity for young people, including planning and monitoring of our Access and Participation interventions. The Youth Council will bring together representatives from different groups of young people across our junior programmes and our degree programmes and will be chaired by a senior member of the College's Executive Committee. The Youth Council is being developed in partnership with Young Manchester, a charity supporting the growth of young people's voice across the Manchester city region.

### **3.5 Evaluation Programme**

The RNCM believe that our Access and Participation work should be research-informed and research-driven, so we know that the work we do will be successful, but also research-generating, so we can build understanding and learning of what works and how we can move closer to addressing inequalities. This is where our Music Education Research strategy directly impacts our evaluation programme.

The RNCM Engage Planning Group, which is the driver of the College's main access projects (where the main aims of this Plan reside), discusses evaluation and the effectiveness of measures and programmes on a regular basis. A number of different methods of evaluation and data collection have evolved over previous years. New strategic thinking around evaluation and data collection, carried out during 2020/21 and 2021/22, and additional budget investment in this area to secure external, long-term and more cohesive and holistic evaluation across all the College's access projects and activities has been brought together into an evaluation programme, to provide both impact evaluation to understand what the impact of the activities has been on the young person, and process evaluation to understand how the activities are working and how they can be improved.

Our evaluation programme brings together individual activity evaluation with larger, more in-depth evaluation to provide an evidence base to underpin our work. There are three aspects to this programme:

- Embedding evaluation into programme design
- Utilising multiple approaches to produce different types of evidence
- Sharing learning

*Programme design*

Evaluation specifically on impact and outcomes is built clearly into the design of most of the RNCM's access and participation programmes. An action research approach, where evaluation is built into programme design and professional development, has been piloted during 2021/22 and we will build on this approach to develop robust process evaluation. A programme of evaluation activity will be developed to incorporate individual intervention evaluations, evaluations required for the Uniconnect funding, and an overarching evaluation of activity that feeds into our access and participation monitoring.

The following evaluation schedule for our Pathfinder programme demonstrates our new evaluation framework and gives detail of the impact and process evaluation approach.

*What we are evaluating*

Impact evaluation will ascertain to what extent the Pathfinders programme has impacted the participants':

- musical development
- experience of music making
- likelihood of progression within the Pathfinders programme
- likelihood of progression beyond the Pathfinders programme
- influence of Pathfinders programme on take up of other musical development opportunities

In addition, the impact evaluation will also ascertain to what extent the Pathfinders programme has impacted:

- family members and other responsible adults' understanding and value of musical development of their young person
- family members and other responsible adults' engagement with music both within and beyond RNCM
- RNCM tutors' understanding of the barriers that exist to musical development and ways of working to reduce these.

Process evaluation will monitor Pathfinders work on an ongoing basis in order to:

- understand the ways that tutors respond to challenges faced by young people over time
- understand what is working well
- understand what is not working well and to address issues as they arise

The process evaluation will also:

- provide a deep understanding of the pedagogical approach of the Pathfinders programme
- develop Pathfinders tutors' critical reflection skills so as to constantly improve process evaluation

*How we are evaluating*

The data sets required for this evaluation programme are:

<b>Evaluation phase</b>	<b>Data sets</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Baseline	Demographic information: Standard equal opps monitoring form. Registration information.	To understand who the participants are
	Starting points statement (participant)	To understand what the participants want to achieve



	Starting points assessment (tutor)	To provide the musical starting points in relation to musical development and enable a needs assessment to take place.
Process	Action Research Reflections (tutor)	To provide ongoing reflection at half termly points. Proforma with combination of closed and open questions.
	Action Research Evidence (participants)	To provide ongoing participant reflections. In-session evidence might include conversations, journals, vox pops. Tutor/manager/student-led as appropriate
	Action Research Reviews (manager)	To review tutor and participant reflections at end of term to review term and set objectives for next term.
	Observations	To understand the pedagogical approach.
Impact	Participant – response to a creative task	To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their progress. To assess engagement with music beyond Pathfinders. To draw out aspirations for future development.
	Tutor assessment	To assess whether needs outlined in baseline have been met. Report form.
	Family member/responsible adult survey	To assess how far Pathfinders has influenced those around participant.
	Tutor interview	To ascertain impact of process evaluation on tutors' work. To build understanding of barriers and ways to overcome these.

Datasets are analysed and evaluation reports are prepared and considered by the RNCM Engage Planning group. A publications plan is in train to enable us to disseminate the learnings from our evaluation programme.

---

**Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees**

\*course type not listed

**Inflationary statement:**

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

**Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	£9250 fee (2017-18 entry onwards)	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
Other	*	*

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Royal Northern College of Music

Provider UKPRN: 10007837

## Investment summary

The OFS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OFS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

### Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OFS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£346,095.00	£347,838.00	£349,607.00	£351,402.00	£353,224.00
Access (pre-16)	£180,739.00	£181,955.00	£183,189.00	£184,441.00	£185,712.00
Access (post-16)	£33,445.00	£33,651.00	£33,860.00	£34,072.00	£34,288.00
Access (adults and the community)	£101,637.00	£101,744.00	£101,853.00	£101,963.00	£102,075.00
Access (other)	£30,274.00	£30,488.00	£30,705.00	£30,926.00	£31,149.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£220,000.00	£230,000.00	£240,000.00	£251,000.00	£262,000.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£5,757.00	£5,826.00	£5,901.00	£5,979.00	£6,061.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£1,596,805.00	£1,612,230.00	£1,569,040.00	£1,584,465.00	£1,584,465.00
<b>Access investment</b>	21.7%	21.6%	22.3%	22.2%	22.3%
<b>Financial support</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	22.0%	21.9%	22.7%	22.6%	22.7%

