

But independent schools have fought back, arguing that the performing arts help to shape the education of all children, not just budding thespians and not just in the independent sector.

They point to the many schools in the state sector that have outstanding facilities themselves and to the huge importance of the performing arts as part of the UK's creative industries, which generate more than £84.1 billion a year for the economy, (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2016).

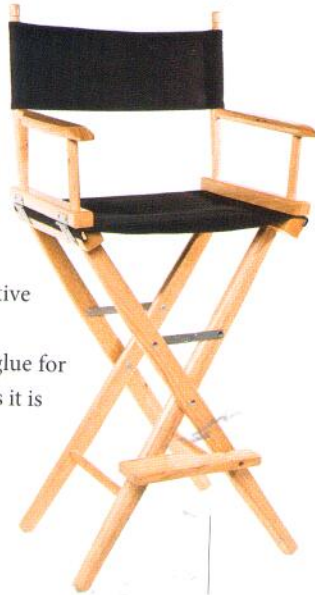
### Not an issue of fees

Deputy Head of Hurtwood House School, near Dorking, James Baker says: "I've rarely met anyone who just builds capital projects to keep up with another school.

Spending millions of pounds is not really relevant to what goes on. Here, we have a theatre that was built 45 years ago.

Hurtwood was ahead of its time in valuing the academic and creative equally – just as some schools use sport as a glue for their community, for us it is the performing arts."

And Bridget O'Brien, Director of Drama at Gresham's in Norfolk, another school



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*James Baker, Deputy Head, Hurtwood House, Surrey*

renowned for its performing arts and alma mater of actress Olivia Colman, agrees:

"This is not a fee issue – buildings are supported through sponsorship and fundraising, and are there in the recognition of developing a wider liberal arts education that encourages students to be active participants in the performing arts.

"School theatres are part of a school's ethos to offer each student an education that stretches beyond the classroom."

Across the UK, there are now also hundreds of independent-state school partnerships in the performing arts, which see facilities and expertise shared.

Latest Independent Schools Council figures show that 45% of the 1,301 schools surveyed for its 2017 census are involved in a dramatic partnership with a state school – with a third of them hosting joint events and/or sharing their hall or theatre space.

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