

working with Kevin Whately who plays Lewis, and all of the crew.  Inspector Morse is on Central tonight at 8pm.

## Pupils suffer when arts are bottom of the class

**Peter Wynne-Willson looks at growing fears over the future of arts education in our schools.**

Changes in schools have damaged the arts, and a great deal more damage is threatened, but the same changes also provide real opportunities.

This was the mixed picture painted by Professor Ken Robinson at a recent conference launching the Movement for Arts Education. Professor Robinson is uniquely well-placed to know, as the head of the Arts Education Department at the University of Warwick, and a man whose commitment to his cause is immediately obvious.

"I feel strongly, it really does matter. Parents do not in general worry about national education policy, but we all worry about our own children's education. It is now increasingly possible for a child to go through an education which is impoverished, and partial."

The National Curriculum does not include the arts as a core subject. Music and art are included as subsidiary subjects, drama is within English, and dance an option within PE. But although their presence is not properly safe-guarded, it is quite possible for a school to have a full arts policy, within and alongside the main curriculum.

"At least the Arts are in there," says Professor Robinson, "The National Curriculum is committed to pupils' cultural development as one of its main aims."

"The problem is many schools simply follow the curriculum literally, taking a narrower view than they need."

The conference, held at the Royal Festival Hall in London, heard a depressing litany of organisations and artists whose work in education is threatened.

Theatre-in-education companies, school orchestras, peripatetic music teachers, local authority arts advisers, all are disappearing, many have already gone. Resources are stretched throughout the education system, and often the arts appear low on priorities.

Wolverhampton and Warwickshire are among more than 20 authorities which now give no grants to students at dance or drama schools, leaving them to pay their own fees, sometimes thousands of pounds.

But in the face of this, Ken Robinson is doggedly positive and pleads for unity.

"One of the problems is the education changes have been divisive, school against school, subject against subject. Also, the debate is polarised. Either you only believe in the three Rs or you are a 60s progressive. In fact, most people would like to see a balanced system, which includes the arts."

He doesn't see what is happening as a campaign against the arts, but as the result of a restricted idea of people's needs.

"You seldom hear arguments against arts education. It gets squeezed by concentration on alternative views. Education is seen as exclusively academic, vocational or managerial. There is a place for all three."

Peter Wynne-Willson is the former artistic director of Big Brum Theatre-in-Education Company.

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**Professor Ken Robinson**  
University of Warwick

# Arts in Schools



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**pwynne**  
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