

The Keyboard Framework

Pupils should be offered broad and balanced programmes of study that promote and develop musical playing and singing. They should be given opportunities to:

- ▶ *express their musical ideas and feelings*
- ▶ *use their creativity, imagination and intuition*
- ▶ *develop their skills, knowledge and understanding*
- ▶ *reflect on and evaluate their progress*

through the interrelated areas of:

A. listening and internalising

including:

- i listening to music with concentration in and out of lessons, building on their experiences
- ii having a clear aural perception of the music to be played
- iii recognising and discriminating between the musical elements of pulse, pitch, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, texture, and tone colour
- iv recognising and conveying structural elements in their playing
- v making links between sound and symbols when using notation

B. making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique

including:

- i posture and freedom of movement
- ii registration
- iii articulation
- iv fingering
- v right hand
- vi left hand
- vii co-ordination and balance

C. creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas

including:

- i improvising expressively
- ii applying their instrumental skills in composing
- iii interpreting music, developing a personal response

D. playing music

including:

- i working out how to play music by ear
- ii repeating musical patterns and phrases accurately from memory
- iii playing pieces in a variety of styles with fluency, expression and understanding
- iv memorising pieces that have been learnt
- v reading and playing music at sight*

E. playing music with others

including:

- i listening, watching, responding and leading
- ii contributing to collective decisions, including interpretation

F. performing and communicating

including:

- i interpreting and communicating the character of the music
- ii evaluating their performances and making improvements

* where appropriate

Programme of Study 1

NQF entry level/Pre-grade 1

Learning objectives

A. listening and internalising

Pupils should learn to:

i listen to music with concentration in and out of lessons, enjoying their experiences and building on them

ii have some aural perception of the music to be played

iii recognise and discriminate between the musical elements of pulse, pitch, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, texture, and notice changes of tone quality and colour

iv recognise and convey in their playing simple rhythmic and melodic patterns, e.g. repetition of main tune

v make links between sounds and symbols when using notation, e.g. shape of the melody

During programme 1, pupils aim to control sounds on the keyboard. They start to develop technical and musical skills. They learn how to play simple pieces, enjoying their experiences and building on them with increasing confidence.

Programme of Study 1

NQF entry level/Pre-grade 1

Possible teaching activities

A. listening and internalising

- Ask pupils to listen with concentration to different pieces of music in their own time and then describe them in the lesson, including aspects of dynamics, instrumentation, character, etc.
- Encourage pupils to jot down details of favourite pieces in their notebooks.

- Perform a piece to be learnt to pupils. Ask them to describe its character.

- Ask pupils to tap the pulse of music played by the teacher or other pupils.
- Ask pupils to respond physically to music being played, i.e. moving in time or beating time to music with a regular pulse. Repeat at different tempi.
- Go through the piece again with pupils, using gestures or actions to indicate rests.
- Help pupils to play/sing short, simple rhythmic/melodic phrases by ear.
- Ask pupils to identify aurally whether the chord feature is engaged or not, and find the split point.
- Play an auto-accompaniment with occasional chord changes. Ask pupils to indicate where changes occur, e.g. by raising a hand.
- Ask pupils simple questions about pulse, pitch, rhythm, dynamics, etc.

- Ask pupils to sing songs they know well, singing some phrases in their heads at a given signal from the teacher. When pupils sing aloud again, they should be singing at the correct pitch and pulse.
- Ask pupils to sing the final note to complete a melodic phrase played/sung by the teacher.

- Ask pupils how many phrases there are in a short piece. Where do they start and finish?
- Listen to other short pieces, e.g. 'Hot Cross Buns', and ask pupils to indicate when the main tune is repeated: count the number of times it is repeated and describe what happens in between.

- Using notation, ask pupils to play/sing or clap short phrases of a piece and count silent bars in their heads, e.g. bars 1-2 clapped/played/sung, bars 3-4 counted and bars 5-6 clapped/played/sung.
- Using notation, ask pupils to describe the main features of a piece before playing/singing it – e.g. shape of melody and obvious repetitions.
- Play a familiar piece incorrectly. Ask pupils to spot the differences.

Points to note

It is important that listening is approached in a relaxed and enjoyable way.

Listening games can be linked to all the pieces being learnt in the early stages.

Ensure that pupils understand the difference between tempo, pulse and rhythm.

Further ideas in developing aural acuity can be found in the approaches of Kodaly and Dalcroze (Eurhythmics).

Pupils should learn from the earliest stages to recognise whether registration is correctly set. They should be given reassurance and help if they experience difficulties.

The main aim is to internalise the sound before relating it to a symbol.

In the first instance, it helps if the penultimate note is either the leading note or the supertonic.

There are many opportunities to use a wide range of musical styles from around the world.

Learning objectives

B. making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique

Pupils should learn to:

- i posture and freedom of movement
 - play with ease and control:
 - developing an appropriate posture
 - developing appropriate forearm, wrist and hand positions, and a hand shape incorporating naturally curved fingers

- ii keyboard geography and registration
 - make creative and musically expressive choices by:
 - understanding the geography of the instrument and the layout of its basic controls
 - applying given registration directions (selecting voices, rhythms, adjusting the volume and tempo controls)

- iii articulation
 - distinguish between legato and non-legato articulation
 - shape short melodic phrases

- iv fingering
 - recognise and use finger numbering
 - use appropriate fingering, initially within a single hand position
 - use appropriate fingering for left-hand chords

Possible teaching activities

B. making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique

posture and freedom of movement

- Explain to pupils the importance of correct set-up procedures. Ensure that keyboards are set up appropriately and that pupils strictly observe health and safety rules.
- Emphasise the importance of instruments being at a suitable height and distance when sitting/standing.
- Demonstrate sitting and standing in a variety of positions, asking pupils to note how posture affects the position of the forearm and wrist. Explain that the forearm should be parallel with the floor.
- Ask pupils to place their hands palm-up in their laps, fully relaxed (fingers will curve naturally). Then turn hands over and place them on the keys, ensuring fingers are curved appropriately.

keyboard geography and registration

- Invite pupils to explore the keyboard, asking them to play all the groups of two and/or three black notes, helping them to recognise the pattern.
- Play a variety of intervals, asking pupils to identify octaves aurally when they are played.
- Play a game where pupils locate notes in different octaves, naming and playing them as quickly as possible.
- Ask pupils to 'say and play' the musical alphabet on the keyboard, both ascending and descending, using a variety of sounds.
- Show pupils how to engage and select auto-accompaniments. Then ask them to set up and play a variety of auto-accompaniments and discuss the effects.

articulation

- Perform a short piece, asking pupils to identify whether staccato or legato articulation is used. Discuss how this affects the character of the music.
- Ask pupils to experiment with different articulations within pieces, listening and discussing how this affects the character.
- Help pupils to develop their ability to play legato, 'walking, not jumping', by using appropriate finger exercises.

fingering

- Explain the conventional system for finger numbering on both hands, checking pupils' understanding by asking them to use or identify certain fingers.
- Monitor pupils' use of all fingers while they play in a closed five-note hand position.
- Explain that finger numbering should only be used as a means of establishing the correct hand position.

Points to note

Ensure that the layout of the teaching space is suitable and safe before pupils arrive. It helps group communication if instruments are arranged facing each other rather than the wall.

Particular care needs to be taken if keyboards are placed on desks or tables since pupils should not sit too low or stand too high.

Using suitable keyboard stands can aid the development of a good posture.

The use of stickers, marker pens and cardboard templates should normally be discouraged.

When introducing the different voices on the keyboard, discuss the character of each sound. Talk about the acoustic and electronic sounds after which they are named.

Use imaginative analogies where possible when introducing legato, e.g. passing the baton in a relay race.

Singing and speech can be used to illustrate the difference between various articulations.

Drawing lines from one note to another using coloured pencils (as in dot-to-dot books) may help to focus concentration.

Pupils sometimes use written fingering as an aid to note identification. This is counter-productive to the development of music reading because the eye tends to be distracted away from the notation. Avoid using unnecessary fingering.

Learning objectives

B. making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique

contd...

Pupils should learn to:

- v right hand
 - develop some independence of fingers
 - play in a closed five-note hand position

- vi left hand

- play easy chord progressions, using major triads in single-finger mode, ensuring chords are clearly detached

- vii co-ordination and balance

- play with a secure pulse:
 - short pieces co-ordinating and integrating a simple right-hand melody and left-hand single-finger chords
 - keeping time with a simple auto-accompaniment (e.g. eight-beat)
 - listening to and controlling the balance between melody and accompaniment

C. creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas

Pupils should learn to:

- i improvise expressively by exploring different sounds and creating satisfying repeated musical patterns or phrases

Possible teaching activities

B. making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique

contd...

right hand

- Teach pupils to play exercises in the closed five-note position evenly and equally. Draw attention to the relative ease/difficulty of using each finger independently.

left hand

- Show pupils how single-finger chords can be played either by literally hopping with a single finger or by using a combination of fingers. Highlight the merits of each approach. Explain that using different fingers for each chord encourages a well-formed hand shape and finger independence, whereas using just one finger ensures chords are properly detached and encourages mobility of the wrist and forearm.
- Ask pupils to play chord progressions using major triads in single-finger mode, ensuring that the chords are properly detached. Demonstrate that if chords are not detached the keyboard may not respond correctly.
- Play the right-hand melody of a known piece and ask pupils to play the left-hand chords only.

co-ordination and balance

- Ask pupils to play a piece (in turn) with both right-hand melody and left-hand chords. While one pupil plays, another can help the player's visual focus by following the notation with a pencil.
- Repeat this with auto-accompaniment engaged. Teachers and pupils can help the player by clapping time, singing, counting aloud or playing the melody together in unison.
- Demonstrate the importance of achieving a satisfactory balance between melody and accompaniment. Show pupils how to use appropriate registration settings and devices to help where appropriate, e.g. reducing the auto-accompaniment volume.

Points to note

Attention can be drawn to the muscular and bone construction of the hand, and the comparative weakness of the fourth and fifth fingers.

Just as pianists begin to learn finger technique playing individual notes, so keyboard players can use single-finger chords. Major triads are recommended first.

Unless clearly explained, using minor and/or seventh chords in single-finger mode can be counter-productive to pupils developing a proper understanding of the formation of chords.

Describing the lower part of the keyboard as 'hot' and the upper part as 'cool' may help to ensure that chords are detached while the melody remains legato!

For instruments with touch response, it may be necessary to disengage this function so as to achieve an appropriate balance between melody and auto-accompaniment.

These activities are most useful when pupils bring their own keyboards to the lesson rather than using school instruments.

The teacher can promote pupils' confidence by:

- demonstrating how to experiment with musical ideas
- providing step-by-step assistance with models, patterns and procedures
- emphasising the open-ended nature of the activity – all outcomes are valued and enjoyed

C. creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas

- Repeating an eight-bar chord pattern, play a two-bar 'question' phrase, asking pupils to respond in turn by improvising a two-bar 'answer' in time with the auto-accompaniment. Initially, pupils can improvise rhythms on one note, then they can progress to five-note patterns. Lengthen both question and answer phrases to four bars.
- Ask pupils to explore musical sounds on the keyboard in response to an imaginative or pictorial idea without using auto-accompaniment.
- Repeat the process, selecting and discarding ideas, aiming for musical coherence.
- Lead pupils in a discussion about the musical effect of their improvisations.

Learning objectives

C. creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas

contd...

Pupils should learn to:

- ii make use of instrumental skills when beginning to compose¹

- iii begin to interpret music with some expression and with a sense of its intended effect; talk about its mood and how it is played and suggest improvements

D. playing music

Pupils should learn to:

- i work out **by ear** how to play short, easy phrases from well-known tunes

- ii **repeat** with accuracy short, easy rhythmic and melodic patterns by playing back from memory

¹Instrumental teachers should harness the composing interests of pupils wherever it is appropriate. This may be as an integral part of the instrumental curriculum or to support the pupils in other areas of the National Curriculum.

Possible teaching activities

C. creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas

contd...

- Ask pupils to extend a four-bar tune to eight bars, using notation where appropriate. Share tunes within a group, with pupils playing each other's work.
 - Ask pupils to compose short pieces with a given stimulus, e.g. a story, poem, theme or picture. Discuss the outcomes. Initially, this could consist of asking pupils to write down their improvisations as an aid to memory, perhaps using their own forms of shorthand as a precursor to staff notation.
 - Provide opportunities for pupils to perform their compositions to others.
 - Encourage pupils to use the keyboard in composing activities in the classroom, applying technical skills already acquired.
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- Show pupils how to experiment with different ways of playing pieces, perhaps in relation to dynamics and tempi. Ask them to listen and decide which way of playing is most appropriate to the character of the music.
 - Involving all pupils in the group, discuss ways of improving the interpretation, particularly in pieces that have few expressive indications.

D. playing music

- Choosing appropriate starting notes, play short, simple tunes with a limited range of notes, e.g. television jingles, folk-tunes, nursery rhymes. Ask pupils to select one and, on the keyboard, work out separate phrases by ear, gradually building up the complete tune.
 - Ask pupils to play the complete tune expressively to others.
 - As an extension activity, ask pupils to teach the tune to other pupils.
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- Perform a piece and ask pupils to respond to the music by clapping, tapping or moving with a regular pulse and at a variety of tempi.
 - Repeat, with pupils substituting a different sound, gesture or action to indicate rests.
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- Engage pupils in 'copycat playing', either with or without notation, maintaining a secure pulse and rhythm. Incorporate different musical effects, such as contrasts of dynamics and articulation.
 - Ask pupils to sing easy intervals and match them to notes on the keyboard where appropriate.

Points to note

Through composing, pupils are able to explore the music from the inside. Composing can be used to develop performing skills, knowledge and understanding. Productive links with general classroom work should be made wherever possible.

It may be necessary to store pupils' ideas for them since their creative imagination may run ahead of their ability to write down their ideas, at least where staff notation is concerned.

Interpretation is the creative dimension of performing. Pupils should be encouraged to make expressive musical decisions, either intuitively or by evaluating their work. The teacher can help by being an informed listener, giving feedback and encouragement.

This is not as difficult as it sounds. Many pupils experiment with tunes they know before starting formal instrumental lessons.

Train pupils to count out loud, including a bar before starting (watching the syncro-start lights).

There is always scope to design new musical games in order to develop pupils' short-term memory. These can often be invented together as the activity proceeds, building on prior learning.

At first, limit the phrase to be copied to possibly two bars of 2/4 or equivalent, using only two notes.

Learning objectives

D. playing music

contd...

Pupils should learn to: iii **play** short, easy pieces from notation / symbols, conveying the character of the music

iv **memorise** with accuracy selected short, simple pieces from their repertoire

Possible teaching activities

D. playing music

contd...

- Select pieces for pupils to learn, from a range of different times and places, and in a variety of styles. Take into account:
 - the musical and technical skills that will be needed
 - opportunities to develop musical ideas
 - pupils' prior experience
 - their personal response to the music
 - their general musical interests
- Teach pupils to practise and play pieces that bring together right-hand melody, left-hand single-finger chords and auto-accompaniment. (See the holistic approach outlined in section 1.)
The following approach includes a range of activities that contribute to this process:
 - perform the piece, encouraging attentive listening. Repeat with pupils, following the notation and clapping the note values
 - ask pupils to play the opening phrase of the melody by ear. Repeat as necessary
 - ask pupils to read and play the melody only. With group teaching, pupils may be given a short time to practise the melody using headphones. Give particular help where it is needed
 - play the auto-accompaniment, asking pupils to play the melody together in unison and/or octaves
 - ask pupils to practise the piece with both hands together, without activating the auto-accompaniment rhythm; explain the importance of breaking down various skills when practising
 - ask pupils to play the tune and chords with auto-accompaniment, individually, in unison as a group, and taking turns at the auto-accompaniment. Discuss the outcomes
 - perform a larger arrangement of the piece, e.g. including registration changes and some improvisation. Lead a discussion about arranging
 - ask pupils to arrange the piece and take turns performing to each other, discussing their approaches and interpretation
 - help groups to make ensemble arrangements of pieces, which may include pupils taking turns and playing together
 - ask pupils to continue playing and practising pieces and to memorise them
- Help pupils to memorise selected pieces from their repertoire by:
 - building up short sections at a time
 - identifying and remembering rhythmic patterns and the shape of the melody
 - noting where repetitions and contrasts occur
 - focusing on expressive details
- From time to time, teach a short piece away from the music, only referring to the notation once it is learnt.
- Encourage pupils to play from memory to other pupils.

Points to note

Pupils can use a pattern of these activities as the foundation for their personal practice routine, for example by following different steps when learning a new piece, e.g:

- playing just the right-hand tune
- playing the tune in time with a drum-beat
- practising tune and chords together, but without engaging the auto-accompaniment rhythm
- putting together the tune, chords and auto-accompaniment
- experimenting and creating an arrangement of the piece

These activities can be used and adapted across all five programmes of study.

Playing from memory is an important and realistic expectation in learning pieces from the earliest stages. Promote confidence by making memorisation of whole pieces a natural part of the learning process. Bear in mind that they are unlikely to be memorised properly until the performance is technically fluent.

Some objectives are:

- to strengthen pupils' confidence
- to focus on the expressive qualities of the music
- to enable pupils to communicate more freely without having the constraints of notation

Learning objectives

D. playing music

contd...

- Pupils should learn to:*
- v read and play **at sight** short, simple phrases at a regular pulse; begin to make links between sound and symbol

E. playing music with others

- Pupils should learn to:*
- i play with others, demonstrating some basic ensemble skills by listening, watching and keeping in time with the group

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- ii explore and discuss the character of the music and the expressive possibilities
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Possible teaching activities

D. playing music

contd...

- Play an auto-accompaniment and lead pupils in clapping (playing a percussion instrument or repeated keyboard note) a range of rhythms, alternating between flash cards. Include rhythms to be encountered in pieces, encouraging pupils to listen and stay in time with the auto-accompaniment.
- Also use flash cards for pitch recognition. Ask pupils to name notes and find them on the keyboard. Devise games that help them to develop instant recall of notes and rhythms, heightening musical memory.
- Provide groups of simple four-bar exercises to be read and played at sight. Each group should introduce a new element: hand positions, range of notes, key, rhythm, registration, etc. The pieces (which should be in a five-finger position) are in common time, using simple note values and rhythms previously introduced using flash cards.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to sight-read together in unison with a conductor, or in time with an auto-accompaniment, played by the teacher.

E. playing music with others

- Ask pupils to adjust their volume controls to balance with others when playing together.
- Suggest pupils select contrasting voices, listening to the effect this has on the balance. Ensure that all the players can be clearly heard above the auto-accompaniment.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to play a simple separate part within group pieces.

- Discuss the mood of the music and how it can be conveyed.
- With pupils, assess their ensemble playing, identifying strengths and areas for further development. Make a recording for this purpose, if appropriate.

Points to note

The maxim 'sound before symbol' is as important now as ever. Reading notation is a means to making music, not an end in itself.

Different forms of notation can be used, e.g. staff, graphic, as an aid to learning. Consider carefully whether notation is appropriate in music from aural/oral traditions.

Help pupils to gain enthusiasm for learning pieces, using notation when appropriate. Ensure that its use is encouraging rather than discouraging.

'Sight-reading' work should be integrated with other aspects of pupils' development so that the benefits of simultaneous learning can be maximised.

In addition to their lessons, all pupils should be provided with opportunities for participation in ensembles. By playing with others, they are likely to:

- increase their motivation and interest
- quicken their rate of progress
- widen their performing skills
- improve their personal and social skills

Using auto-accompaniments introduces ensemble playing skills even while playing alone! Pupils develop the ability to listen to and respond to a rhythmic lead, pick up cues, stay in time and establish a good balance between melody and accompaniment.

Learning objectives

F. performing and communicating

Pupils should learn to:

- i perform music to others, e.g. parents / carers, teachers and friends, demonstrating an awareness of the mood of the music

- ii discuss the quality of their playing and, with guidance, learn from their performance

Possible teaching activities

F. performing and communicating

- Organise opportunities for informal performances in lessons and for parents / carers, relatives and friends at home.
- Ask pupils to revise pieces already learnt and to perform them with expression.
- Encourage pupils to perform from memory where this will enhance confidence, musical awareness and communication.
- Demonstrate to pupils where and how to stand or sit.
- Help pupils to achieve a musical balance by using on-board volume controls for small-scale performances.

- Help pupils to evaluate each performance and suggest ways of making improvements and building up confidence. Promote self-evaluation as much as possible.
- Encourage pupils to develop their own library of pieces that can be repeated in future.

Points to note

Performance is a key skill that should be a natural part of the learning process from the earliest lessons. Simulated performances in instrumental lessons are particularly beneficial, helping pupils to gain confidence.

Allow plenty of time so that the music is thoroughly prepared.

Pupils should be well prepared for every performance so that it is a positive experience for everyone.

Pieces need to be chosen with care so that they are well within pupils' capabilities.

References to nerves can be counter-productive. If pupils are thoroughly prepared, however, nerves can be viewed as an aid to concentration.

Encourage pupils to have a sense of anticipation and enjoyment about performing.

On-going assessment is an integral part of successful teaching and learning. Opportunities for formal assessments need to be built into the activities. Informal assessments, however, are to be encouraged throughout the teaching, prompted by effective teacher-pupil discussion.

Programme of Study 2

NQF 1 foundation level/Grade 1

Learning objectives

A. listening and internalising

Pupils should learn to:

- i listen to music with concentration in and out of lessons, enjoying their experiences and building on them
- ii have some aural perception of the music to be played, including some feeling of the expressive characteristics
- iii recognise and discriminate between the musical elements, including aspects of articulation, phrasing and quality of tone
- iv recognise and convey simple structures in their playing, e.g. repetition of rhythmic and melodic phrases
- v hear some elements of the music internally when using notation/symbols, e.g. tempo, pitch, rhythm, dynamics

During programme 2, pupils build on the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired in programme 1. They extend their musical and technical skills, play a wider range of repertoire and communicate the expressive character of the music.

B. making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique

Pupils should learn to:

- i posture and freedom of movement
 - play with ease and control:
 - maintaining an appropriate posture
 - maintaining appropriate forearm, wrist and hand positions, and a hand shape incorporating naturally curved fingers