

A Music Mark Member Consultation on a Model Music Curriculum

MUSIC MARK MEMBERS SAY:



Guidance should be appropriate for each Key Stage, with a mixed-ability teaching workforce in mind

Advice should be provided on how to select music, rather than what music to select



If a list of repertoire is to be provided, it must be revised and refreshed regularly to allow for a flexible curriculum

Teachers should be made aware their Music Education Hub can provide expertise and resources



Curriculum must link into refreshed National Plan for Music Education

This Consultation Paper contains:

- I. Introduction and Context
- II. Membership Face to Face Consultation and Online Forum
- III. Teachers' Survey
- IV. Conclusion

I. Introduction and Context

Bridget Whyte, CEO of The UK Association of Music Education - Music Mark, was invited in January to join the Department of Education's (DfE) Expert Panel for the development of a Model Music Curriculum. The concept of the DfE producing a 'Model Curriculum' is not new, there are in fact already three models – English, Maths and Science. The model, published by the DfE, acts as additional, non-statutory guidance to help teachers teach the existing National Curriculum for that subject. In the case of Music, although there has been much debate about the process of creating the guidance, the idea of having further advice, especially for non-specialist teachers at primary level, has been cautiously welcomed.

The timeline for creating the Model Music Curriculum was originally set to take 6 months, involving the expert panel and an appointed 'drafting' team. The complexity of the task, the recognition of a need to extend the pool of experts being consulted, and a desire by the Schools Minister for it to be detailed enough to be of value to all teachers has however resulted in a prolonged development phase. The original timetable provided a two-week window for 'wider consultation' in late April early May, this has now been pushed back to the autumn. Before the delay was agreed, Music Mark prepared for and advertised a series of Member consultation opportunities to ensure Bridget Whyte could confidently represent the Membership in her role on the Expert Panel. It was agreed with the DfE and Chair of the Expert Panel that the consultation would take place as planned, with feedback being given as the process continued.

Music Mark therefore undertook a series of consultations involving its members over a 3-week period between the 24th April and 13th May. The consultation included three face-to-face facilitated discussions, an online forum and a survey. In total **230 people participated in the consultation – over 60% of which were classroom teachers**. Some additional 1-2-1 conversations and discussion as part of other meetings also took place and whilst there are no formal notes of these, the contributions reflected the general consensus of the more structured consultation. All direct quotes from our members drawn from the consultation are presented in this document in italics.

The data collected has provided both qualitative and quantitative data which it is hoped will support the Expert Panel in its ongoing work in drafting the non-statutory guidance.

II. Membership Face to Face Consultation and Online Forum

Music Mark’s consultation meetings and online forum aimed to get opinions from music educators – classroom teachers, visiting music instrumental teachers, and others working in the Music Education Sector (including managers of Music Services and Hub Lead or Partner organisations, and companies who provide resources and services to the sector) – around what the guidance might include and how detailed it might be.

The questions used to encourage discussion were developed in close consultation with the ABRSM who were appointed by the DfE to draft the text as directed by the Expert Panel.

At the face-to-face discussions the first question asked aimed to get groups talking. Reminding delegates that there were many existing guides to delivering the National Curriculum which they could think about, and they were asked ‘*What does a great model music curriculum look, feel and sound like?*’. The responses across the two meetings were varied, but it was noted that key words included ‘Flexible’, ‘Musical’, ‘Relevant’ and ‘Accessible’. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: What does a great model music curriculum look, feel and sound like?



NOTE: The word cloud above is taken from feedback given in the face-to-face meetings

In the formal consultation sessions in Northampton and Gateshead, and as part of the online forum discussion, the delegates considered the proposed four pillars of musical learning which have been developed by the Expert Panel/Drafting team:

1. Understanding
2. Skills
3. Experiences
4. Knowledge

Initially, there was concern that by identifying these four areas of learning there was the possibility that they would be covered by teachers independently of one another:

- *....the four strands are dangerous – knowledge without understanding is rote learning..... no understanding without experience or knowledge without making.*
- *By splitting into 4 areas are we not making artificial barriers?*
- *The interrelation between these and the understanding of that interrelation must be stated*

However, it was also noted that by linking them together you could demonstrate the complexity of musical learning and the importance of covering all four:

- *Skills and knowledge – taught through experiences – result in understanding*

What was clear was that musical learning should not take place without making music, although the learning needed to be at the heart of all activity.

- *Music is a doing subject*
- *Use music to talk more musically*
- *Skills not content focus*

Because we allowed for some free discussion or comment in our consultation there were also a few independent suggestions or points raised which were of interest:

- It is important to provide the opportunity for pupil voice in musical learning. This was picked up particularly by those discussing musical learning at Key Stage 3
- As the panel continue to consider the guidance, it must ensure that whatever is written considers how the curriculum is taught to all children and young people, regardless of ability.
 - *Just a plea here.... that any Model Curriculum references inclusion at the point of writing, not as an add on..... referencing inclusive approaches could help to make it a forward thinking, modern facing document.*
- *Music learning is NOT linear – any Model Music Curriculum needs to reflect this.*

In summary, the key recommendations that arose from the face-to-face meetings and online forum were:

1. Guidance should be appropriate for each Key Stage
2. Advice should be provided on how to select music
3. If a list of repertoire is to be provided, it should be revised and refreshed to allow for a flexible curriculum
4. Teachers should be made aware their Music Education Hub can provide expertise and resources

1. Guidance should be appropriate for each Key Stage

One of the key points which was made throughout the consultation was the challenge of providing useful guidance to a very mixed workforce of teachers. It was highlighted that at Key Stages 1 and 2 many, if not most, teachers are not music specialists and therefore the guidance that they require needs to reflect this. However at Key Stage 3 those consulted agreed that assumption should be made that the teachers will be music specialists. Their skills and knowledge may vary, but there should be no ‘dumbing down’ of guidance at this level.

2. Advice should be provided on how to select music

There was considerable debate about repertoire – whether the guidance should provide examples of music to listen to, learn and perform. Whilst there was recognition of a need to give teachers – especially non-specialists – help in choosing appropriate music, there was **real concern about providing a list of ‘set works’**. By doing so it was observed that there was every chance teachers would consider the listed works as the only music to teach – including teachers who had existing schemes of work and used a broad range of repertoire – as by specifying them in a DfE publication would seem to state that these pieces were endorsed by the DfE.

- *Examples will become the canon*
- *Examples will result in a lack of variety*
- *Whilst this is being presented as ‘non-statutory’, it may become an ‘expectation’....it should be as general as possible so that music teachers retain the flexibility to teach music in a way that is most appropriate to their own teaching styles and musical expertise and, above all, the interests and needs of their students’.*

A key recommendation therefore was that **any Model Music Curriculum should provide advice on how to select music** first and foremost. If examples are given they should be clearly marked as examples and be used to **demonstrate the way to select a piece of music**.

- *Help teachers to make informed choices – guidance*
- *Understanding the choice of repertoire is important*
- *How to choose good repertoire is what needs to be taught/explained*
- *Instil a pedagogy of choosing repertoire*
- *It’s what you do with the examples!*

3. If a list of repertoire is to be provided, it should be revised and refreshed to allow for a flexible curriculum

Any repertoire lists given should be revised and refreshed regularly.

- *...a great curriculum would be flexible to change.... not specify genre, format, equipment or software and would allow for the inevitable change the future will bring. It should allow for the teaching of music to keep pace with music in the real world....It should remain accessible and culturally relevant to all learners.*

The consultation emphasised the fact that there are many, **many excellent local, regional and national schemes of work that already exist together with a significant selection of online and printed resources**, both free and to purchase. Recognising that the DfE should not endorse any specific resource or methodology, the Music Mark consultation confirmed that it is the role of **organisations such as Music Mark to help signpost individual**



teachers to such resources and help them to make informed decisions on what they might use to help teach music.

4. Teachers should be made aware their Music Education Hub can provide expertise and resources

The role of Music Education Hub Lead Organisations/Music Services in supporting schools was regularly discussed and it was felt that any **Model Music Curriculum must ensure teachers are aware that there will be a Music Education Hub in their local area that can provide expertise and resources.**

- *Maximise [use of] Hub expertise for teachers lacking specific musical expertise*
- *Collaboration with Hub/partners/musicians to ensure a range of specialisms*

Similarly at a national level the **Model Music Curriculum must link into the 'refreshed' National Plan for Music Education.**

- *A great model music curriculum would align with the new National Plan for Music Education*

III. Teachers' Survey

1. Methodology

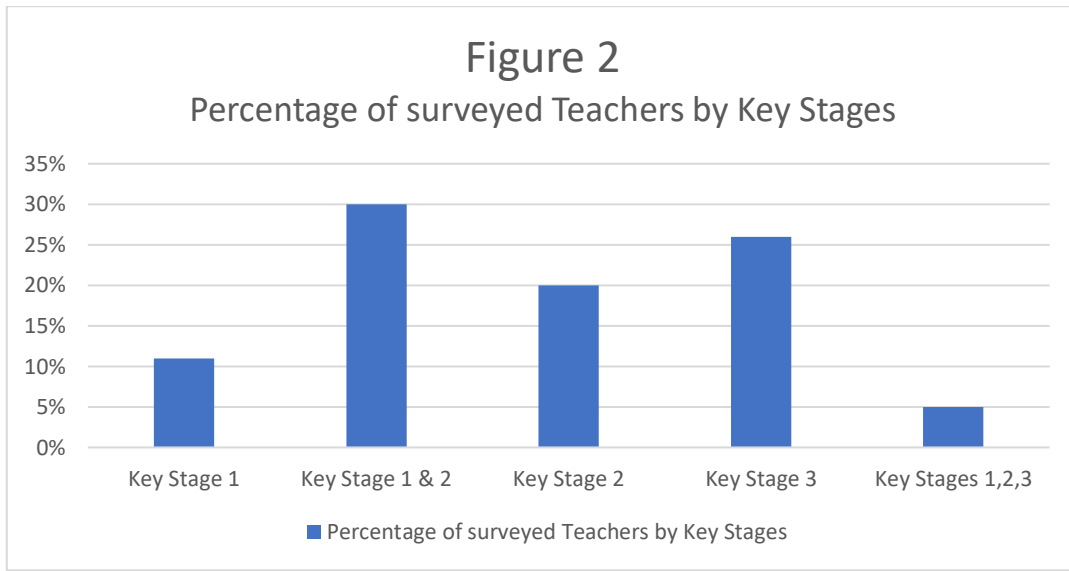
Music Mark sent out an online survey to Music Mark School Members, which ran from April 30th to May 14th. The questions asked were as follows:

1. How many students do you teach?
2. What Key Stages do you teach?
3. How much support do you get?
4. Do you work with your local music service/music education hub?
5. Do you use resources to support you in delivering the National Curriculum?
6. How do you go about finding new resources?
7. Would you see value in a Model Music Curriculum to help you deliver your music provision?
8. How many styles/genres of music do you use in your teaching?
9. How do you know what's a good piece to listen to?
10. What resources do you tend to work with?
11. When listening what do you use?
12. Have you been able to take your students to a live concert?
13. In a Model Music Curriculum, what level of detail would you find helpful?
14. What additional support would you find helpful?
15. Would you say the young people you teach are as engaged with music as they have always been?
16. Please feel free to tell us more about your aspirations for a model music curriculum here:
17. Questions for the class:
18. What do you enjoy most about music lessons?
19. What's your favourite piece and why?
20. What would you like to do more of/ less of?

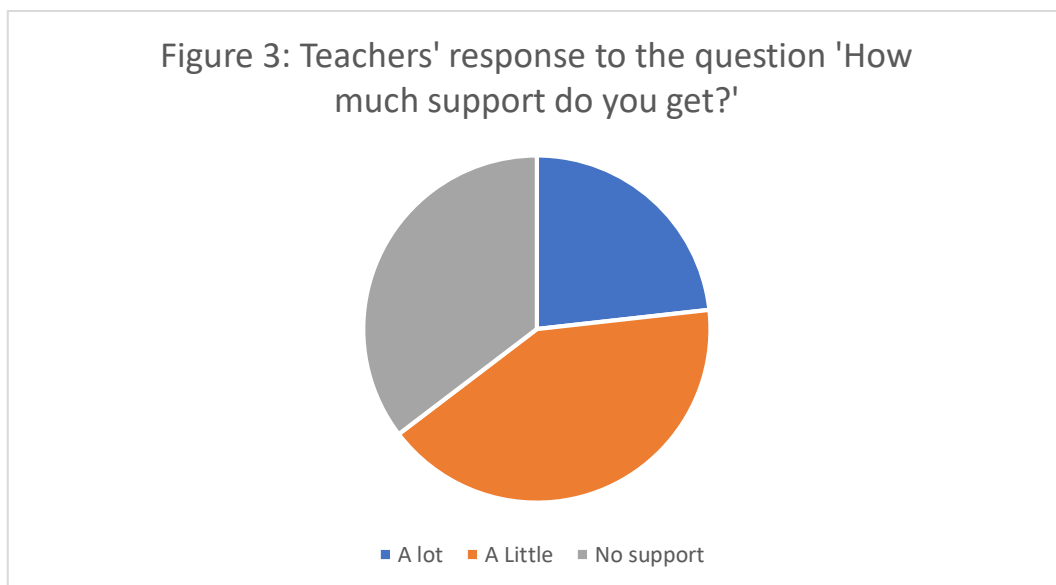
Overall, 116 teachers completed the survey within the consultation period.

2. Key trends

Of the teachers who responded, 30 % taught Keys Stages 1 and 2, whilst over a quarter taught only KS3. 20% taught just Key Stage 2 and, 11% taught Key Stage 1 exclusively, and only 5% taught all three Key Stages. (See Figure 2)



Although 23% stated they received a lot of support, with over a quarter seeking regular advice from the local Music Hub, more than a third felt they received no support, with KS2 teachers being the largest group to feel that they were alone in their teaching at 48%. (See Figure 3)



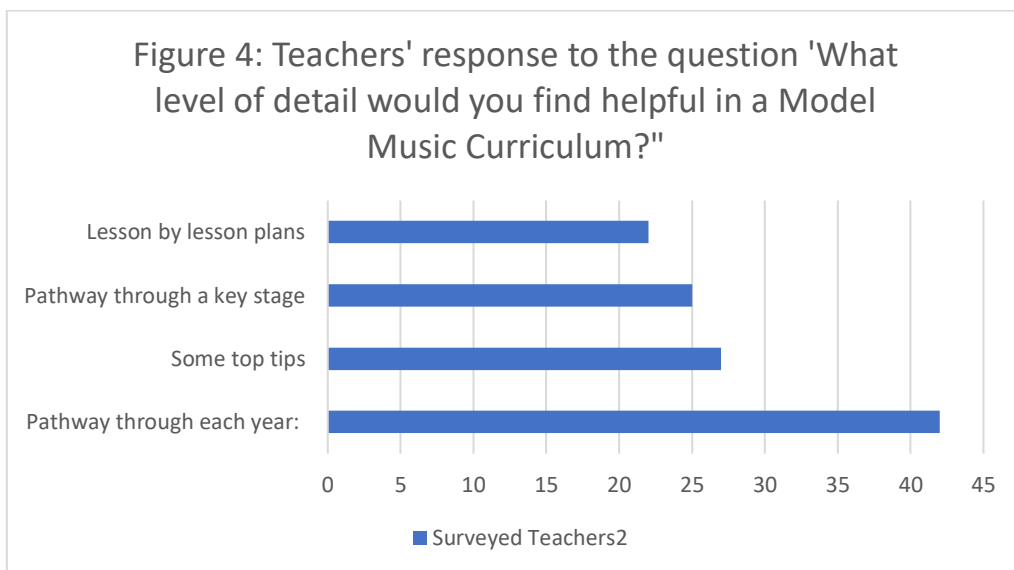
68% of KS3 teachers find their resources from web sources, and they are the only set of teachers surveyed who explored Teachers’ Forums for recommendations. Teachers of KS1 and KS2 were more likely to consult their local Music Hub.

3. What teachers want from a Model Music Curriculum

An overwhelming 85% stated they see value in a Model Music Curriculum to help deliver their music provision.

Music Mark asked what level of detail they would find helpful in a future Model Music Curriculum and the majority preferred a pathway through each year. Broken down further into key stages this represented over half of KS1 teachers, 36% of KS2, 32% of KS3 and 50% of teachers who taught all 3 Key Stages.

31% of teachers who taught both KS1 and KS2 preferred a pathway for each Key Stage however overall, 22% of surveyed teachers stated they only needed a selection of top tips. Meanwhile, 19% of teachers wished for an extremely detailed Model Curriculum and lesson by lesson advice. (See Figure 4)



On content of future Model Curriculum:

- *A curriculum that allows children to explore music and styles with performance and listening. I do not believe this needs to go heavily into theory or music theory. Whilst I know all children in a primary school setting can learn to use notation, I know that this is not appropriate for the vast majority, especially from certain cultures*
- *I like the present curriculum and how it allows wide coverage of musical genres*
- *It should be fun and creative. It should expose children to music from a variety of genres to help them find the genre and styles that they love. It should not require too much resourcing as school budgets are tight.*
- *A curriculum that is inspiring and relevant. A curriculum that builds confidence and enthusiasm in teaching staff who have little or no confidence/subject knowledge in the area of music.*
- *Digital resources which can be used with headphones; ability to self-teach some aspects to aid mixed age class planning*
- *Opportunities for many different types of instruments, links to websites and ways that you can achieve other curriculum objects through the teaching of music*
- *Help on being more creative with classes when not enough space to send them off to work in groups - this is a common issue as a Primary Music teacher.*
- *Practical work and singing. Working with friends and learning pieces of music that we like and hear on YouTube and the radio.*

Key problems raised:

- *No funding in school for music makes delivering the normal music curriculum very hard so more funding is vital!*
- *Music education continues to go around in circles based on mostly experiential syllabus rather than progressive.*
- *I fear there will not be the teachers with skills or experience to teach more than is already in the curriculum which a lot of teachers already struggle with.*

IV. Conclusion:

Amidst the many reflections and concerns that emerged from the consultation, five key suggestions did arise and can be summarized as following:

- Guidance should be appropriate for each key stage, with a mixed ability teaching workforce in mind
- Advice should be provided on how to select music, rather than what music to select
- If a list of repertoire is to be provided, it should be revised and refreshed regularly to allow for a flexible curriculum
- Teachers should be made aware their Music Education Hub can provide expertise and resources
- Curriculum must link into refreshed National Plan for Music Education

The Teachers' Survey mirrored some of these points, with many highlighting the different levels of guidance needed for both specialist and non-specialist teachers. Freedom and flexibility with both content and delivery of music provision was also highlighted as key. Although there were some reservations, the majority of surveyed teachers said they would value a Model Music Curriculum to help them with their teaching.

The rich data collected during Music Mark's consultation will ensure Bridget Whyte is providing guidance on the Expert Panel and feeding data to the drafting team at the ABRSM which is relevant and knowledgeable. There are clearly some concerns about exactly what the guidance will say, in particular how detailed it will be with regard to specific repertoire etc. However, if the document can ensure that it '*build(s) children's confidence, love and joy in making music*' it will perhaps ensure that '*The concert-going, music appreciating public of tomorrow [which are] our responsibility as educators as much as inspiring performers and composers*' will have access to the music education outlined in the National Curriculum.