

Whole Class Ensemble Teaching Research Report – Key Messages for Primary Schools



This document presents key messages from the research report undertaken by Birmingham City University into the nationwide Whole Class Ensemble Teaching (WCET) programme in music. This research was conducted during the academic year 2016-17, it was funded by Arts Council England, and administered by Music Mark, a membership organisation for Music

Services and/or Lead Organisations of a Music Education Hub, their teaching and support teams, their partners and their schools.

The report and associated executive summary are available from the Music Mark website.

Key Message 1: *WCET makes a difference*

Done well, WCET makes a real difference to the lives of the children and young people involved. New horizons have opened for children and young people, schools, parents, and communities.

WCET programmes offer a huge opportunity for children and young people to participate in music-making activities at a local, regional, and, sometimes, national level too, with all of the concomitant musical performing, musical learning, and social benefits that this entails. Music making via WCET translates into making a real difference to the life of the school and the wider community.

Key Message 2: *WCET is about more than ‘just’ learning to play an instrument*

Children and young people learning through the WCET programme develop knowledge, skills, and understandings about much more than ‘just’ playing an instrument. WCET has a significant social impact on the children and young people involved. It also develops a wide range of transferable skills.

WCET promotes and develops cohesion within classes of learners engaged in a joint endeavour. This can be even more marked with full involvement of the class teacher.

Key Message 3: *WCET is about social justice*

The WCET programme of musical learning helps find and encourage children and young people who might otherwise ‘slip through the net’, a number of these youngsters go on to become instrumentalists achieving at the highest levels. Without WCET they may well not have had the opportunity to develop themselves to reach their full potential.

Successful WCET outcomes can involve children and young people making choices about their own musical activities, and chart their own future learning and participation, making informed decisions about their personal future pathways.

Key Message 4: *WCET helps with curriculum provision*

WCET both supports and extends the National Curriculum for music. Schools speak highly of the programme in this regard as it helps significantly with this aspect of the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum.

How can Primary Schools help with WCET?

Primary schools can help ensure the success of WCET programmes in a number of ways:

1. Talking with the local Music Education Hub or Music Service about what is on offer, and what would be appropriate in each particular context.
2. Providing support for visiting instrumental music teachers and classroom teachers from the school itself to function well in this conjoint endeavour.
3. Sharing information about young people prior to the sessions, and during the course of the WCET programmes – primary schools really know their own pupils.
4. There are huge pressures on schools at the moment. Those schools which have worked proactively with their local MEH or MS reap the benefits in terms of a suitably tailored programme which fits the time and the space available.

The research report found that the WCET programme can affect the lives of schools, children and young people, parents, and communities, in a positive fashion. This document has outlined these very briefly. More detail can be found in the full report, available from the Music Mark website.

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