



musicfirst lighthouse

Real Stories of Success in Music Education

Developing a Modernised Learning Environment

University of Birmingham School

Welcome to our MusicFirst Lighthouse series
Inspiring stories capturing how institutions have
implemented online learning into their curriculum
using innovative technology and creative thinking.



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BIRMINGHAM
SCHOOL



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A New Beginning

Annie Arguropulo-Palmer, Subject Leader for Music at University of Birmingham School, began her career at Pimlico Academy as Head of Music following completion of a PGCE at the Institute of Education. After six years there, she decided to return to her roots in Birmingham where she was recruited to lead Music in a brand new school. What an opportunity!

University of Birmingham School was opened in response to a Government white paper exploring the idea of having university training schools. It was the first of its kind therefore was leading the way to create a school of the future. The school was looking to be representative of the city with Birmingham's segmented and diverse community. A core focus was to develop an effective approach for character education by giving pupils from all backgrounds the space, opportunity and understanding to practise good character every day.

The Music Department's Vision



01

To create a modernised learning environment for Music with high quality teaching and learning.

02

Any pupil, no matter what their starting point, would be able to enjoy and flourish at Key Stage 3 compulsory music lessons.

03

Any pupil would be in a position to take GCSE Music if they wanted.

Growth

Having grown the music department, one of the biggest challenges Annie faced was having no way of facilitating regular practice of aural and theory skills and being able to assess pupils' work. She was therefore looking for some kind of platform that would allow her to do this, and more.

There were all sorts of assessment platforms and software applications for other subjects but finding something that could cope with the disparate needs of a music department proved difficult.

However, with challenge came opportunity.

After exploring many options, Annie discovered MusicFirst. Having trialled the platform and software applications they seemed to be the right fit.

The story so far



2018

Pilot MusicFirst



2019

Fully embed into the curriculum



2020

Reassess and reorganise



2021

Develop a robust hybrid-learning strategy

After a second year of successful use, the pandemic hit. This was the moment to knuckle-down, use what they'd all learnt and apply it to an incredibly challenging situation. Annie and her team were one step ahead of the game with their online solution so could more easily adapt to this new situation. It was also a chance to reassess, develop new resources whilst schools were shut and reorganise lessons to fit with what would be the new normal.



2018 was essentially the trial run with MusicFirst as this was a brand new concept. Once it became clear that this was a long-term solution, we really embedded it into the curriculum."

The Solution

The MusicFirst Classroom has supported Annie to develop her own curriculum with a huge range of resources. They include structured lessons and quizzes many of which utilise the software, particularly Auralia and Musition.

Flat for Education was the most recent addition to her platform and this has really added value to the solution giving the pupils so much more opportunity to be creative.



University of Birmingham School's Solution for Creativity and Learning

Over 600 seats of:



MusicFirst Classroom



Focus on Sound



Flat for Education



Auralia



Musition



Having a markbook that's populated with recordings and results is amazing. When I am monitoring pupil progress or when my line manager comes and asks me to see evidence, I can just open up the portfolio of compositions and listening. That's it!"



How we use MusicFirst

MusicFirst has such a diverse range of features, the possibilities are endless but these are just a few of our highlights:

Online portfolio

- Storing practical work (performances and compositions).
- Completing and storing listening questions and assessments.

Regular, self-marking and meaningful online learning

- Aural and theory activities set regularly, enabling maximum time in lessons for practical work and the opportunity to embed and reinforce key skills and knowledge.

Enabling Key Stage 3 to more closely match the GCSE course structure

- Listening assessments at our 'assessment points' used alongside pupils' performance in practical tasks. Almost entirely self-marking to reduce teacher workload.
- We set revision/practice questions and post-assessment reflection tasks.

Why we use MusicFirst

- Information and endless opportunities to practise, with instant feedback (self-marking).
- Ability for teachers to set work and track progress.
- Affordable way to enable access for all years.
- Single location for all music work which combines a portfolio of work with aural and theory training.
- Enables a high-level of customisation to suit our school's curriculum.



The opportunity to facilitate regular pupil practice of listening, as well as key theory skills, in a way which is manageable in terms of workload is having a significant positive impact on pupil progress. We are excited to continue improving our curriculum, better using and embedding this technology to support teaching and learning."

Annie Arguropulo-Palmer, Subject Leader for Music –
University of Birmingham School

With a structure and robust platform in place, MusicFirst allowed Annie and her team to maintain high standards of teaching and learning during forced school closure, but reinforced the importance of online learning. MusicFirst has transformed the way they deliver Music having created a modernised learning environment for their department. They represent leadership in music education and are a role-model to other schools – a true Lighthouse Institution.

Contact Us

For further information about MusicFirst or on how your school can become a Lighthouse Institution contact us today.

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