



INFLUENCING
SUPPORTING &
CONNECTING

Westminster Forum Speech 07/10/19 **by Bridget Whyte**

I think I need to clear something up before I start with my presentation. Although I am on the DfE's expert panel for the Model Music Curriculum, I am not today presenting an official update from the DfE on what is currently happening with this work. Members of the panel are continuing with the research and development of the non-statutory guidance to sit alongside the National Curriculum for Music for key stages 1 to 3, but there is no detail that they have given me to share with you at this point in time.

I realise that this may be disappointing for some, but I hope that what I am about to present – some perspectives from the sector using research Music Mark carried out in the spring - will be of interest and I will welcome questions about that research and thoughts about what the panel might also consider going forward.

I should also point out that my place on the panel the DfE appointed in January was offered for two reasons. 1. Because Music Mark is a membership organisation that represents 96% of the English Music Education Hubs, plus many of the organisations and individuals who work with them including over 6,000 schools, and 2. Because Music Mark is one of the two Subject Associations for Music Education – providing support and guidance to teachers in and out of the classroom providing music education for children and young people in England. I am not a teacher, or an expert on the National Curriculum for Music, but I take my membership with me into the meetings, – where appropriate and/or possible – share with that membership updates on the work of the panel, and use the membership to test and explore the themes of this work.

It is this second point which I would like to expand on with this presentation.

But first some background facts:

- (a) The Department for Education already provides additional non-statutory guidance to teachers, expanding on the statutory National Curriculum, in other subjects, including English and maths. The Music model curriculum is, like those notes and guidance, part of work the DfE are keen to do to support teachers to teach National Curriculum subjects.
- (b) A model curriculum is non-statutory. It is simply further detail, an expansion of the concepts within the National Curriculum for that subject.
- (c) As a panel we are not able to change anything with the existing Music National Curriculum... not even a word or phrase.
- (d) The expert panel were chosen for their knowledge, but also for their networks. Many of us have consulted more widely – having been given permission to do so. But also the DfE have

pulled in other experts and advisors themselves. This work is not being prepared just by the panel, but through wider consultation.

- (e) *The appointment of an organisation to draft the model curriculum on behalf of the panel and the DfE was done through a tendering process. Because of the procurement guidelines for the amount of money available for that work the DfE were able to invite just three organisations to tender – Music Mark, the ISM and the ABRSM were invited. Only the ABRSM submitted a bid and were therefore appointed to do the work. They are not writing the model music curriculum, they are drafting it based on advice and guidance from the expert panel and other contacts – including classroom teachers and skilled/experienced music educators.*
- (f) The original timeline envisaged that this piece of work would be completed by July 2019 to allow for the guidance to be available in time for the new Academic year. The first draft was submitted to the Minister for Schools – Nick Gibb – back in March. At that point, the DfE more fully understood the scale of the work required to draft a high quality Model Curriculum for Music, and that need to get the quality right has superseded rushing to get it published. Originally the plan was for ‘wider consultation’ to then take place, ie in April/May, but by going back to do more work – which continues, we – the panel and the wider sector – now wait for news of a revised timeline for any consultation and indeed when it is hoped that the curriculum will be published.

So, having given you some of the background/facts about what the Model Music Curriculum is, its development process and those involved in it, I would like to present some of the findings of consultation Music Mark did to support my role on the Panel.

- (a) As I mentioned, it was originally planned that there would be a period of consultation on a draft of the Model Curriculum after Easter this year in late April/early May. One of the first things I did as a panel member was to ask the Chair of the panel and the civil servants at the DfE if I could use that time to run some Membership-wide consultation to ensure that – as I had promised – I was representing the organisations and individuals who are part of Music Mark. It was agreed that this would happen. However, of course the timetable moved and I then discussed what that might mean for the – already published – consultation we were planning. It was agreed however, that some focus groups, surveys etc might be useful despite there being no draft to present, and therefore we continued with our plans for a period of consultation.
- (b) The question we asked was ‘what should a Model Music Curriculum look like?’
- (c) Music Mark therefore ran three face to face facilitated discussions, an online forum on our website and a survey targeted at our school members, but available more widely to capture as much data as possible.
- (d) A total of 230 people participated in the consultation
- (e) Of which over 60% were classroom teachers.
- (f) The consultation took place over a 3-week period between the 24th April and the 13th May.
- (g) The data – both qualitative and quantitative – was brought together in a report which was published in late May

(h) And shared with the Panel and the DfE in June.

Here are some of the headlines - most of which I would expect those in this room will not find as 'rocket science':

a) Guidance should be appropriate for each key stage, with a mixed-ability teaching workforce in mind:

Many of those consulted commented that guidance for primary and secondary would need to be tailored to recognise that as a generalisation primary school teachers are non-specialists and secondary music teachers are – by definition – specialist. However, they also pointed out the growing diversity of those who are teaching music means that we might not be able to make any assumptions within the text. Music Mark and the ISM put out a joint statement last year campaigning for there to be at least one full-time, specialist music teacher in every secondary school. Whilst a refocus by Ofsted onto the curriculum, including 'deep dives' into music, there are still more and more reports of schools not employing a full-time teacher, or asking teachers of other subjects to teach music. *[expand on this depending on what others have already said....]*

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

There is a nuanced point here – those we consulted wanted to know how to choose relevant music to support the curriculum not necessarily to be told what music to use. Helping teachers to make informed but independent choices rather than making the choices for them.

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

As the DfE panel began its work there was a discussion about how to prepare a model curriculum in music without promoting specific repertoire, resources or methodologies. The government cannot be seen to promote, and in doing so seemingly endorse, specific organisations or publications, but you can't talk about music without.... Well... the music! It was interesting though, during the Music Mark discussions that people were not apposed to suggesting music, but were keen to avoid creating a list of 'set works'. It was clear that the way in which repertoire is presented within any guidance is important. Taking a piece of music and fitting the curriculum to it is not helpful – it doesn't allow for teachers to be creative in their repertoire choices. The recommendation was that if repertoire was to be suggested should be 'for example you could use x or y to demonstrate this musical point' allowing teachers to listen to the examples and either use them or choose something similar (having been given advice on how to select music). It was also suggested that any lists should be revised and refreshed which would also help to avoid the 'set works' concern.

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

e) The Model Music Curriculum must link into the refreshed National Plan for Music Education:

These last two are linked together really.

Back in the 'cool Britannia' days of the last 90s, the phrase 'joined up' became common place. The Cambridge Dictionary states:

If ideas, systems, or parts are joined up, they are combined in a useful and effective way.

In this context – the recommendation is that the Department for Education combines its two key ‘ideas’ – the National Plan for Music Education and the Model Music Curriculum it will provide a useful and effective way to support a child’s musical learning. What better time to be preparing guidance to support the national curriculum than at a time when the National Plan is being ‘refreshed’. If the two are joined up, recognising the additional value and support available beyond the school through the partners that make up the local Music Education Hub, then the curriculum can be all the richer and the work of the Hub partners can complement that classroom work.

Conclusion

As I said, a full report of the consultation Music Mark carried out is available on our website.

We published them back in May and at the Model Music Curriculum Panel meeting in June I presented the findings and they were both well received and much of what we ‘uncovered’, or perhaps more accurately ‘articulated’ clearly, was carried forward by the panel as it continued to work on a more ‘ambitious’ model over the summer.

However, I would go further to say that the research we pulled together can, and should apply to anyone preparing a model music curriculum. Whether that is a curriculum for an individual primary school prepared by a music coordinator or keen classroom teacher; a curriculum for a chain of academies to follow; or one prepared and supported by a Music Service or other music education organisation working as part of a Music Education Hub. The guidance given by the people we consulted was borne out of years of knowledge and experience. Indeed there were many who told us of the great curriculum guidance they already use.

So, one final point to make. The announcement in January that there would be a Model Music Curriculum produced by the DfE was met with quite a bit of comment and discussion. There were some positive responses, but there were also significant calls of ‘why?’. The aspiration of the government to develop a model curriculum for all the National Curriculum subjects is a worthy one, and I am all for more guidance and support for Music Education, but I think for me the key thing we need to remember and celebrate is that the current National Curriculum has been around for six years and over that time many individuals and organisations have developed additional guidance, models if you will, to help teachers deliver it. Obviously something published by the DfE will be important for teachers to read and consider, but I am sure the Civil Servants, and indeed, hopefully, the Schools Minister, would not want teachers to stop what they are doing if what they are doing works, if it engages children and young people musically, is underpinned by strong pedagogy and provides clear progression across years and key stages. Something that does all of that will not only prepare pupils for further study if they should wish to move onwards into Key Stages 4, 5 and beyond, but also give them a life-long love for, and wish to continue exploring, the subject.

In the immortal words of Cogsworth from the Disney Beauty and Beast... ‘if it’s not Baroque, don’t fix it’!

Thank you!