



Making the most of music in your school

Music makes an important contribution to the life of every school and should be celebrated, promoted and encouraged. It helps build pupils' self-esteem and self-discipline and leads to higher standards across the curriculum.



This document is therefore an invitation to headteachers, senior leaders, primary, secondary and special school classroom teachers, and school governors to reconsider the place and status of music in your school.

We hope that it will:

- Stimulate conversation around how music might be made even better for your pupils
- Encourage you to build on and develop your existing music provision
- Prompt discussion about your music curriculum and assessment system

It is a good time to do this. The role of Music Education Hubs is evolving nationally to help schools access the help they need, with support from the Department for Education, Arts Council England and Ofsted. This document has been produced by national music education organisations working together as a united sector to support you.

Curriculum and teaching

The new National Curriculum for music contains some clear principles but it is not prescriptive. There are many choices for schools to make. This is good.



Suggested discussion points:

- Music lessons should be musical. That means pupils and students should make music in them, just as they should mainly do active physical activity in PE, or speak French in French lessons. So, in your school's music lessons, when does the music start? How much practical music making is there?
- There are lots of ways to teach music musically. What are the best approaches for your school and all its pupils?
- Pupils come to school with considerable musical experience, even starting before they are born. We are not starting from scratch. How does your music curriculum use and build on the various musical activities, interests and experiences pupils are involved in both in and out of school?
- Do your pupils view their music lessons as relevant and fun?
- How are your school values and ethos supported in your music curriculum? How does it reflect your community?
- How is music celebrated in your school?
- Listening, performing, composing, improvising and appraising are fully integrated in a good music curriculum. How does this happen in your school?
- Within practical musical lessons, how do pupils learn about the simple building blocks, or theory, of the music they are working with?
- Are all pupils, no matter what their ability, background, motivation or circumstance, able to participate actively in music making? And how do you create opportunities for active young musicians that benefit the school as well as the pupil?
- Singing is really valuable. Do all pupils have regular and frequent opportunities to sing in school as well as use their voices creatively in lessons?
- How does your music curriculum link with teaching (perhaps instrumental teaching) or special musical events from the local Music Service, Hub or other partners? How do you measure the impact of such partnerships?

Assessment without National Curriculum Levels

The new National Curriculum does not require levelling in music. There have never been sub-levels in music, even though schools, especially secondary schools, have often used them to try to prove linear progression. Ofsted does not expect or need to see such assessments. In fact, it is highly critical of the impact on pupils' musical learning of using sub levels. Schools now have the opportunity to design simple, useful ways of assessing that reflect the ways that music learning works in practice.



Suggested discussion points:

- What is it that you want the pupils in your school to be able to do, know and understand at the end of each term, year, or Key Stage? How can you check this and build on previous learning?
- Who is assessment really for in your school? Pupils? Teachers? Parents? Senior Leaders? How are pupils involved in their own assessments?
- How does your school understand and discuss the differences between assessment for learning, and assessment for reporting on progress in music?
- Remember that musical progress does not necessarily follow a linear path. Does formative assessment contribute integrally to teaching and learning? How can it inform your lesson planning?
- Tangible musical evidence is the best way to check that pupils are making good progress. This is likely to be in sounds and is not necessarily apparent in written work only. Do pupils listen to/watch and discuss audio/video recordings of their own music? Are these used to help them improve and kept as assessment evidence?
- Are you able to liaise locally with colleagues in other phases – e.g. transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3?
- Are your pupils encouraged to ask questions and reflect on their musical work and that of others?



Here to help

Music Education Hubs have been set up across every local authority area in England. Almost all are led by Music Services who are working closely in partnership with local, regional and national music education organisations to develop further support and help for schools to address these questions. All Hubs are required to produce a School Music Education Plan, setting out how they will engage and support schools. The new National Curriculum provides an impetus, as do Ofsted reports, which point out how music can be improved in schools.

Most importantly, what is right for your school and your pupils? Who locally can help you, the teacher, headteacher or senior leader, to deliver a compelling and engaging music curriculum?

Some starting points

National Curriculum programmes of study – www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-music-programmes-of-study

Ofsted reports on music education – www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/our-expert-knowledge/music

ISM assessment and progression framework – www.ism.org

Sing Up – www.singup.org

Musical Futures resource bank – www.musicalfutures.org/resources

Musical Bridges – www.musicalbridges.org.uk

Music Mark – www.musicmark.org.uk

Teaching Music – www.teachingmusic.org.uk

Youth Music Network – www.youthmusic.org.uk/network

Youth Music's Quality Framework – www.youthmusic.org.uk/quality

Artsmark – www.artsmark.org.uk

