

Downs Junior School

Music Policy

Updated November 2018



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1. Introduction and Ethos

Music runs through the veins of the members of the Downs Junior School community. Brighton and Hove is an incredibly vibrant and creative city, with countless high quality opportunities for children and adults to get involved in music. Many of the parents and carers of the children at Downs Junior School work within the arts industries and are incredibly supportive of music education.

Music is a powerful form of communication and has a profound impact on the performer, the composer and the listener – it has an ability to access all of mankind in a primitive way, an intrinsic way, in a soulful, expressive, meditative and communicative way. Music can unite and invigorate and transport people of all backgrounds and of all abilities. Music provides learners with a sense of freedom and confidence to experiment, explore and create, to feed their musical and expressive curiosity and imagination.

During key stage 2 pupils sing songs and play instruments with increasing confidence, skill, expression and awareness of their own contribution to a group or class performance. They improvise, and develop their own musical compositions, in response to a variety of different stimuli with increasing personal involvement, independence and creativity. They explore their thoughts and feelings by observing how they respond physically, intellectually and emotionally to a variety of music from different times and cultures.

2. Aims and Objectives

The national curriculum for music aims to ensure that all pupils:

- perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of the great composers and musicians
- learn to sing and to use their voices, to create and compose music on their own and with others, have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, use technology appropriately and have the opportunity to progress to the next level of musical excellence
- understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations.

Pupils are taught to sing and play musically with increasing confidence and control. They develop an understanding of musical composition, organising and manipulating ideas within musical structures and reproducing sounds from aural memory. Pupils are taught to:

- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

- use and understand staff and other musical notations
- appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
- develop an understanding of the history of music.

3. Resources and Facilities

Music is taught by a specialist teacher (Anna Rusbatch) in a dedicated and very well resourced music room: We have a drum kit, a full-class set of ukuleles and descant recorders, plus half-class sets of keyboards, pBuzz and djembes. We also have a large range of tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments from around the world, including colour-coordinated chromatic and diatonic boom whackers, hand bells and steel pans. Additionally, the children can access an impressive variety of instruments that have either been donated to, or purchased by the school; violins, a cello, acoustic guitars, electric guitars, bass guitars, mandolins, table harp, fifes, penny whistles, flute, clarinet, oboe, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and an accordion. The classroom stage piano (Roland FP-7F) and voice microphone are used in almost every lesson, by teachers and students alike. A full PA system is also established within the main music teaching classroom (Rockit speakers and a PreSonus mixing desk).

The main performance space is the school hall: There is a versatile stage space with wings leading to a backstage corridor. The mixing desk allows for 8 audio inputs and the stage lighting can be controlled from the tech desk; including UV, mirror ball, disco lights and a snow machine. Performances often take place outside too - the stage and audio equipment is moved outdoors for such events.

4. Music Technology

A class set of iPads are available in lessons and music apps and software sites are often used to facilitate, consolidate and assess learning and progression in music. Year 6 explore composition, recording and editing sound using GarageBand. Year 5 explore coding using PC software. Digital Dictaphones and iPads are often used to record evidence of performance and progression. Audio and video files are often uploaded to the school music website (downsjuniormusic.com) to allow children to share their achievements with their families and friends. The school has a PreSonus mixing desk, SM57 and SM58 microphones and Rokit monitor speakers to achieve high quality studio and live recordings of performances.

5. Teaching and Learning

The children experience a weekly one-hour music curriculum lesson and a weekly music assembly, (in which children often perform). The lesson content incorporates composition, performance, listening and appraisal skills. The main aim of every lesson is to develop these skills, build confidence and, most importantly, have fun.

The subject material either links with topics that are being studied in their year group (looking at different periods of time and a variety of genres, cultures and styles), or with current, contextual and relevant local/national/international events and issues.

Children who receive private tuition for a musical instrument often bring their instrument to curriculum music lessons. They are encouraged to explore improvisation and composition on their instrument within a group.

6. Assessment

Dictaphones and iPads are regularly used to record evidence of ideas, progress and attainment. Examples of work are often uploaded to the school music website: downsjuniormusic.com.

Informal assessment is commonly used in the form of targeted questioning and teacher observation. Music apps on the iPads, such as those developed by ABRSM for aural and theory understanding, can track progress and attainment and also (in some cases) provide the children with scores and levels. This quantitative assessment motivates the children to improve their 'personal best' scores and increase their levels of understanding.

Occasionally, written methods are used to assess theoretical understanding and listening and appraisal skills.

7. Continuity and Progression

Throughout the four-year journey of Key Stage 2 at junior school, the children receive their music education from the music specialist teacher – Anna Rusbatch. This consistency allows for effective continuity and progression of skills.

Anna Rusbatch has established good relationships with the music coordinator at the main feeder school (Downs Infant School) and with the Heads of Music at both of our main secondary schools (Varndean School and Dorothy Stringer School). With regard to music technology, the local secondary schools were consulted regarding what software they mostly use with their students, to ensure smooth continuity and further development of skills. Regular correspondence takes place between the local infant and secondary schools regarding skill development and progression and to prevent repetition of content.

Downs Junior School is also a member of a cluster group of partnership schools – the subject leaders meet on a termly basis to discuss current issues, share best practice, update a shared online resource bank and arrange to observe each other's teaching. This allows for greater consistency and quality of teaching methods across the city of Brighton and Hove. Anna Rusbatch is often observed by primary and secondary trainee teachers, and music coordinators and specialists from other schools, to demonstrate and discuss Key Stage 2 music pedagogy. Recently, a secondary PGCE music student split their final placement between Downs Junior School and the local secondary school (Varndean) to gain a broad experience of Key Stage 2 – Key Stage 4 music.

Evidence of progression is mostly captured digitally, with audio and video recordings. Photographs of children's written and notated work are taken to show the development of

musical and lyrical ideas. Where parental permission allows, audio and video recordings of the children's progress are uploaded to the school music website: downsjuniormusic.com.

8. Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

Music serves as a wonderful 'level playing field' – a neutral environment in which nothing is considered to be 'wrong'; in which children, who may struggle in other areas of the curriculum, feel motivated and inspired to try.

The teaching style aims to accommodate the needs and requirements of all children, particularly SEND and vulnerable children. Music often opens avenues of communication and methods of expression that are otherwise difficult to access. Anna Rusbatch is currently exploring professional development opportunities within the area of Music Therapy.

The extra-curricular music clubs are accessible and available to all children in school. Financial support is available to assist with club costs. There are no limits on the number of children in music clubs. The only restriction is an expectation of ability, to become a member of the school orchestra.

9. Health and Safety

Correct use and storage of musical instruments and equipment is made inherently clear to the children and staff in school, and they are regularly reminded of the safety rules within the music room.

10. Peripatetic

A wide variety of individual and small group lessons are available at Downs Junior School. The 11 different tutors are either provided by the local music service (BHMA) or are employed privately through the school. Lessons are available for the following instruments:

Voice, Drum Kit, Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello, Mini Bass, Ukulele, Acoustic Guitar, Electric Guitar, Bass Guitar, Recorder, Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Bassoon, Saxophone, Cornet, Trumpet, Trombone, French Horn, Euphonium, Tuba.

Children are only permitted to sign up to lessons for one instrument during school time. Tuition for an additional instrument may take place out of class lesson time (before or after school or during lunchtime).

11. Extra-Curricular Clubs

Mega Choir is open to all children and adults in school. There are currently 172 children and 4 members of staff who attend rehearsals on Wednesdays, 08:00 – 08:50 in the school hall.

Super Choir is available to Year 6 children. The main focus for the choir in the autumn term is the Remembrance Service and the Brighton Centre Christmas Concert. There is flexibility in

the repertoire for Super Choir in the summer term, allowing the children some autonomy, and elements of dance and drama are often brought into rehearsals and performances. Super Choir does not occur in the spring term because the music room lunchtime slots are allocated to rehearsal opportunities for participants of the Battle of the Bands.

Jam Band is a music-making club for children in Year 6. This club provides the time, space and resources to allow children to create music with their friends. They are encouraged to improvise and ‘jam’ and to explore sound. This club is particularly helpful regarding composing and rehearsing for the Battle of the Bands which sees a marked increase in the participation of boys.

Orchestra is open to all children in school who have been learning their instrument for a minimum of roughly 1 year, and are able to read basic, standard notation.

Throughout the year, the specialist music teacher coordinates with some of the peripatetic staff to create additional opportunities for performance, and to construct a variety of ensemble groups.

12. Events

Every Autumn, the children in Year 4 experience a professional performance at the world famous Glyndebourne Opera House with a full orchestra. Also in the Autumn term we have a Harvest celebration followed by celebratory and reflective events for Black History Month in October and commemorative events for Remembrance Day in November: In 2016, a massed choir (consisting of 221 children from Downs Junior School), performed at St. Bartholomew’s Church for the Royal British Legion’s Remembrance Service.

The festive month of December includes the Super Choir performance at the Brighton Centre, alongside nearly 1,400 children from schools all across the city. There are also many Christmas concerts for a variety of audiences; children at Downs Infant School, families, the local community during the school’s Winter Fair and a concert especially for ex-pupils of the school (from the 1930s to the 1960s). We also collaborate with the Downs Infant School choir to perform in public to raise money for charity at Christmastime. In 2017, 274 children performed at St. Martin’s Church to an audience of 800.

Spring concerts provide a platform for the school choirs, the orchestra and ensemble groups to perform. The spring term culminates with the hotly anticipated Battle of the Bands – a music industry enterprise competition. On average, 50-60 bands enter the competition in January; they rehearse at lunchtimes in school, then audition for the final in late February. The top 12 bands perform in the final in March to a panel of ‘celebrity’ judges – music industry professionals (varying from radio DJs, singer/songwriters and producers to West End musical theatre stars and computer game sound designers). The winning band records an EP and performs gigs at the local infant school and the junior school summer fair.

In the summer term, hundreds of children participate in the Children’s Parade for the opening of the Brighton Festival. The whole school unite for the stamping, clapping, singing and

chanting opening and closing ceremonies on Sports Day. The choir groups and school orchestra perform for huge audiences at the school's Summer Fair. Finally, the year 6 children delight audiences by performing adapted or original stage musicals as a triumphant farewell to their junior school experience.

13. Musical Theatre and International Links

As Head of Music in an international school in Nairobi, Kenya, Anna Rusbatch formed a creative, collaborative partnership with her colleague, Lizzie Jago (Playwright and Head of Creative Arts). Together, they started to write stage musical pieces and youth operas, focusing on raising awareness of global social issues, historical events and true stories – giving a voice to the millions of voiceless children around the world. Lizzie writes the scripts and Anna write the lyrics and composes and arranges the music.

Since moving to Brighton, Anna has maintained strong school links with Kenya and has project-managed international theatre experiences: They have involved organising for Kenyan performers and musicians to travel to Brighton and be accommodated by host families of Downs Junior School. During their stay they experience British life, tour the school, deliver assemblies and concerts, share their break times and lunchtimes, exchange games and songs in the playground and rehearse with the theatre project teams, in preparation for performances in London.

In July 2013, a cast of over 100 children from Downs Junior School and from Braeburn School (in Nairobi) came together to perform Kesho Amahoro (Peace Tomorrow) at the Rose Theatre, for the International Youth Arts Festival in London. The school children also formed part of the live orchestra and backstage team. Kesho Amahoro celebrates the triumph of the human spirit despite the hardship and adversity of war and suffering and life in a refugee camp.

In July 2014, another cast of 100 children (from Brighton and Nairobi) returned to the Rose Theatre to perform Albatross – Wings of Freedom. On the last day of the summer term, the entire school boarded 8 coaches and travelled to Kingston upon Thames to watch one of the performances. There were 5 performances in total. Albatross – Wings of Freedom depicts the fight against the black market slave trade in the late 19th century. It is set in Zanzibar and the characters are based on real people.

The staff at Downs Junior School were incredibly supportive of these projects, volunteering their time to chaperone, host and assist the backstage teams.

In 2017, Anna Rusbatch and the children in Year 6 (128) wrote the script and composed the music and lyrics for a new musical, inspired by Roald Dahl. The musical incorporated all of Dahl's famous characters. The performances in the summer of 2017 received very positive feedback.

14. Community Links

- Ex-Pupils – we provide an annual Christmas concert for people who attended Downs Junior School between 1930 and 1970. They receive a tour of the school from current pupils, followed by tea or coffee and mince pies in the school hall.
- Singing for charity – every December, we collaborate with Downs Infant School to form a large choir and sing Christmas songs and carols to raise money for charity. This is organised via Marks and Spencer. When possible, we endeavour to support charitable events.
- Downs Infant School – In addition to joining forces to sing for charity at Christmas, we also aim to come together to witness each other's Nativity performances or Christmas concerts, and exchange ideas for the Brighton Festival Children's Parade.
- Watching musical theatre and concert performances at the local secondary schools: Varndean School and Dorothy Stringer School.

15. Cross-Curricular Music

- Computing – coding, creating sounds, composing, recording, editing, mixing, layering, mastering sound, exploring and using apps, music technology
- Drama – musical theatre, narrative songs and musical characterisation
- Literacy – song-writing (lyrics, poetry, raps), scene-setting, play-scripts, musicals
- Maths – fractions, time signatures, tempo, rhythms, pulse, song structure
- Science – songs, vocabulary
- French – songs, vocabulary
- Class Assemblies, Humanities & RE – topic-based songs, cultural music, historical eras,
- PE – dance and choreography, gymnastics floor routines

16. Professional Development

Regularly sharing best practice and recommended resources with real life examples:
SoundCity Joint Practice Development Days – Brighton and Hove music professionals (Annual)
Cluster Meetings: See Section 7. (Termly)
Peer-Observations: See Section 7. (Termly)
Master's Degree – Music and Sonic Media at the University of Sussex (2014)
Music Learning Revolution – national exhibition and workshops (2015)
Music Education Expo – free national exhibition and workshops (2016, 2017, 2018)
Songs to Share – A series of workshops led by Glyndebourne Opera (2014, 2015, 2016)
Mentor to Secondary PGCE Music student (2018)
Anna Rusbatch performs regularly in bands, choirs and live samba-karaoke stage events.

Excitingly, Downs Junior School was selected as a finalist at the national Music Teacher Awards for Excellence in the following categories: Best School Music Department 2016, Excellence in Primary Music 2017, and the Francesca Hanley Inspiration Award (2019 (which is sponsored by the Musician's Union).

17. Action Plan

- Music Technology – continue to experiment with new music apps (iPad) and web-based software (mini laptops) and assign them to specific learning objectives and key skills in all year groups; make the iPads available for use in music lessons more often; when budget allows, purchase a half-class set of iPads and headphone splitters solely for use in music lessons.
- Boys: Participation and Attitudes to Singing in UKS2 – create a boys’ choir and allow them to choose a name/title for their ‘group’.
- Increase Community Links – invite a wider variety of community groups into school to deliver workshops, share experiences, witness performances by the children etc. Invite the elderly community to regularly attend choir rehearsals and join in. Establish a connection with a local retirement home – set up a music group to include residents and Downs Junior children (possibly a combination of the vulnerable children in school and children who require further challenge regarding performance and leadership opportunities).
- Improve provision for children with severe learning difficulties to ensure skill progression and increased involvement in performances. Include the use of iPads for live performance – contact Kelly-Jo Peters for recommendations.
- Increase performance opportunities - encourage live musical performances in all assemblies and class productions. Devise half-termly music showcase concerts, specifically for instrumentalists in school, who are not members of the schools choirs or orchestra, due to other commitments.
- Develop an outdoor performance area (amphitheatre / stage) and encourage break-time busking.
- Research ways in which music therapy can support the vulnerable children in school, and how such therapy and supportive experiences can be achieved, delivered and maintained within school.