

## SUPPORTING BETTER MUSIC EDUCATION

This report summarises key points from the Ofsted triennial report on music education, published on Friday 2 March 2012.



### Introduction

Effective schools consider that a **good quality music education contributes considerable musical and non-musical benefits to pupils, parents and wider communities**. Having a better understanding of how and why pupils make musical progress will help teachers deliver more appropriately challenging and musical lessons. This will help teachers and senior leaders understand how to accurately evaluate these lessons, with a greater focus on musical learning which is driven by demonstrable musical progress, not inappropriate assessment. **Heads teachers and senior leaders should explicitly encourage and support teachers to develop these approaches.**

Their inspections of music provision between September 2008 and July 2011 were of 90 primary, 90 secondary, and four special schools in England. Unfortunately, Ofsted noted that '...far too much provision was inadequate or barely satisfactory.' However, **there are proportionally more A\*-C grades awarded in music GCSE when compared to across all subjects**. More needs to be done to encourage pupils to study music beyond Key Stage 3.

### 1. An entitlement for all – music is in the National Curriculum

'The good and outstanding schools ensured that pupils from **all backgrounds** enjoyed sustained opportunities through **regular classroom work** and **music-making for all, complemented** by additional tuition, partnerships and extra-curricular activities' (Our emphasis added).

Time allocated to music in the curriculum should allow for sufficient depth and breadth of learning. **Where insufficient regular time given to music in the curriculum**, for example during some Year 6 lessons or where music is part of an arts carousel or two year Key Stage, **longer term musical progression and the quality of music education are compromised**.

### 2. Music lessons must be musical

Currently, there is **insufficient emphasis on active music making** in lessons. Music must be taught musically, ensuring that **musical sound is the dominant language** of musical teaching and learning. Throughout, there should be a **focus on musical learning and progression**, encouraging pupils to develop as active musicians and for **teachers to be active musicians** in the classroom too. More **teacher modeling and demonstrating** is required, and **learning should not be delayed by lengthy verbal starters, teacher talk and non-musical activities**.

More attention needs to be paid to eliciting **higher quality aural and practical responses** which demonstrate better musical quality. **A focus on Literacy and Numeracy in music lessons detracts from musical progression** and learning and so all lessons should have appropriate musical dimensions. In class lessons, pupils should be encouraged to work on instruments they play.

Teachers should clearly articulate the rationale for the overall curriculum organisation and order of learning to **show how pupils should progress musically**. The curriculum should embed **more high quality vocal work**, noted as currently largely absent from Key Stage 3. Creative tasks should be better framed in order to **promote creativity in responses**. Planning must take into account and **build upon pupils' prior experiences** from in and out of school e.g. taking into account instrumental experience. **More bespoke planning is needed in Key Stages 4 and 5**; the exam syllabi do not constitute a 'curriculum'.

### 3. Music technology is a central and integral part of pupils' lives

Music technology, and in particular, accessible **mobile technology (including mobile phones)** should be used to capitalise on student interest. Technology should be used to **promote creativity, widen inclusion, and make assessment more musical**. This requires greater emphasis on using technology to nurture pupils' musical development and **making more creative use of music technology to more effectively create, perform, record, appraise and improve pupils' work** – central to improving inclusion and the quality of learning and assessment of music in schools.

### 4. Assessment

**There is a great need to improve assessment of musical learning and this should be achieved through developing more appropriate and bespoke assessment methods.** Worryingly, assessment was judged at least good in only 11 out of 90 primary schools and 25 secondary schools.

- "The first reason was linked to schools' requirement for teachers to provide half-termly numerical levels and sub-levels of attainment for every student. While it is important to demonstrate, measure, track and challenge students' progress through comparison of their work and achievement over time, this led to **frequent instances of teachers artificially and inaccurately dividing the levels into sub-grades or assessing isolated areas of musical activity, rather than considering students' musical responses holistically**".
- "Where music departments had **constructed their own sub-divided National Curriculum levels, nominally derived from the eight published level statements**, considerable amounts of teaching time were spent on the **mechanics of assessment procedures**. This often had a negative impact on students' engagement, enjoyment and achievement".
- **Baseline assessments should be based upon assessments of pupils' musical understanding through practical performing and creative tasks**, not written tests and questionnaires based on factual knowledge of music.
- Models of **assessment applied generically from STEM subjects do not work for music**; NC levels should be awarded periodically and holistically based upon a wide range of evidence.
- The report points out that **learning objectives do not need to be explicitly shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons**; however desired learning outcomes should be sufficiently challenging.
- Evidence of individual progression is compelling when **sound-based evidence is recorded over time** and complemented by commentaries, scores etc.

## 5. Equality and inclusion

There is a worrying gap in access and engagement between a number of groups. Particular focus needs to be given to children on free school meals, those with special educational needs, looked after children, and most significantly, gender differences, with girls being *far* more likely to participate in music outside of the classroom. The Pupil Premium resource is there to help to deliver this. Additionally, there is a '**need to challenge pupils with advanced abilities or experience more effectively.**' Uptake of provision should be **monitored closely** to ensure inclusivity and equality.

## 6. Professional development?

Accessing relevant **Continuing Professional Development remains a priority** and **professional isolation remains an issue for many music teachers:** 'Limited access to and take-up of quality CPD training and/or local networking meant that, in too many schools, **self-evaluation lacked perspective.**' "In many cases, secondary music teachers' formal CPD was restricted to attendance at moderation or administration events organised by the examination boards, or commercial conferences led by examiners to help improve outcomes in Key Stages 4 and 5".

## 7. External partnerships

Schools are key to the success of partnership working in the forthcoming music hubs. Schools need to **hold external partners to account** to a much greater extent and are responsible for quality assuring all music provision in their school. The school curriculum and music provided by external providers, e.g. Wider Opportunities and instrumental lessons, should take account of prior learning and seek to build upon this in challenging ways, complementing music education from other areas and improving standards.

The **best music education**, which may use external providers to complement school provision, **successfully meets the needs of all groups of learners.**

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The Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) is the professional association for musicians in the UK with 6,000 members from across the education world working as lecturers, head teachers, classroom teachers, peripatetic music teachers, private teachers and many more: [www.ism.org](http://www.ism.org)

Dr Alison Daubney is a Research Fellow and Music Teacher Trainer at the University of Sussex.

## SUPPORTING BETTER MUSIC EDUCATION

This is a briefing written specifically for busy head teachers. It covers the key points you need to pick up from Ofsted's triennial report on music education, published on Friday 2 March 2012.



### Music lessons: They need to be delivered in a more musical way

- Currently, there is **insufficient emphasis on active music making**; talk less, make music more.
- Music must be taught musically and must ensure that **musical sound is the dominant language** of musical teaching and learning.
- Throughout, there should be a **focus on musical learning and progression**, encouraging pupils **and teachers** to be active musicians.

### Assessment of music must be musical: Say no to sub-levelling!

- Learning objectives **do not need to be shared with pupils in writing or verbally**: we need less talk and more musical assessment.
- There is a **great need to improve assessment of musical learning** achieved through appropriate musical assessment methods.
- **Steer clear of sub-levels** and generic, often STEM influenced, subject level divisions: They don't work to improve musical learning.

### You need to help your teachers access professional development

- **Continuing Professional Development remains a priority** and professional isolation remains an issue for many music teachers.
- Limited access to and take-up of quality CPD training and/or local networking meant that **self-evaluation lacked perspective**.

### Inclusion still needs to be fought for

- Free school meals, looked after children, special education needs all have a significant negative impact on access to extra-curricular music and gender even more so, with girls *far* more likely to be engaged than boys.
- There is a 'need to challenge pupils with advanced abilities or experience more effectively.'
- Music is on the national curriculum, and even at Key Stage 4, you should encourage take up – even for pupils not directly studying music. **There are proportionally more A\*-C grades awarded in music GCSE.**

### Music technology is integral to your pupil's lives

- Music technology, and in particular, **accessible mobile technology (incl. mobile phones)** should be used to capitalise on student interest.
- Technology should be used to promote creativity, widen inclusion, and make assessment more musical.
- This requires making more creative and effective use of music technology **to create, perform, record, appraise and improve pupils' work.**

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