

Music

Conversations with Jimmy Rotheram and Anna Gower

Jimmy Rotheram is the senior leader in charge of music at the Feversham Primary School in Bradford.

If you've taught a brilliant, rich, ambitious music curriculum, what would the Year 6 pupils know, understand and be able to do in music?

I'd want them to be what Peterson called a 'cultural omnivore', a devourer of music of all kinds, and to enjoy it and to not feel inhibited in expressing themselves musically. I'd like them to understand the chords on a guitar and be able to pick up a drumbeat. I'd like them to understand the functionality of melody to work out music by ear, for example, and know, 'Do, re, mi, fa, so,' and to be able to hear that and put the names to it and be able to transfer that to an instrument. I want them to be able to read music reasonably well, to at least understand how to read it and to be making a good job of it by the time they go to secondary school. In terms of knowledge of composers, I want them to have experienced Tchaikovsky and Herbie Hancock and everything in between, to have *felt* the music and moved to it and expressed themselves and sung along with it. And if they want to go on to do GCSE music, I will have given them a really strong foundation. If they want to just enjoy singing in the bath or

karaoke with their friends, I've prepared them for that too, and the same applies if they want to be songwriters, if they want to work in the music industry. I'm trying to prepare them for any eventuality really by giving them a strong foundation in a wide range of musical fundamentals.

The community plays such a valuable part in primary music education. When it comes to music, there's different cultural capital in different places. There's localised cultural capital. I work with mostly Pakistani Muslim children. If I invite the mums to come in and cook, say there's going to be all this amazing food, and we're singing nasheeds, which are Islamic worship songs, it will bring all of the community in. If the children are singing and enjoying themselves, they're really happy about it. We put on a nasheed concert, which was organised locally by people, and the community came along and we had this Islamic open mic night, and it was beautiful.

Zoltán Kodály always said that the formative years of your life are the most important musically, and that if you're a composer, and you want to know whether there's going to be anyone even remotely interested in the music you're making in 20 years' time, go into the kindergarten. The person teaching in the kindergarten is more important for the future of music than the director of the opera house because that's where musicians are often made, especially if we give positive musical experiences in Early Years. The first step is not your crotchets and quavers. The first step is expression. It's having the confidence. The approach of Zoltán Kodály has been a big influence on a lot of my work. Everything is learned through a game. There's a game we play called 'I have lost the cupboard key'. One person hides the cupboard key. Another person is out of the room, and they have to come in and find the cupboard key, and we direct them by using dynamics. We'll sing 'I have lost the cupboard key' very quietly, and then when they're very close to the key, we'll be singing 'I have lost the cupboard key,' really singing with a strong voice. Then we can switch to the sol-fa of that, so, [sings] 'Do, do, mi, mi, re, re, me/Do, do, mi, mi, re, mi.' The children are singing that sol-fa again and again and again and again and again, and you'll sing it 30, 40 times without the children getting bored. Then that's how you're reinforcing all these functional relationships between the notes, [sings] 'Do up to mi,' and so children can then look at 'do' and 'mi' on a score and the sound is in their head, [sings] 'Do and mi.' It's doing all these

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things we need to do as a musician, which is drilling things, doing them over and over again, but if it's part of a game, it is never a monotonous grind.

We play, and we express ourselves, and we use our voices. Animal noises are great for exploring all your different voice styles and all your vowel sounds as well and pitch ranges. You've got very low [sings] 'Moo' from a cow but when you do a sheep you've got some vibrato on your voice like a [sings] 'Baaaahhh'. When you do a bird, 'tweet, tweet, tweet,' you're using that upper register of your voice. All that is tied in with games and nursery rhymes and stories where they ring a doorbell and it's got, [sings] 'The high doorbell and a low doorbell,' and they move to the pulse of the music. These games are where initially we're getting confidence in expression. One of the first songs I use is, [sings] 'Hey, hey, look at me. I am dancing, can't you see?' or, [claps and sings] 'I am clapping, can't you see?' You can change it, and the children can choose their own version of the song. They're solo singing, and again, if it's part of a game, all the children want to sing the solo. Learning through play in a relaxed way is great because you're using a gentle singing voice, and in terms of developing musicianship, that's the best voice to use and it's good for our vocal health as well.

Then we train them how to work together in a group, singing together, helping each other develop musical skills. We begin to encourage the children to tune into each other and to tune into the voice of the teacher as well. We might sing, 'Hey, hey, look at me,' and all the children sing – a call and response is a great way of doing that, so you sing, 'Copycat, copycat, sitting on the doormat,' while doing a strong pulse action and the children copy back. While you're doing these things, you're starting to prepare concepts unconsciously. When we play that game, we're tapping to a pulse. We don't know it's the pulse yet, we've not named it as the pulse, but that's what we're doing – we're tapping to the pulse. When we do the cupboard key game, we're exploring dynamics, but we're not naming it as dynamics yet. This is important; there are quite different approaches to music teaching, but one thing that's common in all the really good approaches is 'sound before symbol'.

Notation is a very abstract representation of music, isn't it? It's very abstract, and often that's a starting point. A crotchet's worth one beat and a quaver's worth half a beat. It's no use knowing what a beat is if

you can't clap in time! You can't even begin to explore rhythm until you understand pulse and you're moving to a pulse and you're moving in time and you're synchronising to music. When you see children reading music well aged six and the whole class can do it, the reason is because there's a sound attached to that visual image. When they see notes on two consecutive lines, they know it's a third, but they also know what a third sounds like. It means something to them.

Yes, a lot of my curriculum is structured through the three Ps. We've got Prepare, which is all this unconscious experience of music, then Presentation. We can then make that learning conscious and say, 'This is the pulse. A pulse is the steady beat in music.' We can start to explain and symbolically represent what they've experienced. Then comes the Practice stage. The Practice stage is then about reinforcing that conscious learning. Often that Preparation stage is missed out of music education. I think people who've experienced music lessons will be very familiar with the idea of being given a score that just looks terrifying, and you think, 'What does that mean?' and you spend ages working it all out. You get all this cognitive overload when you look at all the things you don't understand on that score, and it can be quite intimidating. Whereas if all those elements are prepared, then a child will look at a score and they will feel very empowered, because they'll say, 'Ah, I recognise that, I recognise that, I recognise that.' You're not throwing them in at the deep end, but often that is what happens to us in school – we're thrown in musical deep ends, and we feel very out of our depth, and we struggle. Yes, it's great to be able to work with really young children and just prepare the confidence and prepare a lot of things unconsciously.

Here is an example of curriculum planning for the longer term. In music we have compound time (beats subdivided into 3s) and simple time (beats subdivided into 2s and 4s). Skipping is a natural way of moving and feeling the beat in compound time, while walking and jogging help us feel the beat of simple time, so this is what we do in EYFS/KS1. In Year 3, we will look more specifically at the dual feel of compound time – in a standing position, we shift our weight to the left and tap 'ONE, two, three' with the left hand on the left leg, then shift to the right and tap 'TWO two, three' on the right leg, and we can walk like this too. If you're doing that, you're naturally keeping a steady pulse and you're feeling the

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subdivision. Once that's happening, then a couple of years later, maybe towards the end of school, you can then explain to them that $6/8$ means there are six ti-tis, the six quavers, but it's a feel of two. They'll know exactly what you mean. They'll know why it's compound time and why it's got that kind of double feel of twos and threes. Then they'll expand that by learning about $9/8$ and $12/8$, so that's how the three Ps work in the long term. In the body and in their ear. It's sound before symbol. It's preparation, and it's concrete experience before the abstract experience of notation. You help them feel the physical rhythms of sound and music, and then what you're doing over that time is giving them a vocabulary to talk about it. You get a primal understanding through the experience first, and the more I've taught music, the more I've really appreciated how important movement is; movement's the best way to teach rhythm. You're developing the procedural knowledge that they will need to play instruments and understand music.

The main learning sequences are rhythmic understanding and pitch understanding. This is from one of my Hungarian tutors and this is very much how the Kodály curriculum is structured:

Lessons 1-6: Semiquavers.

Lessons 5-15: New note 'fa'.

Lessons 13-21: Compound time.

Preparation = Unconscious experience.

Presentation = Conscious learning.

Practice = Reinforcement.

Lesson	1-2-3	4	5-6	7-8-9	10-11-12	13-14-15	16-17-18	19-20-21
Semi-quavers	Prepare	Present	Practice					
Fa			Prepare	Present	Practice	Practice		
Compound time						Prepare	Present	Practice

Here, for the first three weeks, this school is doing preparation of semiquavers, so in that they'll be singing songs about semiquavers, like,

[sings] 'Chicken on a fence post' and putting actions to them and starting to embody and unconsciously embed the feel and sound of semiquavers. Then after a few weeks of doing that, that will be then made conscious. Then that will be reinforced, but while you're reinforcing that, you're starting to prepare other concepts, so the three Ps are now overlapping and running with simultaneous strands. In week eight you're going to be looking for songs that have semiquavers in them and also contain the note 'fa', but because it's a preparation song, you don't want anything unfamiliar in your song that has the note 'fa' in it.

Usually, they've learned the notes 'do, re, mi' by that point, so you'll do a song like *Pease Pudding Hot*, that has, [sings] 'Do, do, re, mi, (pease pudding hot). Fa, fa, fa, mi (pease pudding cold). Do, do, re, mi, mi, mi/re, re, do (pease pudding in the pot, nine days old).' That has all the familiar 'mi-re-do' notes they've done previously, but it's got this new element in there, and so they're unconsciously recognising that one of those notes is different to what they're used to. Then you'll do a few songs like that, and then you'll make that new note they've learned conscious, and then you'll start reinforcing that. Then you'll be thinking in week 18, 'I need to start preparing compound time,' so you'll be looking for songs that are practising the note 'fa' while preparing the compound time, and then you can start breaking this down even further, so you're building on what they know but then taking it to the next step; you're building on what they've just learned and then extending it. It's the familiar as a route to the unfamiliar, and the concrete as a route to the abstract. Reading the symbols is quite a long way down the process and it's by no means your starting point.

The end goal for Kodály and for Dalcroze was that you could read music like you read a book and just hear the music in your head as you read in the same way that you hear the words in your head as you read. That was the aim, and it's like an expanded, more detailed version of those three Ps.

Robert Abramson provides a similar way of sequencing the learning of music based on Dalcroze. You go from hearing to moving, moving to feeling, feeling to sensing, sensing to analysing, analysing to reading, reading to writing, writing to improvising, improvising to performing. This last one I disagree with slightly because I think improvisation is key throughout for me, but it's just another example of a similar way

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of organising it. Every teacher does this stuff slightly differently, and it should be adaptable to your setting and cohort.

Audio is important when you're developing a music curriculum, because you need to make sure the teachers are at least hearing the right notes. Sometimes your less confident singers are better than your confident singers, because your less confident singer will worry about whether they're singing the notes in tune, and they will do things like using chime bars to make sure they're getting the right pitch. Whereas your confident singer might be singing in the wrong pitch and they're actually undoing all that work you've done for years by attaching the wrong sound to the symbol! It is difficult. I think that's where you do need training. The British Kodály Academy. Dalcroze UK offer good courses.

I think assessment's something that non-specialists find very difficult. They often don't know what to look for. They might not be able to hear exactly or even know what they should be listening out for or how to fix things that don't go right after their delivery. They're very good at asking the questions and teaching and delivering and pedagogy and knowing the children and all this stuff. Sometimes the sticking point is just the musicality, so I think as well as pedagogy training, they need some basic musicianship training as well. I think for primary schools you don't need a lot. As I say, 30, 40 hours of quality training will do it nicely. The difference in confidence, independence and musicality is palpable.

Anna Gower is a qualified teacher and has worked in various schools as a head of music and Advanced Skills Teacher across the last 20 years. Highlights include developing a transition model and collaborative cross-phase projects, establishing an orchestra of 60+ students of all abilities and implementing a new approach to music teaching which resulted in growth to over 25% take-up at GCSE. She currently teaches in a British school in Thailand.

What would you like a pupil to know, understand and be able to do in music at the end of Year 6 if you have taught them a rich, ambitious music curriculum?

Year 6 is an important transition point and I would want a child to have the confidence and the love of music to engage with music on whatever level they feel comfortable. I would want them to have a 'musical identity'. If we don't feel musical ourselves, or we don't feel like we are the musicians, because we don't play the piano, it's really difficult to make that jump into participating in music activities, and, more importantly in the case of teachers, *leading* them. So my number one priority is about developing that confidence and lifelong love of music that builds through to the end of Year 6. I would like pupils to have a wide and open attitude to music, so that when they hear a piece of music, they do not write it off as something that they don't like because they don't understand it, or they don't understand how to respond to it or to approach it or to make sense of it, but actually to have this open mind about what they're hearing, and in some cases what they're seeing as well. One of the things I love about teaching primary is how much they love any kind of music. When music is playing, as they come into the classroom, they will stop and they will listen, and they're inquisitive and they want to ask questions about that music and try to make sense of it. So having that openness is a brilliant way in for the children.

In terms of specific experiences, number one is singing. It's something everyone can do. There aren't any barriers to being able to participate if you are just using your voice. Of course, your voice isn't only about singing; you can use it for vocal percussion – you can

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make all kinds of creative sounds in interesting and creative ways. You can use digital technology to manipulate and change the sound. You might be writing a rap with Year 1, but what you're actually doing is you're teasing out, for EAL children, the scansion of the English language, or how you put the emphasis on certain words, or how you communicate meaning through simple sentences. If you're using technology, you're looking at soundwaves. So, singing is the number one. By the time they get to Year 6, the children might have had experience of singing in lots of different musical styles and expanding the range of their voices, and have some basic understanding of how to control the sound and to have confidence. Being able to sing in two-part, three-part songs, adding little vocal harmonies. By the time they get into Year 7, ideally doing some singing there, they've got the building blocks and the foundations.

The second thing is being able to maintain your own part, while playing as a large group. The lockdown did not help. When you're doing something on your own at home, you don't have to keep in time, you don't have to listen to what everybody else is doing and you don't have to take it in turns, because you can just do your thing and then move on to the next thing. Post-pandemic I'm doing lots of work on maintaining your part. Can you know when to listen and know when to copy? Can you follow this video, but when I turn off the video, can you still hear the sounds? Can you internalise musical stance? Can you embody the pulse or the beat? Are we moving to the music when we hear a piece of music play, whatever style of music it is? If we can start to have those internal responses to music, by the time we get to Year 6, that just becomes a more natural part of when they're creating and making music. The third thing is about creating their own music, which can come in as early as Early Years and be built on and scaffolded all the way through. So, by the time children get to Year 6, they understand how sounds fit together to create other sounds, and they can make more musical choices based on things they've heard. Based on things that they've played, and based on these very kind of step-by-step little compositional activities that you can thread through the curriculum, all the way through. So it is three things – singing, maintaining your own part in a group and creating your own music.

If you walk into a music lesson in a primary school, what would you expect to see those children, or hear those children doing?

I call them spines of music. Some people might have a spine called 'listen'. I prefer 'responding, hearing'. There are all kinds of different ways that you can label that one activity, which really is representative of how the children might be participating in an activity at the time. Some people might say 'performing', some people might say 'playing' or we're 'engaging' with music. Creating, composing, and improvising. Listening, hearing, and responding. My favourite one, really, is exploring. I think that music is never finished. There's always something you're continuing to explore, at whichever point of development you're at. When we're planning for musical activities that take those children through to that endpoint, those are all the things that we're doing.

Let's go down to Early Years and some of the things you do to get to that endpoint, as detailed as possible.

Starting at EYFS, we're singing our instructions, 'Will you please stand up, will you please sit down.' You can do that at any time, anywhere, and you can sing your directions. As those children go through the school, those kinds of things can become more normalised. On the one hand, you have your singing assemblies, everyone comes together and sings, and it's very communal. If you're talking about teaching specifics through singing, then it's that element of making informed choices about the songs that you're choosing, which then becomes a little bit more difficult. If I was doing the singing for, let's say, KS2, all together, the subject knowledge and the specialism and the experience that I've got would probably enable me to choose music where I could thread through some of that teaching into that scenario. When the teacher is not a music specialist, resources like 'Sing Up' become essential, because they are age-related. There's lots of guidance and notes which support people to make informed music choices. Resources are provided to help the teachers to teach them. If I'm working with a team of teachers on curriculum design, we start with their musical background and story. Everybody has ended up as that music co-ordinator for a reason. It could be because they've played the piano, or it could be they have a passion for and an interest in music. Working with a few teachers together, not just that co-ordinator,

sharing the musical backgrounds and stories, is an important part of this. It goes back to that thing about not feeling musical yourself; if you don't feel like you're the right person to be teaching this, you're starting from a very low base and then the confidence that you need to make the choices is missing. If you begin with the national curriculum statements, and then the Model Music Curriculum, the ISM support resources, and the Ofsted research report, the first thing you notice about most of those is the musical language that's used within them. The Model Music Curriculum starts off by talking about 'dynamic contrast'. The context in which those are used is very specific to a specialised music provision. We have to begin with those spines: playing, singing, hearing, responding.

Then we've got pedagogy – what are the children doing and what is the role of the teacher in that? How is the teacher working with those children? We know that as children go through primary, the pedagogy changes. So in EY, singing simple songs, 'Show me, show me.' Songs which are related to counting, things which are related to language. Repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat. 'Hello' songs. 'Goodbye' songs. Songs related to stories they might be reading in class. Crucially, this is where the 'create' comes in, some free-flow time, where you can bring a musical instrument in and allow them to explore that instrument in a free-flow situation. 'How do you think sound is made? What happens if we tap it? Do you want to come and have a look at this? How do we hold it? How do we carry it?'

So, balancing the short songs and the simple games, which teach the children some of the structures they're going to need later to be able to participate through that natural exploratory stuff in Early Years. My first Early Years unit was hooked around animals. We did a warm-up activity, which was a song and dance video, where they made the animal actions and the animal sounds. Then we drew the shape of animals and warmed up our voices by taking the pitch up and taking the pitch down. Then we sang a couple of our favourite action songs about animals; there's one about a crocodile that eats the monkeys, and they all have to snap their hands together. Then we did a snake in a cherry tree song, which is all about movement and actions. Each song was related to the animals. Then we repeated those songs, and we added the actions, and then we started to embody the beat as they were taking part in it. Then, we started to add the instruments, so that instead of a snap of the crocodile, we might

hit the drum. We might beat mark by using shakers and mark the beats as they are singing. Pedagogically, there's a lot about embodiment, about getting the rhythm of the music in their bodies. Getting a sense of pulse and rhythm from a very early age is so crucial as a prelude to introducing the vocabulary of music. If I say to somebody, 'A beat has the same distance between each sound,' that would be meaningless to them. With my Year 4s we talk about pulse and beat, and we find our heartbeats. Then I say, 'Hang on, if you find your pulse, what does that mean? Do you think that piece of music needs to have its own pulse? How does that work in your body? What keeps your body moving?' We can't go any further until we have drilled that down to those basics. I think the very basics are pulse, pitch matching, the embodiment of the sound and then selecting the activities which teach the children all of those elements. That goes all the way through to Year 6; I will march Year 6 into a lesson, in time to the pulse, in the same way that I would get EY to come skipping or jumping into the room to a pulse.

Years 1 to 6

In Years 1 and 2, we might introduce a few more instruments and expand the range of percussion instruments that they use. So, you sing something so that they've heard it and that they've experienced it, and then you would play the instruments, whether as an accompaniment or with specific pitches that fit with that song. Everything up to Year 2 is bite-sized; we're talking about chime bells and about hand percussion, which could be egg shakers, cymbals, or triangles. There are topic-based projects; for example, Year 3 are doing a rainforest project. In assemblies they're singing songs about rainforests and saving the planet. In the classroom, they're looking at *The Carnival of the Animals*, and then they're listening to other music related to animals, and trying to bring out musical terminology to explain why that piece sounds like a kangaroo! In Year 4, they're starting to learn the ukulele through call and response. We do some rhythmic activities which involve me or one of the children being the leader, and we copy it back. We usually try to do that in time with the backing track, so that there's always something for them to refer that to. Then we go on to the ukuleles and they start to learn where to put their fingers and, again, we do some call and response activities, so that they can hear what I'm playing, they can hear if they're

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playing it, and then we take turns to build pieces of music through call and response. In Year 5, we're doing a project inspired by their own class topic, which is space. So we've listened to *The Planets*. We've tried to perform some of the rhythms from *Mars*. We've tried to put it together with keyboards, djembe drums and tune percussion, and we've tried to build our own three-part ensemble performance of that. Then we're going to start looking at how we compose melodies. As we do that, we'll be looking at different types of melodies and move-by-step melodies, which are ostinato patterns. Then the children will go on to their instruments and compose their own themes to go with *The Planets*. In Year 6, we're doing some work on minimalism. So far, we have found a movie that has no sound to it. We've talked about the impact that sound has on a moving image and how music in the background tells us how we can feel about a piece of music. Then we've used GarageBand on iPads and we've created some backing tracks. After half-term, they're going to be recording their own minimalist patterns using tune percussion and using their own instruments, which they learn in our school. Then we'll be putting all those minimalist bits over the top of their backing tracks and creating our own living soundtrack.

In terms of the technical development, we don't introduce 'timbre at this age and dynamics at that age', it all comes through as a more sophisticated process, as you get older. I know schools which say, 'This year, we're doing rhythm, next year we're doing pitch, next year we're doing timbre.' That looks lovely on paper because it's got that sequence, but music exists as a combination of all those elements. Our approach is experiential in essence, but we're layering the knowledge and the technical terms into that developmental process. The child's musical development finds direction through the choice of music you use, the way that you pitch the activities, the instruments that you might give to them. There has to be some sense of progression in terms of tools that they have and the music that they get to respond to, but I don't think it's set in absolute stone in the same way it is in other subjects, such as science. There are so many variables.

When do you introduce proper music notation?

Primary music education should be about learning how music works and what's out there in the wonderful world of music for us to discover,

by making it in sound. At primary school music is first and foremost a participatory, active, social, interactive learning process. If a form of sign and symbol helps in the participatory, active, social, interactive learning process, then use it. But don't teach notation as a dry theoretical exercise. Use it in context as a tool. Give the dots and sticks names if it will help in communicating ideas clearly. Use the symbols and the language, to support understanding and the communication of ideas in sound. Music professionals/composers use all manner of dots and squiggles. They are in no way limited by five lines and four spaces. (Follow @NotationIsGreat on Twitter to get a feel for the diversity of written music language that's out there.) A good music teacher won't reject a student's own way of communicating what they want in sound; they will however make it known that the five lines/four spaces approach is the most common way and most widely used system and show students how it works in context. The other big thing to take into account is opening up the world of non-visual musical communication. Most of the world's musical cultures don't use any written form at all; it's an aural tradition. Some use notation as an aide-memoire. Staff notation is just one of many ways of storing sound in symbolic form.

There are a number of different musical approaches you can follow through Early Years music. You could follow the Kodály method which moves from singing to stick notation into stave notation. You could use colours and equivalent colours that the children are following, to go up and down the musical scale. Some people go straight into stave notation at a time where they feel they're ready. If there is something visual that relates to what they're hearing, I think they should see it. So, the children in EY will learn their 'tars' and their 'tts', and then they will learn their stick notations to go with it. Then as they go up through the school, they'll add different rhythms. They know that the songs that they sing are all associated with those rhythms and then there are little compositional tasks to go alongside that.

With the Year 6s, we will notate their minimalist patterns, because they're going to be composing motifs of music, which we will be able to notate on the stave. They should already, from the work they've done in Kodály, have the rhythmic knowledge to be able to notate the rhythms. With the Year 5s, the stepwise melodies, we'll be able to notate those, because they'll be directly related to something that those children

are playing. That's something that when we have them all together, we can just put the little melodies and the patterns up on the screen and they're sight singing and they're following the patterns which go up and down. Personally, I would start to introduce that from Year 3 upwards, but different forms of notation. My Year 4s have learned ukulele chord tab and I wouldn't teach recorders without that reference to notation, because they go absolutely hand-in-hand. What's not clear, from lots of this research, is how do these two things fit together and why are we teaching stave notation, if they're then going to go on to Year 7 and they're never going to use that again? This is the thing, you have to decide: is your end goal, at Year 6, for every child to be able to read music? If it is, why? Go back to your curriculum intent...

Composition

With the EY children, it's about soundscapes and it's about putting different sounds together and try and put some intent behind that and what does that sound like in relation to that one, is it higher or is it lower? Is it louder or is it quieter? So we teach key concepts through the hearing of them, and the elements of music, the dynamics, the pitch, the tempo. With Year 3 this week, we got the instruments out and we said, 'Okay, we're going to pick an animal and we're going to try and compose something which represents the animal, and we're going to try and guess what that is.' That came as a 10-minute chunk of the much wider lesson. In Year 4 we look at how we can use question and answers to compose our own melodies. However, with Year 4, we are also playing little songs on the ukulele, and we're going to compose lyrics and we're going to turn those into songs. Then as we get up into 5 and 6, the composition becomes a little bit more structured. I always do improvisation in every lesson; in my warm-ups, we might be moving to the pulse and we'll do some rhythmic improvisation going around the circle, or we'll do some vocal improvisation where we're using our voices in different ways to respond. We'll play a name game where we're chanting our names in different ways. Each activity has this opportunity to compose. The more structured composition in 5 and 6, is where they learn more concept-based approaches, like conjunct melodies, and then composing melodies that have that shape, as a start point. We use opposite cards; so one will be angry and one will be happy. Depending

on which card they pick, they have to compose the opposite types of melodies. Then we talk about how they've achieved that. Then we'll put the melodies together and say what happens if you put one to the other, then we'll organically work out how we compose the melody. Then an end point, singing lots of those and then writing their own.

Where does someone approaching the subject for the first time begin?

You've got to look at the musical experience of the people you have delivering the subject. Then you've got to look at the instruments, and the room you have for teaching music. Are you teaching music in your own classroom or do you have a designated music space? Do you have musical instruments available or are you going to be running a singing-based programme? Until you know how you're going to be able to deliver music, it's very difficult to choose a scheme. Of course, there's no easy answer here because no scheme looks the same. No scheme ticks all the boxes, and it takes a little bit of time to research. Many schemes will offer a free trial. Find out what other schools are using. Talk to colleagues in local primary schools. That's particularly useful because if you've got a cluster of primaries that transfer to the same secondary, using a similar scheme is really helpful in terms of transition, and it also allows for cross-school training. Do you want an online platform that people load up? Do you want a series of activities with CDs? Are you looking for a songbook? All schemes are laid out slightly differently. You should be looking for performing, composing and some kind of hearing and responding within whatever scheme you choose to follow. Returning to curriculum intent is absolutely key, because you'll very quickly lose your way if you start with a scheme. It gets very messy. Know precisely what you want music to be in your school.

The advice in the national curriculum talks about the great composers and the history of music. When planning which composers to promote to children, we need to ask ourselves a set of questions. You have to ask, 'Who are the great composers?' Are the commonly accepted great composers relevant to our local communities, or are there more relevant choices we could make to the children attending our school? Is this something that might resonate with them and get them interested and excited in music that they wouldn't otherwise experience? Are we talking

Music

about sitting down and colouring in a picture of Beethoven? Are we talking about playing a piece of music and then bringing in the context? What was happening at the same time that Beethoven wrote this piece of music? What's the title of the music and what's it trying to represent and why, at this time, might they have been representing it?

When it comes to introducing children to a range of music, there are e-calendars available online where you have a piece of music for each day of the month. Those are already made; play those pieces of music to the children in class, in their music lesson each week. Those tend to cover a wide range of different types of music. Start with the pre-made one. Then be having those conversations with the teachers and the members of the community about the relevant pieces of music that those children would find relevant and inspirational.

When you see a group of children who are playing something and you see them begin to bob their heads up and down together, and then you see them start to move, the music is embodied in the children and you suddenly see the whole room move together and everybody becomes part of that experience. Music in primary schools is truly magical when it is a communal experience.

Music: background

Music is found in every known society, past and present. The oldest known song was written in cuneiform 3400 years ago in Ugarit, Syria. It was taught from Roman times until the end of the 16th century, as one of the four subjects in the quadrivium, along with arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. It's always been part of the fabric of society. It helps us identify who we are, how we feel, our history and our stories.

When the national curriculum was created in the early 1990s, music was given equal status alongside the other 'foundation' subjects (art, geography, history, physical education, technology and MFL).

The EBacc, introduced in 2011, excluded the arts and technologies and thus began a period of decline nationally in the uptake of GCSE and A-level, which has seen numbers at examination level in music halve in a decade. It has led to the subject's extinction beyond KS3 in state schools in some areas of the UK.

The now-withdrawn (2019) Russell Group 'facilitating subjects' list has also taken its toll, as has the practice of schools running a three-year KS4,

and an arts carousel system at KS3. This has led to a phenomenon of one-person music departments, where extracurricular music is unsustainable, and innovation and creativity stagnate. The recommendations of the new Model Music Curriculum and the July 2021 Ofsted music research review seek to reverse this trend.

In March 2021, the new Model Music Curriculum was published, and in July 2021, Ofsted's music research review was released. The latter states:

'Music touches the very heart of our humanity and a sense of the wonder of music has touched human societies throughout history. Music education offers young people the chance to understand, perform and create in an aural dimension that often sits outside our capacity to describe in words. For many pupils, the music they love will be part of the narrative of their lives and bring colour to the experiences that shape them.

In England, all pupils should study music until the end of key stage 3. The requirement for maintained schools and academies to offer a broad and balanced curriculum is set out in the Education Act 2002 (for maintained schools) and the Academies Act 2010. This expectation is reflected in the national curriculum and is at the heart of the education inspection framework.¹

While both documents have caused heated debates in music education circles, they are both very welcome reminders of what music education could and should be. And while you can argue about the detail, there is clarity and vision and a recognition of the value of music education for its own sake. Once these two key documents have been read, alongside the additional recommended reading list, it is helpful for subject leaders and co-ordinators to discuss and agree with colleagues the reason why music is important for the pupils in their school.

This moves us away from the territory of 'we teach this subject because of the SATs or GCSEs'. While the external tests and exams are important, they are not the totality of the subject.

¹ Department for Education. (2021) *Research review series: music*. Available at: www.bit.ly/3k80mnp (Accessed: 15 March 2022).

Professional communities

Subject associations are crucial in music leaders' work on curriculum thinking, development and resources. The leading subject associations for music are the Music Teachers' Association and the Incorporated Society of Musicians. It should be the case that any member of staff with responsibility for a subject should be a member of the relevant subject association, and this should be paid for by the school.

Twitter subject communities are important for the development of subject knowledge because it is here that there are lively debates about what to teach, how to teach and the kinds of resources that are helpful. It is worth following the Music Teachers' Association and ISM on Twitter and the hashtag #MusicEdSummit.

Links

Ofsted research review series: music – www.bit.ly/3k80mnp

Model Music Curriculum: Key Stages 1 to 3 – Non-statutory guidance for the national curriculum in England – www.bit.ly/3y7BSQh

New Music Curriculum Guidance – www.bit.ly/3AR9kfv

ISM: A framework for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment – www.bit.ly/3sq5E18

BBC Ten Pieces – www.bbc.in/3mbPqrq

Arts Council Music Education Hubs – www.bit.ly/3iUOKoc

Sing Up – www.singup.org/why-sing

Friday Afternoons – www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk

Listen Imagine Compose – www.listenimaginecompose.com

The Full English: Folk music in schools – www.bit.ly/3k7czsk

The Music Education Council – <https://mec.whitefuse.net>