

Teaching music at key stages 1 and 2

Aims and purposes of music.

By engaging children in making and responding to music, music teaching offers opportunities for them to:

- develop their understanding and appreciation of a wide range of different kinds of music, developing and extending their own interests and increasing their ability to make judgments of musical quality;
- acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to make music, for example in community music-making, and, where appropriate, to follow a music-related career;
- develop skills, attitudes and attributes that can support learning in other subject areas and that are needed for life and work, for example listening skills, the ability to concentrate, creativity, intuition, aesthetic sensitivity, perseverance, self-confidence and sensitivity towards others.

At all key stages, music teaching should:

- develop each of the interrelated skills of performing, composing and appraising in all activities;
- extend these skills by applying listening skills and knowledge and understanding of music.

In particular, by making and responding to a wide range of music, children should be helped to understand:

- how sounds are made, changed and organised, for example through the use of the musical elements and structures;
- how music is produced, for example through the use of instruments, and musical processes including relevant symbols and notations;
- how music is influenced by the time and place, for example how it can be affected by the venue, occasion and purpose.

Key stage 2

During key stage 2 children 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 through responding physically, intellectually and emotionally to a variety of different kinds of music from different times and cultures.

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By the end of year 6, most children will have attained level 4 and will be able to identify and explore the relationship between sounds and how music reflects different intentions. For example, they will:

- maintain their own part with awareness of how the different parts fit together and the need to achieve an overall effect
- improvise melodic and rhythmic phrases as part of a group performance
- compose by developing ideas within musical structures
- perform by ear and from simple notations
- describe, compare and evaluate different kinds of music using an appropriate musical vocabulary.

Descriptive, disciplined and ensemble skills.

Descriptive and disciplined skills

The development of descriptive skills is essential because it enables children to explore the way sounds can communicate both concrete and abstract images.

Children tend to find it easier at first to make sound effects, for example the sound of a dripping tap, but they should be encouraged to explore the more abstract use of sounds, for example sounds that could describe a country scene or sounds that are pleasing in themselves.

The development of disciplined skills is also vital for all children if they are to progress in subsequent key stages. For example, a child who has not developed a sense of pulse will find it very difficult to contribute to group and class performances of songs and published music. Without this skill they cannot access many areas of community music-making.

The development of disciplined skills must be done in ways that involve musical expression, for example children recognising that the pulse may slow down at the end of a piece of music and that subtle changes of timbre and dynamics can make music sound more interesting.

Descriptive and disciplined skills should not be developed in isolation. For example, in some units the descriptive-skill activities lead into disciplined-skill activities and vice versa.

Towards the end of key stage 2 there is less of a need to make the distinction between the two types of skill: children should be encouraged to use both in most work.

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Ensemble skills

Children should be helped to understand how every performer has an important contribution to make and that the success of the end result is dependent on how well the group and class can work together.

In addition, children should learn how to interpret music written by others, for example how to achieve and increase an intended effect. And they should learn about making arrangements and using improvisation to develop given ideas.