

# The National Curriculum for Music

## Secondary Overview



**Introduction:** A new National Curriculum for Music comes into effect in England from September 2014. This briefing aims to help teachers and hubs understand and respond to the changes, opportunities and challenges resulting from the new curriculum.

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1. What's changed? What's new?
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### Key documents to read:

- [National Curriculum for Music in England](#) (September 2013)
- [National Plan for Music Education in England](#) (November 2012)
- [Ofsted's Review of Music Education](#) (March 2012)

## 1. What's changed? What's new?

The new National Curriculum for Music draws upon the key elements of the National Plan for Music Education (DfE and DCMS, 2012).

The importance of Music and the Arts within schools has gained additional external prominence; Sir Michael Wilshaw (Ofsted) recently announced:

*"The effective teaching of art, music, drama and other creative subjects is important in ensuring students experience a rich and balanced curriculum. This is something our inspectors pay close attention to when they visit schools."*

Since the inspection process is for all schools, this is a clear directive that the **importance of music as a subject within school is maintained, or where appropriate, strengthened.**

To meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum it is clearly expected that music should be **regularly taught across all Key Stages** and that the learning in Key Stage 3 should build upon 'previous knowledge and skills' to help pupils to develop 'a love of music and their talents as a musician' and 'increase their self-confidence, creativity and sense of achievement'.

The power of music to engage young people in education, to motivate and excite them, to develop musical and transferable skills, also has a large body of empirical research. The new National Curriculum draws upon this in its Purpose of Study. A summary of the review of evidence is at: [www.ism.org/news/article/how\\_powerful\\_is\\_music](http://www.ism.org/news/article/how_powerful_is_music)

**Music maintains the status of a statutory subject** and is an entitlement for all pupils up to the age of 14 in schools that must follow the National Curriculum.

The purpose of study points to an essentially musical experience – ‘to inform their practice as musicians’, where learning about music comes through practical experience; it is good to see that ‘creativity’ has maintained importance within the new curriculum, and **many inter-related (see below) processes** such as ‘performing, composing, improvising, singing, creating, listening’ **underpin the practical nature of music**. Encouragement needs to be given to ‘**creative exploration** and development of ideas’.

The framework document provides brief statements of ‘Purpose’, ‘Aims’ and ‘End of Key Stage Subject Content Statements’. The detail within these highlights that composing, performing, listening and critical engagement are inter-related, meaning that, rather than being taught separately, they should be considered holistically.

There is a greater emphasis on singing in the new programmes of study, linking to the National Plan’s aspiration for regular singing in all schools and at all Key Stages. This will contribute to the development of ‘internalising skills’ which the NC specifically mentions.

The Purpose of Study mentions exposure to a wide range of music and exploring the history and context of music through first-hand experiences of developing as a musician in a practical sense. This is not new; the previous version of the National Curriculum emphasised the importance of contextualising music. The need for pupils to access **live and recorded music** is also explicitly mentioned.

As with all subjects, there is no guidance for assessment. The previous triennial review pointed out that the system of levelling (particularly sub-levelling) in music was not fit for purpose and that **whole-school assessment models based upon STEM subjects do not work for music**. Whilst this new curriculum gives an opportunity for a new and more meaningfully musical system to be developed, there will be an interim period where schools and hubs are expected to develop their own systems. As advised by Ofsted, systems should be based upon musical progression over time, with sound (audio/video files) providing evidence of musical development over time. A greater emphasis is given throughout all Key Stages on developing musical quality.

Composing and (frequently neglected) improvising are integral to the new curriculum.

**Music technology** retains an important prominence in the new National Curriculum.

It is explicitly stated that learners should **play and sing in a range of solo and ensemble contexts**.

‘Appropriate use of staff and other relevant notations’ is maintained. This should be a natural part of musical learning as pupils explore music in different ways and consider the relationship of sounds and symbols. It should not be limited to staff notation.

The phrase ‘Musical Canon’ may cause mild panic; however, the interpretation of this should be of music across wide range of historical periods, genres, traditions, composers and musicians – essentially, as Michael Wilshaw at Ofsted points out, to **create a ‘rich and balanced’ curriculum**. In all Key Stages, teachers should contextualise musical learning and encourage pupils to explore music from a wide ‘range of historical periods, genres styles and traditions’. Through first-hand experiences of music from a wide range of musical genres, periods, structures, styles and traditions, learners will be supported to develop the skills to critically engage with music in ways that the National Curriculum suggests, for example exploring ‘tonalities, scales and other musical devices’.

## 2. What does this mean for the whole school curriculum?

Music education needs to 'engage and inspire pupils' – does yours? The Music curriculum in your school needs to be relevant, accessible and yet challenging and motivating to all pupils. There is some helpful information on creating more joined up experiences where units of work are not in silos – see Fautley (2014).

Read about the [Listen Imagine Compose project](#).

Schools should use **audio/video based digital technology** in order to capture and develop musical learning in sound-based ways. This will form the basis of a new assessment and evidence system, in line with the expectations of Ofsted (2012) and make formative assessment integral to the learning process.

Read [Fautley's \(2014\) thoughts on assessing without levels](#).

Musical learning in secondary schools must map onto, and develop from, provision in primary schools and young people's musical experiences out of school, as well as providing the foundations required for a range of pathways at Key Stage 4.

Schools are responsible for the quality of all music provision in their schools, even that provided by external partners; they should quality assure this properly and make sure that any short-term workshops or instrumental teaching etc. maps onto the music curriculum, meets musical needs and skills of learners and continues to be developed.

Musical learning both inside and outside the classroom needs to be taken into consideration when planning music lessons and activities in schools to make sure that all pupils are appropriately challenged and supported.

There remains the need for CPD to encourage all teachers to continually reflect upon and develop their practice. Time and resources will be needed, alongside additional support to create schemes of work, lesson plans and resources.

Opportunities to take this forward might include: extra CPD inset days, staff meetings, shared CPD resource packs, shared CPD sessions, online support forums, shared planning/resources, working in partnership with music hubs and other schools.

## 3. What materials and resources are available to you?

Your **local music hub** will be operating whole class vocal and instrumental programmes. You should aim to contact your local music education hub to see how you can best make use of their expertise and resources. They may also be able to offer curriculum support.

You can find your local hub and access other resources at [www.ism.org/education](http://www.ism.org/education)

The **Department for Education Expert Panel for Music Education** is developing online resources for trainees and existing teachers in order to help with interpretation of the curriculum and signposting new and existing resources. These will be available soon.

Music Futures have [launched an App](#), with a range of resources and ideas.

#### 4. Have you identified your gaps? What do you need to fill these gaps?

##### Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you have Schemes of Work and lessons which are flexibly able to deliver the demands of the new curriculum?
- Is the learning logically sequenced and can pupils' recognise links and progression?
- How are your pupils' views and expectations recognised within the curriculum?
- Are there plentiful opportunities for composing, improvising, performing, listening and critically engaging with music in meaningful and purposeful ways?
- Is the curriculum inclusive and does it offer support and challenge for all pupils?
- How does it develop pupils' musical experiences from outside the classroom?
- Is there guidance at all on assessment in the new curriculum?
- Does your department/ school assessment model promote musical learning, helping learners to recognise their own development and next steps?
- Do you have sufficient knowledge of the networks and forums that are available to support teachers? Can your local Music Education Hub help and support this?
- Are you in touch with colleagues in primary schools, instrumental teachers and other practitioners who are involved in primary school pupils' musical education?

Read [guidance on transition from the University of Sussex](#)

- Who attends any musical activities in your co-curricular programme?
- How do you encourage and support all pupils including but not limited to: SEN, looked after, Pupil Premium, gifted & talented, boys and girls? Ofsted make it clear they expect a breakdown of participation to demonstrate inclusivity and integration.

##### How to answer these questions:

- Look for examples of excellent planning.
- Explore possibilities across your music education hub to create case studies of excellent practice that demonstrate how musical learning is supported and developed across schools in your area.
- Continue to develop networks across your music education hub, utilising Universities, cultural partners, lead schools and individuals to create CPD materials, deliver CPD events and then share/support on-going CPD/resources.
- Hubs should undertake an audit of music provision in schools across the area to identify schools and individuals who can share with and support others.
- With the support of senior leadership, explore opportunities for teachers/trainees to meet and, where possible, observe music lessons in other local schools.
- Promote your local networks through your school leadership and work with colleagues in primary, secondary and special schools and across the hub to establish common understanding of assessment and progression, and to develop musical ways of assessing and evidencing this.

The **Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM)** is the professional body for musicians. We have over 6,500 members from across the education world working across the music education sector and in the music profession. **Dr Alison Daubney** is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Sussex. With thanks to Sound City, Brighton and Hove Music Education Hub.