ISM TRUST

A FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL MUSIC

Professor Martin Fautley (Birmingham City University)

Dr Alison Daubney (University of Sussex)

ismtrust.org

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

US UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

CONTENTS

ISM Trust, 4–5 Inverness Mews, London W2 3JQ

020 7221 3499

enquiries@ismtrust.org

 ISMTrust

 ISM_trust

INTRODUCTION

As a creative, practical and academic subject, Music is fundamentally important throughout the curriculum for all children and young people in all schools and academies. It is essential as part of a broad and rich curriculum, offering opportunities for learning and joyful engagement both within and beyond the taught curriculum.

A strong musical presence in school classrooms creates a living musical culture in those schools. Music lessons and musical activities delivered on a regular and sustained basis by teachers are the backbone of this work, and must continue to be so. These teachers know their learners, design and deliver learning programmes and activities specifically tailored to the wants and needs of their school communities and work with children and young people day-in-day-out, to sustain an inspiring music education throughout the years that those youngsters will be learning and creating music with them.

Young people starting secondary school have a wealth of musical experiences that they have gained and developed throughout their lives, both from within and beyond formal schooling. They do not start secondary school as empty musical vessels! Pupils commencing secondary school will have experienced singing, performing, composing, and improvising (although they may not have labelled them as such) in primary school, and may well have been playing musical instruments in classroom settings as part of the curriculum, as well as by such activities as taking part in whole class ensemble tuition (WCET, also known by a variety of other names, including 'WCIT', 'first access' or 'wider opportunities'). They will have a curiosity and knowledge about sound and music that has been developed through their wide-ranging experiences. From a young age, children frequently express preferences and opinions about music, and have an implicit understanding of music as an integral part of cultures and communities. Young people's practical experience of making and creating music is often much more sophisticated than their talking about music might show.

Music in the secondary school has exciting opportunities to build upon such prior experiences that pupils bring to music from their lives outside school. It has the potential to capitalise on the joy, knowledge and learning from informal and formal learning across their lives, and bring these into the classroom and school community to foster creativity, imagination and originality in their work. An inspiring and appropriately challenging curriculum will draw upon these experiences and competencies.

The essence of music in the curriculum is a combination of making and creating music, through which children gain an understanding of how music works. This gives them skills and knowledge to be musical and think musically, offering an excellent basis for teaching, learning and making music in all schools. Singing, playing, improvising, composing, and listening are all key processes in the development of musical knowledge, skills, and understanding, along with broader aspects of learning which need to be given due consideration. The emphases placed on these needs to remain strong in all our classrooms.

This revised ISM document is designed to help you address matters of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, bringing together thinking about interrelationships between these within your own setting. It is constructed upon sound research-based principles, as well as published evidence into effective teaching, learning, and assessment in music. A separate document detailing the research context which outlines the thinking behind this framework is available in the same series from the ISM. This present framework document provides a structure that is designed to help you, your colleagues, and your Senior Leadership Team, think about what you want from music education, and how you might best achieve it within your own context.

We hope that you find this document useful, and that there are ideas, provocations, and suggestions here that you can take and adapt to suit your own circumstances, and that it will prove helpful for you providing a strong music curriculum and musical culture in and beyond your school.

1 AN OVERVIEW OF MUSICAL LEARNING AT LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Music is both a practical and academic subject. Musical learning involves thinking and acting musically. This means that music lessons should primarily involve learning *in* and *through* music, and not be solely *about* music.

Music lessons in school should be focussed on promoting imagination and creativity, developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in order to progress their musicality. As we saw in the introduction, young people come into secondary school with a lifetime of musical experiences, which are practical and experiential, and these have contributed to their aural memory, practical, discriminatory skills, and personal and collective identity formation. Their music lessons in secondary school, therefore, should not assume that they know nothing and have no prior musical experience.

There is a need for secondary school music teachers to get to know their incoming pupils as individuals, and this is probably best achieved through practical engagement with music itself through a wide variety of musical endeavours. As has also been observed in the introduction, the range of pupil experiences the pupils had in primary school need to be valued and built upon. It is the case that this is challenging for teachers, and the incoming experiences of learners are highly likely to have been variable and inconsistent, which means that a unified approach to learning, progression, and development will need to be carefully considered and planned for.

We are living in times of change, and this is certainly true of music education. Changing modalities of music teaching and learning in primary schools, informal learning situations, and learning elsewhere and otherwise, means that pupils are coming to secondary schools with a broad range of experiences, skills, understandings, and, importantly, interests. One of the implications of this is that your music curriculum is unlikely to remain static for long periods of time; it needs to respond to the changing nature of music in school, your community and wider society. Part of your role as a secondary school music teacher includes needing to ensure that musical learning remains relevant to the pupils in your school, and builds on prior learning. Wherever possible, your curriculum should encompass pupils' musical learning from beyond the classroom. It is probably going to be the case that your curriculum will look and sound very different from that of another school, maybe even those nearby.

At lower secondary school, music teachers are the architects of their own curriculum. Responsibility for what goes into it lies within the decisions made by schools. This gives opportunities for your curriculum to be exciting, inspiring, and moulded by what is right for your children and young people, in your school, and in your community. A strong, sustained and sustainable classroom music curriculum should lead seamlessly to inclusive extra and extended curricula music making, which will be central to the life of the dynamic music department and school community.

2 PLANNING FOR MUSICAL LEARNING, ASSESSMENT, AND PROGRESSION

Assessment of musical learning should be rooted in the reality of musical activity that the young people undertake. Consequently, assessment should be of musical attainment learners have evidenced through a range of learning activities in which they have been singing, playing, performing, improvising, composing, and critically engaging with music.

Progress is made over time, and evidence from developmental musical activity is the basis for ongoing formative and occasional summative assessment which can be used to show this.

There are many ways in which assessment takes place throughout musical learning. Formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning, is fundamental to good music teaching. As teachers we often make decisions about whether and how to intervene based upon what we see and hear emerging in the classroom. This is a type of formative, developmental assessment.

Good formative assessment happens throughout lessons, including when you have conversations with pupils about their music making and musical learning, or even when you stand next to them during a group performance and, say, bring them back into time with the ensemble. It does not need to be written down, it can be verbal, involve musical modelling, or a combination of ways. It occurs in the moment, and is immediate. The importance of this should be recognised; formative, developmental assessment is fundamental in securing sound musical progress.

Musicality and developing understandings should be the centre of assessment attention; participation and enjoyment, whilst important, are only a part of what should be the principal focus. There should be sufficient opportunities through practical music-making, listening to pupils talking, playing, and trying out musical ideas, to enable you, and often them, to form assessment judgements which are appropriate to the work they have done. These are often formative, and are used to inform the next stage of teaching and learning to move learners along on their musical journey. Such assessments may be used over time to build up into a portfolio which demonstrates progression. As this is music, assessment data is likely to include audio and/or video recordings of pupil work, although we are mindful of issues regarding GDPR, safeguarding, and child protection.

Summative assessment, which should be used sparingly and infrequently, can be built up from such portfolios, drawing on a range of work over a period of time. Modern technology has made it straightforward to produce a catalogue of recordings of work, built up across a series of lessons or schemes of work.

Recordings can capture the learning process, which is equally, if not more important, as the final product. Much musical engagement in lower secondary school music classes happens in groups or as a whole class, and so it is not always necessary to make recordings of individual pupils and their work, unless this is part of the planned learning. Such recordings support and enhance musical learning processes, and are not simply a bolt-on afterthought. It is helpful for pupils to listen back to these recordings, as they provide useful learning and discussion opportunities to help further progress work, thinking, and oracy.

What this means is that assessment should be based on work done by pupils, and not just be used to 'prove' linear progression. It should be possible, and is certainly desirable, for assessment to be built using suitable musical criteria, a point we return to later in this framework document.

Well-designed lessons and units of work, planned using this framework, should be appropriately differentiated and personalised for pupils in actual learning situations. In other words, specifically targeting learning to the particular learners is essential for everyone to feel and be successful, as well as being appropriately challenged. Regular formative, and occasional use of summative teacher assessments will reflect this.

We know many schools have managed to successfully address these matters so that effective assessment remains genuinely musical and worthwhile.

In some schools, formal assessment criterion statements intended for music examinations taken at age 16+ have been re-written by music staff for use in the lower secondary school. The use of external examination or other grading systems in an attempt to chart progression towards an examination taken by a few pupils at age 16+ can sometimes be of little help to classroom music, and in some instances may actually hinder effective musical learning and progression.

The lower secondary music curriculum is designed to lead into further stages of study and a range of qualifications, but this does not mean that assessment criteria designed for external qualification purposes will transfer seamlessly and work well in the lower secondary school. It can also be the case that inappropriate use of such data from outside of music education can put an artificial ceiling on learning and attainment.

To reiterate our essential premise, in this document we recommend that pupils should be assessed using suitable musical criteria, based on work they are actually doing, and built up over time.

> "WE KNOW MANY SCHOOLS HAVE MANAGED TO SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESS THESE MATTERS SO THAT EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT REMAINS GENUINELY MUSICAL AND WORTHWHILE."

3 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

This section provides a structure for you to think through your current curriculum, pedagogies, and assessment, and reflect upon how your values and aspirations for music education are currently planned for and enacted. It takes the form of a series of questions. You can work through these by yourself, or with a group of colleagues within your school, music hub, locality, federation, or academy chain.

The questions which follow are intended to help develop and promote music education in your school. An outcome of undergoing this reflective process of addressing the questions, is that you should be in a strong position to be able to further develop and promote music education in your school, and ways in which it is taught, conceptualised, delivered, and assessed musically. They are constructed so that a 'big' question, which encapsulates a broad area of interest, in many cases a difficult conceptual area, is followed by a series of smaller questions, designed to help you address the big issue.

Values

BIG QUESTION 1 What do you value in music education?

Can you make a list of the things that you value in music education? For example, a group of teachers listed these; are they on your list?

- creativity
- enjoyment
- active learning
- inclusion
- skills

- opportunities to make music together
- singing and vocalising
- accessing live music
- expressing thoughts and feelings

Please note: your list might look very different from this! What else is on your list?

BIG QUESTION 2 How does what you value appear in your lower secondary school curriculum?

- What is included in your lower secondary school curriculum?
- Is it topic based? Or something else?
- What order are the topics (or whatever you have) in?
- Why are they in this order?
- Does each topic (whatever you use) have its own learning outcomes?
- Does each term/year/phase have its own learning outcomes?

BIG QUESTION 3 How do the values that you listed in answer to Big Question 1 figure in your answers to Big Question 2 and its sub-questions?

- Which of the things you value are exclusive to music?
- Which of the things you value are supporting broader aspects of learning?

BIG QUESTION 4 How do the pedagogies you employ at lower secondary school music support your values?

- What pedagogies do you employ? (e.g. group work; whole class performing; whole class ensemble tuition; singing; workshopping; informal learning; learning by ear).
- Do you use different pedagogies for different topics?

BIG QUESTION 5 Do you assess what you value? If so – how, and why?

Revisiting the lists you made in answer to Big Questions 1-3, are the things you say you value actually evidenced in your assessments?

- If so – how are they evidenced?
- Are any missing?
- Are any under-represented?

Big Question 5 Rephrased: Do you value what you assess? Or do you assess what you value? Or is it a combination of both?

Purposes of lower secondary school music

BIG QUESTION 6 What are the purposes of lower secondary school music education in your school?

- Is music in the lower school curriculum for everybody?
- Is music in the lower school curriculum preparation for examination purposes in the next stages of education?
- Does music in the lower school curriculum promote positive musical identities for all pupils?
- Whose music figures in the lower school curriculum? Why?
- Are there spaces for pupil voice and/or pupil choice?
- Is it designed to feed extra-curricular music activities? If so, are these available and desirable to *all* pupils?
- What is the place and role of western classical music?
- What is the place and role of musical theatre?
- What is the place and role for jazz?
- What is the place and role for traditional musics?
- What is the place and role of contemporary pop and rock?
- What is the place and role of folk musics?
- What is the place and role of music from other cultures, times, and places?

- What is the place and role of the pupils' indigenous cultural musics?

- What is the place and role of local community cultural musics?

- Are there connections between the ways in which you 'package' your lower secondary music curriculum (see Big Q2), and your answers to Big Qs 3-5?

- If so, are the connections you noted in Big Q2 made explicit in your curriculum documentation?

Ownership of curriculum, pedagogies, and assessment

BIG QUESTION 7 Who makes the decisions on curriculum in your school?

- To whom do you have to justify your curricula choices? (e.g. "why are *we* doing this?" [pupils]; "why are *you* doing this?" [Senior Leadership Team]).

- What do you publish about your curriculum on the school website?

- What do you publish about your curriculum in the school prospectus?

- Do you know if any of the topics you teach are also covered anywhere else in the lower secondary curriculum? (e.g. blues - geography and history; sound - science).

- Do you know if any of the broader skills and/or knowledge you teach are also covered anywhere else in the lower secondary curriculum? (e.g. groupwork and social aspects; analytical skills; listening; cooperative skills; literacy; numeracy; oracy; creating; critical thinking; resilience).

- Does your curriculum support, challenge, and encourage pupils to bring in their musical skills and enthusiasm from beyond the classroom? If so, what, how, and when?

BIG QUESTION 8 Who makes the decisions on pedagogies in music teaching in your school?
(In other words, why did you choose to teach it [whatever 'it' is] in this way?)

- Have you considered different pedagogies for teaching what you teach already?

- Are your pedagogies inclusive, do they provide a realistic and suitable level of challenge for *all* pupils? (Do you differentiate pedagogies for e.g. pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), higher achieving pupils, pupils with greater levels of musical experience (e.g. ABRSM or Trinity College grades, or those who play instruments?)).

- Do you know which learners are in receipt of the pupil premium or equivalent?

- Do the pedagogies you employ support, challenge, and encourage pupils to bring in their musical skills and enthusiasms from beyond the classroom? If so, how, and when? (Big Q6).

- Do you have to modify what and how you would like to teach because of school circumstances or expectations? (e.g. having to write learning outcomes on board/in books at start of lesson; having to write down targets every lesson at the end; having to give pupils time to respond to feedback in writing; having to always employ silent starters; having to be silent at times due to exams in the hall next door; having to take a register within first 5 minutes). If you do, what steps have you taken to try to make these things more musical?

- Do you have to justify your pedagogies to anyone (e.g. SLT) in your school?

BIG QUESTION 9 How, and when do you embed formative assessment - assessment for learning - in your teaching?

- What range of formative assessment approaches do you use? What are the purposes of these in different learning situations?

- (How) are pupils involved in formative assessment?

- How do you know if your formative assessment approaches are positively impacting on developing pupils' musical learning?

- Do your formative assessment approaches entail assessment for learning opportunities, or are you undertaking what have been called a series of "mini-summative" assessments, and treating these as formative assessment?

- Are there opportunities at a whole-school or wider level for you to develop your formative assessment strategies and approaches? If there are, might there be an opportunity for music teachers to share their own understandings with other colleagues?

BIG QUESTION 10 Who makes the decisions about how, when and why pupils are summatively assessed?

- What are the purposes of your summative assessments?

- Do you assess holistically? Or atomistically? (Why?)

- Do you think your summative assessments support musical learning?

- Who are the various assessments for? (pupils; teachers; systems; parents).

- (How) are pupils involved in summative assessment?

- How frequently do you undertake summative assessment? Is this timeframe decided by the music department, or is it a whole-school policy matter?

- Is summative assessment linked to musical learning processes, or are assessment lessons or assessment moments set up (e.g. class performances at the end of a unit) to do this? If so, do you know if these capture the full range of pupil assessment potential?

- Are you and your school systems separating assessment of *attainment* from assessment of *progress*?

- Who owns decisions made about processes of assessment? (e.g. commercial systems; whole-school policies; academy chains).

- Do you have to modify what and how you would like to assess because of school circumstances or expectations regarding data collection? (e.g. having to have an assessment lesson; only using evidence from an assessment lesson for grading).

- Is there target setting for lower secondary school music?

- If there is target setting for lower secondary school music, what is it based upon? (e.g. only maths and English scores on entry to secondary school; Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) scores; predicted upper school examination grades).

- Who decides?

- Does 'tracking' have a specific meaning in your context? If so, what is it?

BIG QUESTION 11 Do you know who owns your assessment data? (you; pupils; assessment manager; School Information Management Systems (SIMS))

- Are you and your pupils creating a portfolio of musical work?

- (How) do your pupils use such recordings over time?

- Does the school require you to record formative comments in some way? If so, how do you share these with pupils?

- (How) do you record grades, marks, scores? (How) do you share these with pupils?

- What would be your preferred methods of assessment data recording to make it musically meaningful? Is this in any way different from your current practice? If so, how?

BIG QUESTION 12 What form does reporting take in your context?

- How often do you have to report to:
    a. systems/SLT
    b. pupils
    c. other staff
    d. parents
    e. governors

- What do you have to report on? (e.g. grades for attainment; grades for effort; grades for engagement; test scores).

- (How) do these relate to predefined targets set by you, the school, academy chain, or statistical packages? What happens if they do not tally?

- Are you 'allowed' to report on actual attainment? (i.e. can a given grade be lower than its predecessor?).

- Does the reporting system in your context take account of the entirety of a young person's musical achievements? e.g. if they play in a local or area ensemble; develop their DJ-ing skills in a youth or club setting; take part in musical theatre; or compose and perform out of school?

- Does your school use 'free text' or report-bank statements for reporting?

- Is there a role for formative feedback in your school's reporting system? If so, what is it?

'THE QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO HELP DEVELOP AND PROMOTE MUSIC EDUCATION IN YOUR SCHOOL.'

4 PLANNING FOR MUSICAL LEARNING

What does planning entail?

Musical learning in the lower secondary school entails a programme of study which takes place over a long period of time, normally over multiple years. Planning for musical learning should begin with an understanding of where the pupils are in their learning journeys at the outset. Some teachers begin lower secondary music with a unit which elicits this information for them through a range of practical music making activities. Following this, many teachers plan a 'grand overview' of their developmental learning curriculum. This is what is normally referred to as long-term planning. Medium-term planning takes the form of units of work, and short-term planning involves planning for individual lessons within this. Good planning for musical learning enables pupils to utilise and develop their musical experiences from both within and, importantly, beyond the classroom.

A planning and assessment spiral

Musical learning in the lower secondary school is often built around five key processes as main strands, which are interrelated and overlapping. These are:

• singing
• composing
• improvising
• playing
• listening

In addition, there are three overarching themes which run throughout the processes. These are:
• Creativity
• Critical engagement
• Broader aspects of learning

Singing, composing, improvising, and playing should be self-explanatory. Listening to music should include that which they have produced themselves, performances by, say, teachers or visitors, as well as carefully chosen recordings selected for their appropriateness, such as from a range of cultures, times and places, including musics which exist in young people's lives outside

of school. Such listening can inform composing and performing, bearing in mind that it is in practical work like improvising, composing and performing where young people think and act musically as musicians.

Creativity, often defined as the original creation of a purposeful thought, process, or outcome, runs throughout all of the strands of learning. For young people in the lower secondary school this will often be "little 'c' creativity", in other words producing something which is novel for them, but not necessarily new for wider society.

The notion of critical engagement as we are using it encompasses listening, appraising, evaluating, describing, identifying, aural perception and many other aspects of musical learning that often happen in the moment.

Broader aspects of learning can include social, moral, spiritual, cultural, behaviours, values, attitudes, cooperation, and habits. These can be things which are sometimes missed, but are central to productive musical engagement and developing musically.

The idea of a spiral curriculum is well established both in education generally, and in music education in particular (Bruner, 1960; Bruner, 1975; Thomas, 1970; Swanwick & Tillman, 1986; Charanga, 2015; *British Journal of Music Education*, Special Edition 2022). We are presenting the strands of musical learning in lower secondary education in the form of a spiral. This is important, as the notion of progression using a spiral means that pupils can go back and forth, up and down, in three dimensions, and over time. Often as learners encounter a new situation their apparent attainment can be perceived as dipping, but by invoking the notion of a spiral this does not mean that their actual attainment has worsened, merely that in the specific instance in question the pupils have shifted their 3D location on the spiral.

Spiral considerations can be very useful for curriculum development in music education, as well as for thinking about assessment and children's musical progress.

Figure 1: A Planning and Assessment Spiral
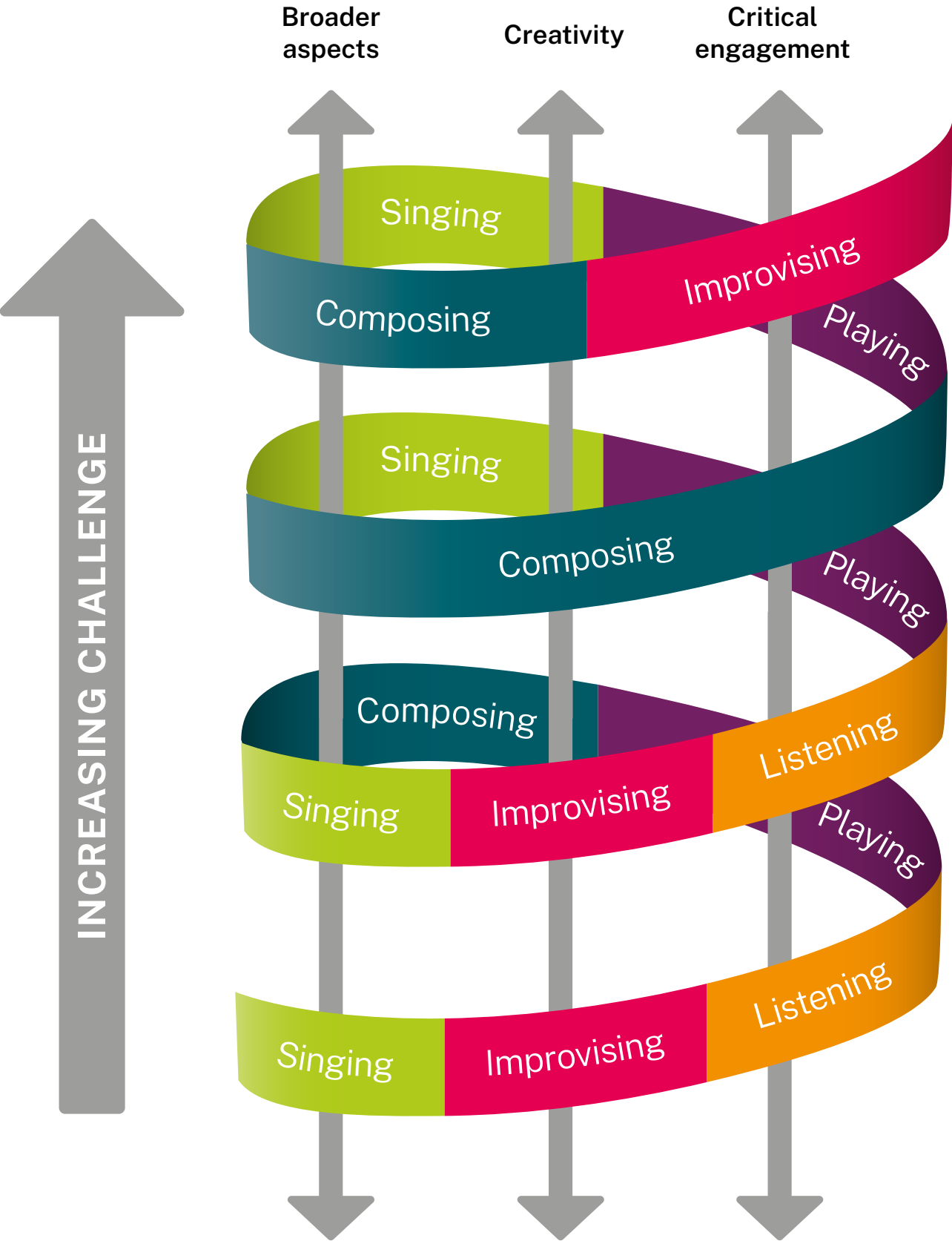
5 FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND PROGRESSION

About the framework

This assessment and progression framework is in two parts:

PART A is a planning framework designed to help you think through your curriculum, learning, assessment, and pedagogy. It is intended to help you plan, deliver and assess musical learning in your classroom. It can be used in a number of ways: for individual lessons, for medium-term planning, and for long-term planning. This has been done purposefully in order to help you consider how and why your curriculum is relevant and developmental.

PART B consists of a series of exemplar assessment criterion statements. These statements have been designed to be applicable at a range of stages of developmental musical learning throughout the lower secondary school. Some are clearly intended to be challenging to pupils at different points during their musical journey. Although these statements are meant to be examples only, they are intended to help you differentiate learning for pupils with a varying range of personal musical experiences.

How do you use it?

The boxes on the left-hand side of the framework, singing, playing (etc.), are the curricular components of musical learning. They are presented individually here in order to help you ensure that they are both included in your planning, and also assessed. However, as we observe throughout this framework, it is vital to note that musical learning happens in a holistic fashion, and that units of work and their assessment should not be atomistically separated. Teachers should be mindful of this throughout all planning, delivery, and assessment. Hopefully, by presenting them in this fashion, teachers can use the framework to help with planning and assessing over time, as some units of work will focus on different aspects of musical processes identified. However, they should all be present (albeit to a greater or lesser extent) throughout the music curriculum, and when looking at the lower secondary school music curriculum in its entirety.

In addition to individually presenting curricula components, this framework also artificially separates skills, knowledge, and understanding; this again is intentional, and designed to be of use to you during thinking processes which occur during planning. At all stages during the planning and teaching processes, you need to be aware of the skills, knowledge, and understanding you are seeking to develop, and why these are important for specific pupils, or groups of pupils, at this point in time, so the framework supports you to delineate these separately. What this means is that planning for learning must precede deciding upon which curricula materials (e.g. activities or repertoire) will be used. Planning, therefore, is based on *learning* and not *activity*, and consequently, effective assessment arises from well-defined and timely planning and delivery.

"IT IS VITAL TO NOTE THAT MUSICAL LEARNING HAPPENS IN A HOLISTIC FASHION, AND THAT UNITS OF WORK AND THEIR ASSESSMENT SHOULD NOT BE ATOMISTICALLY SEPARATED."

The assessment criteria boxes we present link back to the skills, knowledge, and understanding you defined in earlier stages of the framework. In later sections of this document, it is suggested that a three- or four- point scale could be used to grade outcomes. What this means is that any assessment criterion statements need to be *measurable*. For this to happen, the most straightforward way of writing each assessment criterion is to produce *one* statement in which the outcomes are clearly differentiated by attainment level, *not* by writing three separate outcome statements.

Having done this, in order to operationalise the assessment process, what the teacher then needs to do is note when musical activity which the assessment criterion focuses on has taken place. One of the implications of working in this fashion is that teachers need not necessarily await a specifically designated 'assessment lesson' to do this, but they can, and should, assess 'on the hoof' as learning progresses. Learning and doing can also be captured by a variety of technologies, including audio or video recordings. It also means that formative and summative purposes of assessment can be contained within the framework.

How does what you value appear in your lower school curriculum?

(Vertical label, far left): What is it that you value in music education?

Being musical through:	Desired skills	*(Why you chosen these skills?)*	What are your range of pedagogies for:	*(Why have you chosen these pedagogies?)*	Desired knowledge and understanding	Approaches to developing knowledge and understanding
Singing	What singing skills do you aim to develop?		Developing singing skills?		What is the knowledge and understanding of singing you are seeking to develop?	How will this knowledge and understanding of singing be developed?
Playing	What playing skills do you aim to develop?		Developing playing skills?		What is the knowledge and understanding of playing you are seeking to develop?	How will this knowledge and understanding of playing be developed?
Improvising	What improvising skills do you aim to develop?		Developing improvising skills?		What is the knowledge and understanding of improvising you are seeking to develop?	How will this knowledge and understanding of improvising be developed?
Composing	What composing skills do you aim to develop?		Developing composing skills?		What is the knowledge and understanding of composing you are seeking to develop?	How will this knowledge and understanding of composing be developed?
Listening	What listening skills do you aim to develop?		Developing listening skills?		What is the knowledge and understanding involving listening you are seeking to develop?	How will this knowledge and understanding involving listening be developed?
Broader aspects	What broader aspects do you aim to develop?		Developing broader aspects?		What is the knowledge and understanding of broader aspects you are seeking to develop?	How will this knowledge and understanding involving broader aspects be developed?
What would you put in this box? (Do you need more boxes?)	What skills are you seeking to develop here?		Developing skills you have identified here?		What developing knowledge and understanding have you identified here?	How will the knowledge and understanding be developed?
WHAT	**WHAT**	**WHY**	**HOW**	**WHY**	**WHAT**	**HOW**

How does what you value appear in your assessment?

(Vertical labels, left to right): Why have you chosen this range of knowledge and understanding? | What stimuli will be used, and what developmental materials will your pupils explore? | Why these units of work? Why in this order? Why these materials?

Curricula materials	Assessment Criteria	*(How, when, and why are you using these in a formative developmental fashion?)*	*(How, when, why do you use these in a summative fashion?)*	Assessed through communicating in and through music, evidenced through…
	What are the assessment criteria you are using for singing?			Communicating in and through music
	What are the assessment criteria you are using for playing?			Creating and making
	What are the assessment criteria you are using for improvising?			Exploring
	What are the assessment criteria for you are using for composing?			Notating
	What are the assessment criteria you are using for listening?			Oracy and literacy
	What are the assessment criteria you are using for broader aspects?			How are you using these in a formative developmental fashion?
	What are the assessment criteria you are using for the areas you have identified?			How, when, and why do you use these in a summative fashion?
WHY / **WHAT** / **WHY**	**WHAT**	**HOW, WHEN, WHY**		**HOW, WHEN, WHY**

(Vertical label, far right): How is what you value in music education embodied through the curriculum, pedagogies and assessment?

6 SAMPLE ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Here is a list of sample assessment statements which can be used, developed, and adapted for your own units of work. It is important to note that this list is *not* intended to be exhaustive, instead it examples ways of constructing assessment criteria for pupils at different points on their musical journeys. The criteria show examples from each of the strands of musical learning from the spiral.

Singing

1. Sings more-or-less in tune, following contours of song
2. Sings in tune with musical expression
3. Sings with accuracy and stylistic integrity
4. Sings with fluency
5. Is able to hold a melody line
6. Is able to hold a harmony line in a big group
7. Is able to hold a harmony line in a small group
8. Uses own voice as instrument appropriate to the musical context

Improvising

1. Improvises basic musical responses
2. Improvises using a basic range of given options
3. Improvises simple responses which mostly echo source materials
4. Improvises appropriately and musically with stylistic integrity
5. Improvises effectively demonstrating awareness of mood and intended effect

Composing

1. Composes a functional piece of music which meets demands of the brief
2. Composes an effective piece of music which responds to the brief using appropriate imaginative ideas
3. Composes an effective piece which uses appropriate harmonic and rhythmic devices
4. Composes a piece of music which has a clear sense of style, structure, and purpose
5. Composes using a limited range of musical ideas which involve given materials
6. Demonstrates an understanding of the principles of composing as appropriate to starting point
7. Composes an idiomatic response to a given or chosen stimulus
8. Has ideas, and is able to realise them in sound
9. Offers a creative response to a given or chosen brief

Performing

1. Is able to hold own part in a solo performance
2. Is able to hold own part in an ensemble performance
3. Can follow performance directions in the moment
4. Performs fluently
5. Shows evidence of developing fluency
6. Creates a convincing performance
7. Performs a simple part showing awareness of musicality
8. Performs an appropriately challenging part showing awareness of musicality

Listening

1. Listens carefully to own music in order to refine it after suitable reflection
2. Listens with concentration to own music, and is able to make spontaneous adaptations to own contribution
3. Is able to re-join performance on time after rests (or minor lapses)
4. Can suggest and incorporate appropriate refinements to own music
5. Able to justify choices and responses when listening to the music of others
6. Uses appropriate vocabulary when discussing previously unheard music
7. Is open to listening to different musical styles, genres, traditions, cultures, and times
8. Is able to make informed connections between pieces of music from different times and places
9. Discusses and critiques the music of others appropriately
10. Is able to aurally recognise differing technical aspects of music, such as time, texture, instrumentation

Broader aspects

1. Awareness of how own contribution (part) fits with those of other people
2. Enjoys singing
3. Engages in purposeful rehearsal techniques
4. Doesn't give up on musical ideas too soon
5. Resilient to setbacks in musical processes
6. Is prepared to take creative risks in music making
7. Deals with performance anxiety in an appropriate fashion
8. Shows evidence of emerging personal musical identity
9. Works well in cooperative music making or music creation activities
10. Shows awareness that affective responses differ between individuals
11. Is aware and mindful of the potential effects of criticism on others when giving musical feedback
12. Communicates effectively with an audience
13. Discusses and critiques own music appropriately
14. Demonstrates creative responses to musical starting points

7 GRADING

It is normally to be expected that summative grading in classroom music is used very sparingly, for example at the end of a year, a unit of work, programme of study, or other medium-term planning goal in order to show progression or development. In the examples shared here, progression over time can be shown by a series of judgements, based on the grading scales arising from each unit as discussed later in this section. Along with associated commentaries on these grades, which should relate directly to musical development over time, teachers should be able to establish pupils' progression in terms of both breadth and depth.

The criterion statements in section 6 are intended to act as examples which can be graded using a variety of marking systems. Many schools already use a multi-point grading scale. One common example is a four-point scale, such as:

• emerging,
• establishing,
• embedding,
• enhancing (or identifying pupils who may be working at 'greater depth').

However, some schools have more complex grading systems already in place. It is important to reiterate that such grading exercises, in other words summative assessments, should only be undertaken periodically, and not every lesson. Grades awarded should normally relate to a fairly substantial body of work from across a period of time. Again, to repeat what we have said before, this means that any assessment criterion statements need to be *measurable*. This means that the most straightforward way of writing each assessment criterion is to produce *one* statement in which the outcomes are clearly differentiated by attainment level, *not* by writing separate outcome statements.

For example, from the exemplar criterion statements, the assessment criterion: **'Improvises simple responses which mostly echo source materials'** can be graded using a four-point scale. For each topic/project/unit of work/ learning section, you could construct a series of, say, four or five criterion statements which are relevant to *that*

topic only, as exemplified in section 8. Assessment is then specific to the intended learning for that unit.

It is to be expected that formative assessment can also use these terminologies for consistency, and it seems likely that many schools will want teachers to do this. However, the important part of assessing in a formative fashion is the quality of the feedback conversations had with the learners, not to reductively encapsulate their endeavours into a single word. This means that its purpose is to be developmental, but done in the moment. Using the language of the framework, teachers can give appropriate developmental feedback within and between lessons to help all learners to succeed at a level appropriate to them.

When you come to write your own assessment criterion statements, it is worth pointing out that it is advisable to beware of statements which entail *assessment* by *accretion*. This occurs where criterion statements have lots of use of the word 'and' in them. In other words, "the pupils can do this, *and* that, *and* something else too". This can make it difficult to effectively grade these sorts of statements, and you are advised to try and keep your statements to assessing a *singularity*, in other words focus in on one aspect of what you wish to assess, and if you need other areas of assessment, add those in as separate criterion statements. This is especially the case with some examples we have seen where the accretion statement covers multiple unrelated aspects of musical attainment, making grading on the simple scale we suggest very problematic.

8 ASSESSMENT EXAMPLES

Having done your long-term overview of musical learning, your units of work will appear in the order in which you have chosen to develop the musical skills, knowledge, and understanding that you wish to promote in your context. This means that if you move a unit to a different place, you will need to rethink the developmental sequence of learning.

In order to illustrate possible assessment use within medium-term planning, here are two examples of how a unit of work (UoW) on film music might appear at the early stages of lower secondary learning, and then again towards the end. We are not advocating that the same unit is taught twice (although it could be), but that the intended learning and assessment opportunities are different at each point.

It is important to note that in the examples which follow we have not always directly used text from the example statements from the previous section. We have done this purposefully to show that it is expected that criterion statements will be created specifically for each topic or area of study. However, hopefully it can be seen that the provided example statements can be used as a 'writing frame' for these new criteria to be provided, which means that hopefully this will not be too great a task for each school music department.

Example 1: Film music unit early in the lower secondary music curriculum

Learning Outcomes: In this Unit of Work (UoW), pupils will learn:

Singing: To sing confidently with new classmates a song which they are likely to know from the specified film for this unit.

Composing: To compose short leitmotifs for the main characters.

Improvising: To improvise in groups a musical response to specified action sequence.

Playing: To perform as a class the main theme tune.

Critical Engagement: That music can be used to create and enhance a range of atmospheres and moods that accompany visual images.

Broader aspects: Participation in musical activity needs to be coordinated so individuals function effectively as part of a wider endeavour. Effective collaboration requires individuals to work in teams, and rehearsal time is used wisely.

		Emerging	Establishing	Embedding	Enhancing
Singing	Is able to hold a melody line				
	Is able to hold a harmony line in a big group				
Composing	Has ideas, and is able to realise them in sound				
	Offers a creative response to the given brief				
Improvising	Improvises simple responses which mostly echo source materials				
	Improvises effectively demonstrating awareness of mood and intended effect.				
Playing	Is able to hold own part in ensemble performance				
	Can follow performance directions in the moment				
Listening	Is open to listening to different musical styles, genres, traditions, cultures, and times				
	Is able to make informed connections between pieces of music from different times and places				
Broader aspects	Does not give up on musical ideas too soon				
	Works well in cooperative music making or music creation activities				

Example 2: Film music later in the lower school music curriculum

Learning Outcomes: In this Unit of Work (UoW), pupils will learn:

Singing: Not a main focus for this unit, but may be used in pupil composing, although the quality of the singing should *not* be used to judge the quality of the composing.

Composing: To compose an extended piece of music that creates atmosphere for a specified film clip.

Improvising: Not a main focus for this unit, but will be used to generate a range of ideas which will be developed during composing.

Playing: The resultant composition will be played, or realised using music technology, or a combination of both. However, the quality of the performance or realisation should not be used to judge the quality of the composing.

Critical Engagement: How to be aware of the processes they undertake when composing and performing, and adapt their work over time as a result of informed feedback through formative, developmental assessment.

Broader aspects: Recognition that thoughts and feelings can be individual and personal in response to music, and although these may differ, giving *informed* justifications for personal responses is a valid outcome of this work.

		Emerging	Establishing	Embedding	Enhancing
Singing	Criteria can be chosen if necessary				
Composing	Composes a piece of music which has a clear sense of style, structure, and purpose.				
	Composes an idiomatic response to a given or chosen stimulus				
Improvising	Criteria can be chosen if necessary				
Playing	Performs fluently				
	Creates a convincing performance				
Listening	Is able to recognise differing technical aspects of music, such as time, texture, instrumentation				
Broader aspects	Give informed justifications for personal responses				
	Adapt their work over time as a result of informed feedback through formative developmental assessment				

9 ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

For each assessment focus used (e.g. composing) the examples show one or two criterion statements (e.g. has ideas, and is able to realise them in sound).

This recognises that pupils' musical development will be at different stages, and therefore provides differentiated opportunities for all pupils to be able to meet expectations, and have a personal sense of achievement as a result. You may wish to have more than two criterion statements, depending upon your specific context. This is fine, but be aware of manageability!

As noted previously, in some schools 'assessment lessons' are used to provide data collection. It is important to note that for assessment to be used in a truly formative fashion, it is normally more appropriate to gather and record evidence of pupil attainment 'on the hoof' as the normal lesson progresses, rather than save it all up for the end. What the teacher or pupil then needs to do is mark when they notice this taking place. As we have discussed earlier, musical evidence may be captured by a variety of means including audio or video recordings both during the process, and at the end point. A positive implication of this is that formative and summative purposes of assessment are contained within the framework. This also means that working in this holistic way gives a targeted impression of individual pupil progress and attainment, and also allows for suitably targeted and timely developmental feedback. We know that many of our young people do not perform at their optimum level under pressure. Whilst in some circumstances we do want them to rise to the occasion, assessment should provide useful formative information to both teacher and learners, as well as summative gradings when appropriate; an assessment lesson therefore may not always be the best means to this end. After all, as Swanwick (1988 p.149) observed, *'to teach is to assess'*, and assessment may be best captured in the process of learning, making, and doing.

10 PROGRESSION

In this framework we have referred to assessment with relation to attainment. Many schools and teachers are also rightly concerned with progression. This framework treats progression as the cumulation of attainments over time, evidenced through musical endeavours. This will be delineated by the framework statements identified in your planning documentation, and which can be seen to be exemplifying musical progression and development in your school music curriculum over time.

The exemplar assessment learning criterion statements have been organised using the five categories of the spiral. We have explained how within each of these categories there are a range of outcome statements intended for different stages of the musical journey.

There is always a concern for manageability in any teacher assessment system in lower secondary school music classes. In order to help with this, it is possible to use the criterion statements suggested in this framework, and assemble them, specific to the unit of work in question, into a simple tick-list which the teacher or pupil can then fill in as appropriate. An example might look something like this:

		Emerging	Establishing	Embedding	Enhancing
Singing	Criteria can be chosen if necessary				
Composing	Composes a piece of music which has a clear sense of style, structure, and purpose.			✔	
	Composes an idiomatic response to a given or chosen stimulus			✔	
Improvising	Criteria can be chosen if necessary		✔		
Playing	Uses technologies appropriately to record a fluid performance	✔			✔
Listening	Is able to recognise differing technical aspects of music, such as time, texture, instrumentation			✔	
Broader aspects	Give informed justifications for personal responses		✔		
	Adapt their work over time as a result of informed feedback through formative developmental assessment				✔

As already noted, most music departments have some ownership over the content of their lower school curriculum, and this is also frequently the case for the construction of assessment criteria. Within each unit you are likely to have differing criterion statements designed to provide appropriate levels of challenge for the full range of pupils in your classes. It is important to note that these assessment procedures are intended to *support* the evidence for musical learning, they are not meant to replace it. Evidence for musical attainment and progression should itself be musical, it should normally include audio/video evidence over time. Progress over time can be shown in the accumulation of gradings, but these are only used to support the work that has been produced, which in music involves sounds, gathered in an appropriate format, which itself may vary between schools.

11 FINAL THOUGHTS

Throughout this document the importance of formative assessment has been repeatedly emphasised. What this means in practice is that the teacher will be always looking at, and listening to what emerges in the classroom, and in turn is responding appropriately and encouragingly to this. Doing this will help promote musical learning without getting bogged down in the minutiae of individuated assessment schedules and complex spreadsheets.

Great schools are joyful and creative musical places where music is embedded throughout the school and its associated community. All those who work with young people, in whatever capacity, have the potential to promote positive musical learning experiences, and engagement within and beyond the classroom through developing sustained and effective curriculum, teaching, and assessment opportunities which are developmental, inspiring, creative and inclusive.

The curriculum, assessment, and progression framework and practices outlined in this document are intended as guidance to be used flexibly in your own context. In order for this to be effective they should be tailored to suit local circumstances in your school. Musical assessment is likely to be different from that used in other subjects, it happens in sound, and unfolds over time, and it is important that whole school assessment systems recognise the specifically musical nature of musical assessment, but it is even more important that the one used in the music department does! It is essential to re-emphasise that musical assessment should not replace musical endeavour; assessment is there to *support* emergent musicality and musicianship. It is also to be hoped that whole school assessment policies can come to value music as a sonic art, and that a spreadsheet, however good it may be, is no replacement for the sound of music!

REFERENCES

British Journal of Music Education, Special Edition 2022
cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-music-education/issue/F8AB63AE70BD5F5F6FC2F21B59A76D6A

Bruner, J. (1960)	*The Process of Education*	Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press
Bruner, J. (1975)	*Entry into Early Language: A Spiral Curriculum*	Swansea, University College of Swansea
Charanga (2015)		www.charanga.com
Swanwick, K. & Tillman, J. (1986)	*The sequence of musical development: a study of children's compositions*	British Journal of Music Education **3**, 3, 305-9
Swanwick, K. (1988)	*Music, Mind, and Education*	London: Routledge
Thomas, R. B. (1970)	*MMCP Synthesis; a structure for music education*	Bardonia, NY, Media Materials, inc.

Professor Martin Fautley

Professor Martin Fautley is Emeritus Professor of Music Education at Birmingham City University. He has a wealth of experience in music education, both in terms of pedagogy, and of music education research.

For many years he was a secondary school music teacher, subsequently undertaking Doctoral research working in the education and music faculties at the University of Cambridge, investigating the teaching, learning and assessment of classroom music making.

He is widely known for his work in researching both assessment and creativity in music education. He is the author of ten books, including *Assessment in Music Education* published by Oxford University Press. He has written and published numerous journal articles, book chapters and academic research papers on a range of aspects of teaching and learning.

Along with Alison Daubney, he is Co-editor of the *British Journal of Music Education*.

Dr Alison Daubney

Dr Alison Daubney has a portfolio career as a teacher, lecturer, researcher, workshop leader and author. She has worked across all ages and stages of education and taught in a variety of mainstream and special educational settings. Alison has been actively involved in teacher education for many years and is an Honorary Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Sussex. She holds a PhD from the University of Surrey.

Alison has worked extensively in the UK and abroad with University of Cambridge International Examinations on curriculum and assessment development, training and research. She has carried out research and arts education evaluation on behalf of many organisations and funding bodies around the UK and further afield.

Alison has authored multiple books, materials and research reports including *Teaching Primary Music* published by SAGE, and the award-winning *Primary Music Toolkit*.

ISM TRUST

The ISM Trust, the sister charity of the Independent Society of Musicians (ISM), has been empowering music teachers and musicians since 2014 with award winning professional development, events, training, and resources.

Our publications include the essential *Teachers' Pack*, a Black History in Music hub and an award-winning guide to teaching primary music. Recently, we released the *Primary Singing Toolkit* (2023) and *Breaking the Singing Barrier* (2024), both award-nominated. The Trust also offers expert-led webinars on safeguarding, engaging with visually impaired and D/deaf students, music advocacy, and more.

Find out more at **ismtrust.org**.

ISM INDEPENDENT SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS

The Independent Society of Musicians (ISM) is the UK's largest non-trade union representative body for music teachers and musicians, and an award-winning subject association for music. For over 140 years we have been dedicated to promoting the importance of music, defending musicians' rights, and protecting the future of music education.

Supporting over 11,000 members from across the UK and Ireland, the ISM offers unrivalled legal advice, comprehensive insurance, and specialist services. In 2024, the ISM received the prestigious kitemark award from the Council for Subject Associations (CfSA) for exceptional work as a subject association.

Find out more or join at **ism.org**.

SUPPORT US

Help us to make the future of music by becoming a Friend of the ISM Trust, making a donation or leaving a legacy.

ismtrust.org/ support-us

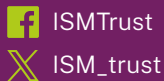# A FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL MUSIC

Professor Martin Fautley (Birmingham City University)

Dr Alison Daubney (University of Sussex)

ismtrust.org

ISMTrust

ISM_trust