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A FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL MUSIC

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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 classroom teachers are the backbone of this work, and must continue to be so. These teachers know their children and young people, design and deliver learning programmes and activities specifically tailored to the wants and needs of their school communities, work with children and young people day-in-day-out, in order to sustain an inspiring music education throughout the years that those youngsters will be learning with them.

Young people in primary school have a wealth of musical experiences that they gain and develop throughout their lives. Children starting school are full of songs, melodies, playful musical ideas and a curiosity about sound and music that has been developed through a range of mostly informal and sometimes formal experiences too. Young children frequently express preferences and opinions about music and an implicit understanding of music as an integral part of cultures and communities. Music in school has exciting opportunities to build upon these and for the joy that they bring to music from their lives outside school into the school community and classroom in creative, imaginative and original ways.

The essence of Music in the curriculum is a combination of making and creating music, through which children gain understanding of how music

works. This gives them the skills and knowledge to be musical and think musically, offering an excellent basis for the teaching and learning of music in all schools. Composing, improvising, performing, critical engagement, and listening are all key process in the development of musical knowledge, skills, and understanding, and the emphasis placed on these needs to remain strong in all our classrooms.

This revised 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 and evidence into effective teaching, learning, and assessment in music, and a separate document detailing thinking behind this framework is available in the same series from the ISM. It provides a framework 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 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 activities in and beyond your school.

1 AN OVERVIEW OF MUSICAL LEARNING IN THE EARLY YEARS AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Music is a practical subject. Musical learning is about thinking and acting musically. This means that music lessons should encompass learning in and through music, not solely be about music. Children come to school with a lifetime of musical experience, which is practical and experiential, and which has contributed to their aural memory. Their musical learning in school, therefore, should seek to draw upon and extend a wealth of prior musical experiences, both in and out of school, across the curriculum; we should not assume that pupils know nothing and have no prior musical experience.



Part of your role as a teacher includes needing to ensure that musical learning is relevant to the pupils in your school, builds on what your pupils have done previously, and points them in the direction of what they will be doing next. This could mean that your curriculum will look very different from that of another school, maybe even those nearby, and that the planning and delivery of it will be focussed on providing appropriate challenge to the pupils in each class. For example, it could be the case that you have children who have been learning various aspects of music elsewhere and we need to ensure that their experiences in the classroom are nurtured and developed.

For many Early Years and Primary school contexts, in cross-curricular learning (sometimes called learning journeys or the creative curriculum), music might sometimes be used as a vehicle to support learning in other areas, for example, to memorise the parts of the water cycle, or to provide a soundscape for a particular book scene during a literacy lesson, with a defined topic as the basis of work across a few weeks. However, the knowledge, skills and understanding involved in musical learning need to be properly planned for, and sufficient and regular time allocated to enable musical learning outcomes to be specified regardless of whether it is taught as a separate subject or linked to a creative curriculum.

Music education in early years should, and in primary contexts must, include singing, playing a range of instruments, and using appropriate music technology to both make and create music. By making music we mean the pupils are involved primarily in performing, on their own or with others, music which already exists; whereas creating music involves the children in creative processes to generate their own original music, or to implement their own ideas exploring pre-existing music and making it their own.

Listening to music should include that which the learners have produced themselves, performances by, say, teachers or visitors, as well as carefully chosen recordings selected for their appropriateness, involving a range of cultures, times, and places, including music which exist in children's lives outside of school. Such listening can inform children's composing and performing, bearing in mind that it is practical work such as improvising, composing and performing where children think and act musically as musicians.

Learning by ear is a valuable musical activity, and children will often reproduce music they have heard. This is an important facet of musical learning both in and out of school.

Musical notation exists to support musical learning. This means that staff notation, as well as other musical notations, should be used as appropriate to help understand relationships between sounds made by the children and the symbols used in whatever system of notation is being employed. Therefore, learning musical notation need not be an end in itself, it should be done to support music-making.

Whilst in Primary school, many children will experience whole class instrumental and vocal tuition (WCET, also known by a variety of other names, including 'WCIT', 'first access' or 'wider opportunities'). This is an integral part of their music education that builds on their musical education, knowledge, and experience to this point, and provides firm foundations for later musical learning too.

Music making is a powerful collective and personal experience. Music learning that creates links with children's lives and enables them to experience quality music making supports schools and classrooms to become rich sources of musical and artistic meaning, and is an important source of enjoyment and belonging.

2A A GUIDE TO 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 they have evidenced in 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 ongoing 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 bring them back into time with the ensemble. It does not need to be written down, it is often verbal, in the moment, and immediate.

Musicality and developing understandings should be the centre of attention here; participation and enjoyment, whilst important, are only a part of what should be the assessment focus. There should be sufficient opportunities through practical music-making, listening to children talking and playing, trying out musical ideas, watching children responding, to enable you, and often them, to form assessment judgements which are appropriate to the work they have done. These are often formative, and inform the next stage of their musical journey. Such assessments may be used over time to build up a portfolio of work which demonstrates progression. As this is music, assessment data is likely to include audio and/or video recordings of children's 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 children's 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, than the final product. In addition, it is helpful for children to listen back to these recordings, and this provides useful learning, oracy, and discussion opportunities. Most musical engagement in primary schools happens in groups or as a whole class, and so it is not always necessary to make recordings of individual children and their work. Such recordings support and enhance the musical learning process, and are not simply a bolt-on afterthought.

This means that assessment should be based on work done by the children, and not to be used to 'prove' linear progression. It should be possible, and is certainly desirable, for children to be assessed using suitable musical criteria, a point which we address in the next section. Well-designed lessons and units of work, planned using this framework, should be appropriately differentiated and personalised for children in specific learning situations. In other words, specifically targeting learning to the particular learners is essential for everyone to feel successful and appropriately challenged, and regular use of formative, along with occasional use of summative, teacher assessments will reflect this.

These materials are intended to help you create an exciting, relevant and challenging music education within your own setting. We hope you find them useful.

2B A PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT SPIRAL

Musical learning in primary schools is often built around five key processes as main strands, which are interrelated and overlapping. These are:



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, including 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 practical work such as 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 the strands of learning. For young people in primary schools this will often be "little 'c' creativity", in other words novel for them, but not necessarily something which is new for wider society.

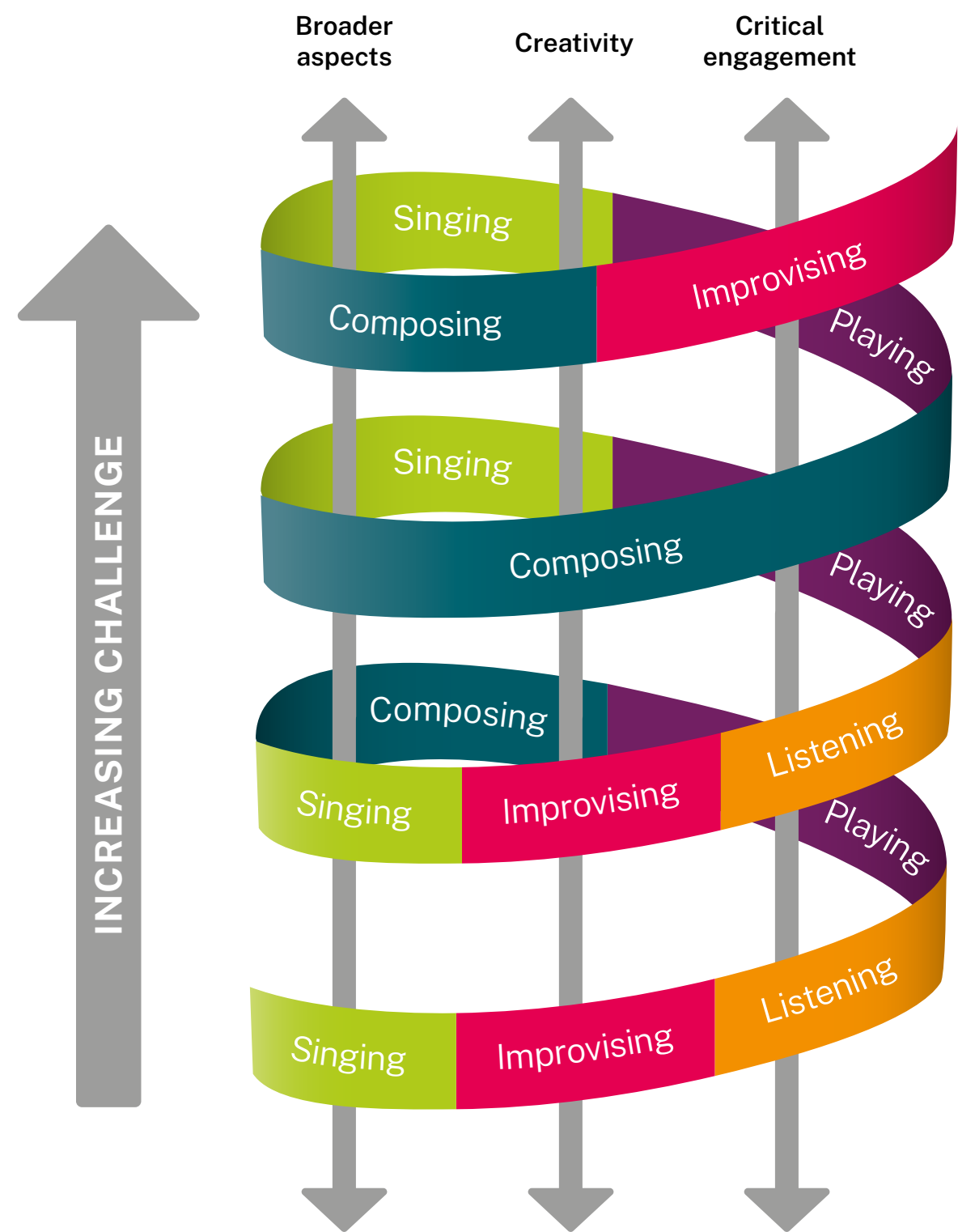
The notion of critical engagement as we are using it encompasses listening, appraising, evaluating, describing, identifying, aural perception, and many other aspects of musical learning that often happen in the moment.

Broader aspects 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 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 primary 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 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



2C USING THE FRAMEWORK

The framework is presented as a series of questions for teachers to address. There are five key processes suggested; these are singing, playing, improvising, composing and listening. Teachers may wish to add their own musical processes to this list as they see fit.

From this, teachers can plan their own approaches to developing musical skills, knowledge and understanding alongside broader aspects of learning. These will be based upon topics, repertoire, curriculum materials as appropriate to the planning and teaching context of the school.

Although modes of assessment and musical activities have been separated out in the framework, it is most helpful if these can be considered holistically.

Throughout all lessons during each unit of work, the teacher should formatively assess children's musical learning through a variety of means including listening to and observing children talking about music, making music, exploring music, responding to music, and, at upper primary level, using staff and other notations if appropriate. Teachers may wish to add their own sources of evidence to this outline.

Examples of possible assessment criteria statements across different stages of learning are shown in the exemplar tables within this document. It is important to note that it is up to each school to decide *what* it is that will be assessed, as well as *how* it will be assessed. The examples given have been positioned at four separate stages of learning which are labelled A, B, C and D. These do not specifically relate to each other or to year groups or key stages in schools. They are intended to act as examples which can be graded using a variety of marking systems. Many schools will want to adopt a 3-point scale, based, for example, on:

- not yet able to
- able to
- confidently

This three point scale is sometimes labelled as:

- working towards
- working at
- working beyond

Other such three- or four-point scales also exist, and your school may have its own (for example, emerging, establishing, embedding, enhancing, or identifying pupils who may be working at greater depth). Some schools may wish to have more complex grading systems. It is important to note that such grading exercises (summative assessment) should only be undertaken periodically in music and not every lesson. Grades awarded should relate to a fairly substantial body of work from across a period of time.

Formative assessment can also use these terminologies for consistency, and many schools will want teachers to do this. However, the important part of doing this in a formative fashion is the quality of feedback conversations had with learners, not simply encapsulating their endeavours into a single word or grade. This means that its purpose is to be developmental and 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.

It is intended that summative grading is used very sparingly, often 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 over time a series of judgements, based on the three-point or four-point scale grades arising from each unit as discussed above, can be employed. Along with associated commentaries on these grades, which relate directly to musical development over time, teachers will then be able to establish pupils' progression in terms of both breadth and depth.

3 ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK

Musical process	Desired skills	Approaches to developing skills	Desired knowledge and understanding	Approaches to developing knowledge and understanding	
Singing	What singing skills you aim to develop?	How are you going to develop 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 you aim to develop?	How are you going to develop 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 you aim to develop?	How are you going to develop 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 you aim to develop?	How are you going to develop 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 you aim to develop?	How are you going to develop 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 skills involved in broader aspects you aim to develop?	How are you going to develop skills involved in broader aspects?	What is the knowledge and understanding involving broader aspects you are seeking to develop?	How will this knowledge and understanding involving broader aspects be developed?	
WHAT	WHAT	HOW	WHAT	HOW	

Planning question	Curricula materials	Assessment Criteria	Assessed through....				
Why is this important? Why is it important now? How does it link to where the pupils are in their learning journeys?	What stimuli will be used, and what developmental materials will your pupils explore?	What are the assessment criteria you are using for singing?	Responding	Creating and making	Talking	Exploring	Notating
		What are the assessment criteria you are using for playing?					
		What are the assessment criteria you are using for improvising?					
		What are the assessment criteria for you are using for composing?					
		What are the assessment criteria you are using for listening?					
		What are the assessment criteria you are using for broader aspects?					
WHY	HOW	WHAT	HOW				

4 EXAMPLE CRITERION STATEMENTS

Example statements stage A

- 1 Enjoy singing, playing, trying out and changing sounds; explore sounds and music through play.
- 2 Recognise and broadly control changes in timbre, tempo, pitch and dynamics when playing instruments and vocally.
- 3 Sing broadly in tune within a limited pitch range.
- 4 Follow and offer simple musical instructions and actions.
- 5 Keep a steady pulse with some accuracy, e.g. through tapping, clapping, marching, playing (develop 'internalising' skills).
- 6 Listen to ideas from others, taking turns as appropriate to the context, e.g. passing around instruments, sharing, listening to others playing/singing/ sharing ideas.
- 7 Show awareness of the audience when performing.
- 8 Create music, and suggest symbols to represent sounds (e.g. a large foot for the big bear, small foot for little bear).
- 9 Make physical movements that represent sounds (e.g. move like a snake, an elephant, grow like a tree in response to music).
- 10 Comment on and respond to recordings of own voice, other classroom sounds, musical instruments etc.

Example statements stage B

- 1 Enjoy making, playing, changing and combining sounds; experiment with different ways of producing sounds with voice, musical instruments, simple music technology, 'body sounds' (tapping, clicking, marching, stamping etc.).
- 2 Sing in tune within a limited pitch range, and perform with a good sense of pulse and rhythm.
- 3 Join in and stop as appropriate.
- 4 Follow and lead simple performance directions, demonstrating understanding of these through movement, singing and playing (including, but not limited to, dynamics and tempo, starting and stopping, adhering to 'starts and stops' -i.e. sound and silence). Pupils could suggest and try out their own ideas.
- 5 Listen with increased concentration, responding appropriately to a variety of live and recorded music, making statements and observations about the music and through movement, sound-based and other creative responses.
- 6 Respond to musical cues.
- 7 Musically demonstrate increased understanding and use of basic musical features as appropriate related to a specific music context (e.g. graduation of sound – getting louder, softer, higher, lower, faster, slower, describe the quality of sounds and how they are made, combined etc. and names of common classroom instruments), supported by verbal explanation, pictures, movements etc. as appropriate.
- 8 Begin to recognise and musically demonstrate awareness of a link between shape and pitch using graphic notations.
- 9 Begin to recognise rhythmic patterns found in speech, e.g. saying / chanting names, counting syllables in names etc.
- 10 Demonstrate understanding of the differences between pulse and rhythm through physical movement, playing, singing.

Example statements stage C

- 1 Use voice, sounds, technology and instruments in creative ways.
- 2 Sing and play confidently and fluently, maintaining an appropriate pulse.
- 3 Suggest, follow and lead simple performance directions.
- 4 Sing within an appropriate vocal range with clear diction, mostly accurate tuning, control of breathing and appropriate tone.
- 5 Demonstrate musical quality – e.g. clear starts, ends of pieces / phrases, technical accuracy etc.
- 6 Maintain an independent part in a small group when playing or singing (e.g. rhythm, ostinato, drone, simple part singing etc.).
- 7 Create simple rhythmic patterns, melodies and accompaniments.
- 8 Communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings through simple musical demonstration, language, movement and other art forms, giving simple justifications of reasons for responses.
- 9 Offer comments about own and others' work and ways to improve; accept feedback and suggestions from others.
- 10 Aurally identify, recognise, respond to and use musically (as appropriate) basic symbols (standard and invented), including rhythms from standard Western notation (e.g. crotchets, quavers) and basic changes in pitch within a limited range.

Example statements stage D

- 1 Experiment with voice, sounds, technology and instruments in creative ways and to explore new techniques.
- 2 Maintain a strong sense of pulse and recognise and self correct when going out of time.
- 3 Demonstrate increasing confidence, expression, skill and level of musicality through taking different roles in performance and rehearsal.
- 4 Lead an independent part in a group when singing or playing. (e.g. rhythm, ostinato, drone, simple part singing, etc.)
- 5 Use a variety of musical devices, timbres, textures, techniques etc. when creating and making music.
- 6 Create music which demonstrates understanding of structure and discuss the choices made.
- 7 Listen and evaluate a range of live and recorded music from different traditions, genres, styles and times, responding appropriately to the context. Share opinions about own and others' music and be willing to justify these.
- 8 Be perceptive to music and communicate personal thoughts and feelings, through discussion, movement, sound-based and other creative responses such as visual arts.
- 9 Critique own and others' work, offering specific comments and justifying these.
- 10 As appropriate, follow basic shapes of music, and simple staff notation, through singing and playing short passages of music when working as a musician.

5 WHAT IS IT FOR?

This assessment and progression framework is designed to help you plan 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 and supporting and evidencing children’s musical learning and development over time.

How do you use it?

The boxes on the left-hand side of the framework, singing, playing (etc.), are 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 assessed. However, as is observed 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 planning, delivery, and assessment. However, by showing them in this fashion, teachers can use the framework to help with planning and assessing over time, as although some units of work will focus on different aspects of the musical processes identified, they should all be present (albeit to a greater or lesser extent) throughout the music curriculum when viewed as a whole.

This framework artificially separates skills, knowledge, and understanding; this is intentional and designed to be of use to you during thinking processes which occur throughout planning for learning, teaching, and assessment. 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 this is important for specific pupils or groups of pupils at this point in time, so the framework supports you by delineating these separately. What this means is that planning for learning should precede deciding upon which curricula materials (e.g. activities or repertoire) will be used. Planning, therefore, is based on learning and not activity, and effective assessment arises from well-defined and timely planning.

The assessment criteria boxes link back to the skills, knowledge, and understanding you have defined in the earlier stages of the framework. In an earlier section of this document it was suggested that a three- or four-point scale be used to grade outcomes. What this means is that

assessment criteria 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. For example, in the example criterion statements section, C3 would be written as:

Suggest, follow and lead simple performance directions:

- Is not yet able to... [working towards]
- Is able to... [working at]
- Is confidently able to... [working beyond]

Here is a four-point option:

- Emerging
- Establishing
- Embedding
- Exceeding

Your school will probably use some variation on these.

All the teacher then needs to do is note when this has taken place. What this also means is that teachers do not necessarily need to await a specific assessment lesson to do this, but they can and should assess ‘on the hoof’ as learning progresses. This may also be captured by a variety of means including informal audio or video recordings. It also means that formative and summative purposes of assessment can be contained within the framework.

When you come to write your own assessment criterion statements, is important that you are clear about the learning sought, and that the activities planned lead towards clearly defined assessment criteria.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Throughout this document the importance of formative assessment has been emphasised. What this means in practice is that the teacher will be always looking at, and listening to what emerges in the classroom, and is in turn 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 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 and engagement within and beyond the classroom through developing sustained and effective curriculum, teaching and assessment opportunities which are developmental, inspiring, creative and inclusive.

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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 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*.

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