

A Common Approach



An instrumental/vocal curriculum

A Common Approach breaks new ground. It provides, for the first time, an instrumental/vocal curriculum drawn together at national level. Building on the experience and expertise of many teachers, *A Common Approach* aims to improve the quality of musical experience for all pupils by encouraging instrumental/vocal teachers to reflect on, develop and improve their professional skills, knowledge and understanding.

Section 1 deals with generic issues, including a rationale for instrumental/vocal teaching, inclusion, a curriculum framework, assessing, practising, and information and communication technology. Section 2 uses the framework and thinking of section 1 to develop five long-term 'family'-specific programmes of study. These contain learning objectives and related musical/teaching activities for each of the programmes. Next, some examples of units of work illustrate how the objectives and activities can be brought together in an holistic approach to teaching and learning. Finally, some summaries of outcomes are provided to help with assessment and tracking pupils' progress.

To offer flexibility, the documentation is provided in a ring-binder. This allows teachers to order the generic section (section 1) and to add family-specific programmes of study (section 2). Some teachers may wish to order two programmes of study, e.g. classical and contemporary guitar, piano and keyboard. Teachers may also want to add their own units of work, individual lesson plans, teaching notes, thoughts on repertoire, etc. Schools, Music Services and Junior Departments of Conservatoires, on the other hand, may wish to order the generic section plus all nine programmes of study and use the documentation as a source of reference.

As with any curriculum development, this documentation should be viewed as part of an organic, on-going process. The ring-binder format will facilitate some periodic updating.

Preface

"The arts add quality and challenge to our lives, making us question and reflect on our thoughts, feelings and values and helping us respect the views of others. They provide opportunity for us all to explore and understand different forms of expression, appreciate our diverse cultural heritage, gain a sense of personal identity and to be creative. Creative skills and the ability to innovate are increasingly important in responding to new challenges in the knowledge economy of the future."

from *Policy to Partnership: Developing the Arts in Schools*
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority/The Arts Council of England

March 2000

A Common Approach is a ground-breaking initiative, providing for the first time an instrumental/vocal curriculum drawn together at national level. Building on the experience and expertise of many teachers, it sets out thoughts on a rationale for instrumental/vocal teaching, curriculum content and teaching strategies. At a more detailed level, *A Common Approach* provides a framework for a broad and balanced curriculum, using it as the basis for teaching objectives, related activities and for developing long-, medium- and short-term teaching strategies. *A Common Approach* is presented in a ring-binder to give teachers the flexibility to insert their own units of work, individual lesson plans and teaching notes.

We warmly commend *A Common Approach* to all instrumental/vocal teachers, Music Services, Junior Departments of Conservatoires, schools and other organisations involved in the provision of music education. In particular, we hope that teachers will find *A Common Approach* stimulating and thought-provoking and that it will encourage them to reflect on, develop and improve their own practice. But most importantly, we believe that *A Common Approach* will be of direct benefit in our common aim to raise standards of achievement and the quality of young people's musical experiences. This is essential reading and a valuable teaching resource. Please use it!

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George Caird, *Chairman, Music Education Council*
Richard Hallam, *Chairman, National Association of Music Educators*
Dame Janet Ritterman, *Director, Royal College of Music*

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Section 1

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Foreword

A Common Approach, first produced in 1998 by Faber Music Ltd on behalf of the Federation of Music Services and the National Association of Music Educators, provided a generic framework for an instrumental/vocal curriculum. Drawing on the excellent work of many Music Services, schools and individual teachers, it aimed to raise the overall quality of teaching and learning by encouraging teachers to reflect on, develop and improve their own practice. It also sought to establish greater coherence and consistency in instrumental/vocal teaching.

This revised and expanded version of *A Common Approach* takes the process a stage further by providing 'family'-specific programmes of study for strings, woodwind, brass, percussion, piano, keyboard, classical guitar, contemporary guitar and voice*. These programmes of study, based on an amended version of the original framework, give suggestions in respect of learning objectives and related musical/teaching activities, both generic and family-specific. In addition, through the units of work, some thoughts are offered on how the musical/teaching activities can be used and integrated in an holistic approach. No attempt, however, is made to provide individual lesson plans. These are the teacher's responsibility. The documentation, therefore, concentrates on long and medium-term planning.

Thanks to the generosity of The Leverhulme Trust, the consultative process used to produce this revised version has been extensive, with many teachers and organisations contributing. In some areas, thinking has moved on and not coincided with conclusions reached in the original version. This has contributed to some significant changes. The National Curriculum 2000 and the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework have also stimulated further thought and debate.

Besides a steering group, many members of which helped with the original version of *A Common Approach*, working parties were established for each family in order to formulate ideas and refine the feedback from the consultative process. These met for several residential weekend conferences over a two-year period. A consultative group was also established under the chairmanship of the Director of the Royal College of Music, in order to draw on a broader range of expertise and experience.

To all those who have contributed to the consultative process and have helped and/or supported the project in any way, we are enormously grateful.



Richard Hickman *Project Co-ordinator*



John Wittchell *Project Editor*

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* At a later stage, funding permitting, it is hoped to produce some more family-specific programmes of study.

The importance of music

"Music is a powerful, unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act. It brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development. As an integral part of culture, past and present, it helps pupils understand themselves and relate to others, forging important links between the home, school and wider world. The teaching of music develops pupils' ability to listen and appreciate a wide variety of music and to make judgements about musical quality. It encourages active involvement in different forms of amateur music-making, both individual and communal, developing a sense of group identity and togetherness. It also increases self-discipline and creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment."

from *National Curriculum for Music (England) 1999*

All children should have the opportunity to sing and to play a musical instrument. Playing and singing music enables children to explore and experience music from the inside; to express their ideas and feelings through music; to have the thrill of making and performing music individually and with others; to develop a sense of personal satisfaction and fulfilment. Playing and singing involves a unique synthesis of body, mind and spirit, and contributes towards self-discovery.

All children have the opportunity to sing and to play instruments in the classroom as part of their entitlement within the National Curriculum. It is recognised, however, that for children to acquire more highly developed instrumental/vocal skills and to have access to a greater breadth of opportunities (i.e. range of instruments), additional, specialised instrumental/vocal teaching is necessary, together with ensemble activities as appropriate. As children's skills develop, so the quality of their music-making improves, as does their ability to explore a wider range of music. These additional opportunities can make a significant contribution to children's level of achievement and their overall development.

More specifically, learning to play an instrument /to sing helps to develop:

- **enjoyment and understanding of music** – a unique form of experience and 'way of knowing'
- **sensitivity** – awareness of the expressive power of music
- **aesthetic judgement** – personal appreciation and evaluation
- **creative thought and action** – imagination, interpretation
- **intellectual skills** – spatial thinking, linguistic skills, abstract thought
- **cognitive skills** – problem solving, independent learning
- **social skills** – co-operation, communication, leadership, team-work, a sense of interdependence
- **physical and perceptual skills** – co-ordination, speed and accuracy of response
- **personal attributes** – self-discipline, self-reliance, concentration, attention to detail, initiative, commitment
- **cultural awareness** – understanding of culture and cultural changes
- **interpersonal and intercultural understanding** – a mutual respect for individual and group achievement

Playing and singing can also be therapeutic, offering a sense of spiritual well-being, while playing and singing with others helps to give communities a sense of identity and cohesion.

Inclusion: Learning Opportunities for all Children

All children should have equal opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument and to sing.

A Common Approach is designed for all pupils of all abilities, whatever their background and diverse needs. Activities, of course, need to be selected accordingly. Similarly, lessons need to have sufficient flexibility to develop suitable activities in the light of pupils' needs and responses. In group teaching and ensembles, activities need to be planned for pupils of differing abilities.

A pupil's motivation is extremely important in deciding which instrument to play. There are few obstacles that a determined pupil will not overcome. However, care should be taken to ensure that pupils' physical development is not put at risk, particularly when teaching young children. Physical damage may occur at a later stage if there is lack of awareness of potential problems when pupils start learning.

Instrumental/vocal tuition should be appropriate to the age and development of pupils, and should always be adapted to individual needs. This may mean:

- recognising pupils' interest and ability, especially if they cannot always convey it
- adapting or selecting instruments for pupils with severe physical disabilities, e.g. providing special supports
- changing the order of the curriculum
- adapting repertoire and activities so that they are relevant and attractive to pupils
- selecting other resources, such as large print, raised notations or ICT
- building on pupils' language, social, emotional, cognitive and physical development

Although there are fundamental differences between instrumental/vocal tuition and music therapy, there may be some areas of overlap. Indeed, some instrumental/vocal teachers may have a particular interest or training in therapy and may wish to adapt activities for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) or profound multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). In these circumstances, the learning objectives and activities outlined in *A Common Approach* will probably need to be adapted.

Instrumental/vocal tuition provides a natural extension of opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. Recognising and nurturing these pupils is an important responsibility. Indicators may include high levels of commitment, self-motivation, enthusiasm, interest and musical independence. *A Common Approach* provides a challenging curriculum, the programmes offering sufficient flexibility to encourage able pupils to progress quickly and to develop a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding.

Sometimes children from minority groups may need positive encouragement to participate in activities and will often not do so if perceived barriers are placed in their way. For all children, however, teaching that is predominantly steeped in one tradition may be less attractive than that which acknowledges the diversity and richness of music. Approaches that recognise and explore music from different cultures and traditions, including recent popular music, may be of more immediate interest. The guiding principles, therefore, should be: first, to choose musical repertoire on the basis of intrinsic value; second, to ensure that there is breadth and balance of styles from different cultures, times and places.

At present, charges for part or all of the cost of instrumental/vocal tuition are frequently passed on to parents. It is the intention of the current government to ensure that, over time, all primary-school pupils in the maintained sector who want to will be able to learn a musical instrument¹. *A Common Approach* is predicated on the principle of access for all, regardless of the ability to pay.

¹ Department for Education and Skills (2001) 'Schools – Achieving Success', *Government White Paper*

Commitment

Learning to play an instrument and / or to sing requires effort and persistence. Starting at an early age, preferably at least two years before secondary school, and allowing pupils to learn instruments of their choice, helps considerably towards nurturing and developing commitment. An early start can also help children to reach a self-perceived 'acceptable level of attainment' prior to adolescence and a range of competing interests.

In order to encourage continuity and progression, and to help develop and maintain motivation, it is strongly urged that all pupils should attend two 'directed' sessions each week during term-time, all sessions lasting for a minimum of 30 minutes. Appropriate activities could include, for example:

- an instrumental lesson plus a teacher-supervised practice session
- an instrumental lesson plus a band, jazz group or orchestra session
- two large-group lessons
- a singing lesson plus a choir rehearsal
- a piano lesson plus playing duets / chamber music

Pupils with only one lesson per week have to wait a long time between one lesson and the next! A second 'directed' session each week helps to sustain interest. Members of an ensemble can also provide each other with a valuable source of support and encouragement. *A Common Approach*, as with the original publication, is based on the premise that a broad and balanced instrumental / vocal curriculum involves both making music individually and with others. Each activity reinforces the other.

All pupils need support and encouragement. Teachers, parents / carers, schools, community music centres and other organisations all have their part to play. Other ways of developing pupils' motivation and commitment include:

- enabling them to make music with others
- offering structured learning goals, such as performing in concerts and taking examinations
- encouraging them to listen to music, including tapes or CDs of music to be learnt
- taking them to hear live music

Listening

Listening is fundamental to all musical activity and experience. Pupils need to listen:

- in audience to live and recorded music, for pleasure and enjoyment, to understand how sounds are made, organised and used, and to develop deeper appreciation
- when playing / singing in order to improve and refine their technical skills, to interpret and communicate the character of the music
- when improvising and composing in order to make decisions about particular effects and outcomes in music

It is vital to develop pupils' listening skills in each of these three areas. Sometimes pupils' listening skills are comparatively well developed in performing and in improvising / composing but are less well developed in reflecting and evaluating. This lack of experience can be addressed by encouraging pupils, from the earliest stages of learning, to listen to their teacher performing and to listen to recorded music and live performances. These experiences can provide a stimulus for practising, improving skills, knowledge and understanding, and motivating pupils to explore new music for themselves.

A Common Approach

AIMS

A Common Approach aims to sustain and build on improvements made to instrumental / vocal teaching and learning over recent years. In particular, *A Common Approach*:

- encourages an holistic approach to teaching and learning
- provides broad and balanced family-specific programmes of study
- suggests learning objectives and related musical / teaching activities
- seeks to strengthen agreed levels and standards of pupil attainment
- illustrates how musical / teaching activities can be used and integrated within units of work
- provides models of:
 - long-term planning, e.g. the framework and programmes of study
 - medium-term planning, e.g. the units of work
 - short-term planning, e.g. the template for individual lessons
- offers guidance on planning and assessment

OVERVIEW

The framework provides the foundation for each of the five programmes of study (please see Section 2). These identify what should be taught from beginner to advanced levels. For each programme, learning objectives are suggested, together with related musical / teaching activities. Some of the objectives and activities are generic, others are family-specific. Next follow family-specific units of work. These are included to exemplify how activities can be combined, either over a period of several weeks, or in order to illustrate a particular approach. In addition, a template for individual lessons provides a tool for short-term planning. Finally, summaries of learning objectives and outcomes are included to help with assessing pupils' attainment and progression.

THE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

The five programmes of study provide an aid to long-term planning. They identify the range of skills, knowledge and understanding that should be included at various stages of learning in an instrumental / vocal curriculum.

Four themes recur throughout the five programmes. These underpin the importance of an integrated approach to teaching and learning. They are:

- expressing ideas and feelings
- using creativity, imagination and intuition
- developing skills, knowledge and understanding
- reflecting on and evaluating progress

These recurring themes inform six interrelated areas of musical experience. They are:

- listening and internalising
- making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique
- creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas
- playing / singing music
- playing / singing music with others
- performing and communicating

The Generic Framework

Pupils should be offered broad and balanced programmes of study that promote and develop musical playing and singing.

They should be given opportunities to:

- ▶ *express their musical ideas and feelings*
- ▶ *use their creativity, imagination and intuition*
- ▶ *develop their skills, knowledge and understanding*
- ▶ *reflect on and evaluate their progress*

through the interrelated areas of:

A. listening and internalising

including:

- listening to music with concentration in and out of lessons, building on their experiences
- having a clear aural perception of the music to be played / sung
- recognising and discriminating between the musical elements of pulse, pitch, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, texture, and tone colour
- recognising and conveying structural elements in their playing / singing
- making links between sound and symbols when using notation

B. making and controlling musical sounds : developing technique

including:

- posture and freedom of movement
- tone quality and intonation
- articulation and co-ordination
- breathing, fingering, embouchure and diction, etc.

C. creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas

including:

- improvising expressively
- applying their instrumental /vocal skills in composing
- interpreting music, developing a personal response

D. playing /singing music

including:

- working out how to play / sing music by ear
- repeating musical patterns and phrases accurately from memory
- playing /singing pieces in a variety of styles with fluency, expression and understanding
- memorising pieces / songs that have been learnt
- reading and playing /singing music at sight*

E. playing / singing music with others

including:

- listening, watching, responding and leading
- contributing to collective decisions, including interpretation

F. performing and communicating

including:

- interpreting and communicating the character of the music
- evaluating their performances and making improvements

* where appropriate

An Holistic approach to Teaching and Learning

There are many valid ways of categorising musical experience. The six interrelated areas identified above, however, should be viewed as a whole and not as hierarchical. The intention is that together they offer teachers sufficient flexibility to plan interrelated activities that are true to the intrinsic nature of music. This holistic approach to planning is central to *A Common Approach* and is reflected throughout the documentation.

An example of teaching a piece holistically:

- perform the piece to pupils and discuss with them the overall effect
- jointly analyse the piece, i.e. in relation to mood, character, style, structure
- teach the piece to pupils, breaking it into manageable chunks so that a little is learnt at a time
- demonstrate aspects of the piece to pupils, e.g. shaping of phrases, expression marks, and encourage them to use their aural and reading skills as the piece is absorbed
- make use of and devise (as necessary) appropriate exercises and scales to help pupils acquire technical accuracy and control
- encourage pupils to explore expressive possibilities from the outset
- assess progress and identify achievements and areas for improvements so that pupils learn to identify what needs attention, how to identify tricky passages and how to make improvements
- set short-term targets for practice at home, structuring the amount of time to cover technical and musical skills and establish a daily routine for pupils
- build up pupils' fluency within a realistic time-frame (according to individual needs)
- revisit technical and musical problems in lessons and suggest ways in which pupils can practise independently
- help pupils to refine their musical performance and convey the character of the music
- teach pupils how to improvise /compose a short piece based on ideas from the original piece
- where possible, listen to performances of music in the same genre and discuss
- arrange an informal and /or formal assessment as appropriate, e.g. pupils perform to teacher or to others in a concert or examination

Continuity and Progression

The five programmes of study track the progress of pupils from the beginner stage to the advanced and provide a tool for long-term planning. Each programme exemplifies a layer of attainment that builds on and incorporates prior learning. Thus progression is evident in the:

- **Depth** of skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils are able to demonstrate. This is shown in the demand of the activities, for example by playing/singing more challenging music.
- **Breadth** of the musical activities and repertoire undertaken. This is shown in the range of learning objectives and activities, for example the variety of cultural styles.
- **Quality** of the outcome. This is shown in the confidence, independence and ownership demonstrated by the pupils, for example performing with fluency, expression and sensitivity.

The five programmes describe progression in this multidimensional way. They also reflect other ways in which young people often develop as musicians. In Programme 1, for example, the expected outcomes feature the pupils' control of musical materials. In Programme 2, the emphasis is placed on the increasing awareness of expressive possibilities. By Programme 3, pupils are more likely to be aware of structural relationships in music and to be able to convey this in their music-making. At the level of Programme 4, pupils should be able to demonstrate a more perceptive understanding of musical idioms, for instance in their interpretations. Finally, in Programme 5, expectations focus on pupils' ability to invest their music-making with a greater sense of critical and personal ownership.

These outcomes are only broad indicators of attainment and it may be that some pupils will be working across several programmes simultaneously. For example, a late starter may be working in Programme 1, but also playing with expressive sensitivity (a feature of Programme 2) and showing considerable personal ownership (Programme 5). These differentiated responses should be expected and planned for so that a pupil's potential is not underestimated.

Similarly, the programmes are neither time nor age-related. Pupils inevitably progress at different speeds, depending on such factors as age, previous experience and ability. Indeed, pupils may be ready to move to a higher programme in some areas but not in others. The framework, however, is sufficiently flexible to allow teachers to take account of these differentiated outcomes when planning their lessons and to encourage pupils to move on to the next programme when appropriate. Flexibility is the key to planning.

Equivalence of Programmes of study

The following table illustrates possible reference points to the National Qualifications Framework, to graded music examinations and levels of the National Curriculum.

| A Common Approach | National Qualifications Framework | Graded Music Examinations | National Curriculum / GCSE, etc. |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Programme 1 | Entry | (Pre-grade 1) | (National Curriculum levels 1-3) |
| Programme 2 | 1: Foundation | (Grade 1) | |
| Programme 3 | 1: Foundation | (Grades 2 - 3) | (GCSE) |
| Programme 4 | 2: Intermediate | (Grades 4 - 5) | (GCSE A* - C) |
| Programme 5 | 3: Advanced | (Grades 6 - 8) | (A level) |

Group / individual lessons

Some instruments and/or stages of learning are more suited to group teaching, others are more suited to individual teaching. The learning objectives and activities given here in the programmes of study and units of work can be used in both, although some may need to be adapted.

Here are some pupils' comments on the perceived advantages of both types of lessons:

"I enjoy group lessons. I can learn from the mistakes of others. Also, I find it helpful to have my playing criticised constructively by my friends. It's fun playing quartets in lessons."

"I prefer individual lessons. I get more time and attention. It's better when preparing for exams and concerts. It's also easier to get to know your teacher."

Related Musical / Teaching Activities and Notes

The suggested related musical/teaching activities are designed to stimulate reflection and to help teachers match the range of work to the needs of pupils, either in group or individual lessons, the intention being to complement rather than replace teachers' successful strategies.

Activities are grouped under one of the six areas so that they are clearly related to learning objectives. Most activities are relevant to more than one area, just as they could fulfil more than one objective. In selecting activities, the holistic nature of music should be kept in mind. For example, an activity under the heading of 'listening and internalising', may be equally applicable to 'performing and communicating' and/or 'making and controlling musical sounds'.

Where appropriate, notes have been added to provide further information on the activity. These may illustrate a particular approach, suggest an extension activity, provide a useful tip or perhaps clarify a technical point.

The activities relate to each 'family', e.g. woodwind, piano. Of course, the list of activities is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the suggestions will help teachers as they plan their activities for lessons and units of work.

Units of Work

INTRODUCTION

A unit of work is a medium-term plan, often spanning several weeks², which guides a sequence of lessons. The specimen units provided here show how activities can be drawn together and used in an holistic approach. The units aim to:

- illustrate how a sequence of lessons can be devised, drawing on a variety of suitable activities
- convey the musical context of lessons and the holistic nature of music-making
- illustrate progression and continuity in relation to the needs of pupils
- show how particular aspects of teaching can be structured

The units provide examples of different approaches for each family. Starting points could be musical, performing or technical, drawing on appropriate activities within the programmes of study. Some units relate to a particular programme and time-span, others extend over several programmes.

Of course, some lessons will probably be independent of units. Nevertheless, it is important to have a clear idea of what is to be taught in the medium term and also to be able to devise teaching strategies for particular objectives. It is hoped, therefore, that teachers will find the template useful in developing their own units of work.

² Units identify activities and progression over an anticipated medium-term time-scale. This may be of half a term or a whole term's duration, or possibly longer.

Notes on Units of Work

1. Each unit should build on pupils' prior learning and musical experiences. (See box in template.)
2. Learning objectives should be selected in relation to the needs of the learners. They should outline the steps involved in acquiring and developing the musical skills, knowledge and understanding within the focus of the unit.
3. Activities should relate to chosen objectives and be based on pupils' interests. Using the six strands, they should encompass listening, creating and developing musical ideas, playing, singing and performing.
4. Activities should facilitate the progress that is anticipated throughout the unit.
5. Expectations should be broad descriptions of what pupils will be able to do by the end of each unit. Here, they are described in three levels of expectations:
 - the expected attainment of all pupils, including those who make relatively slow progress
 - the expected attainment of the majority of pupils who make average progress
 - the expected attainment of those pupils who make quick progress
6. 'Points to note' should include details on other important issues, such as teaching, practice, assessment, self-evaluation, extension and enrichment opportunities.
7. Reference should be made to repertoire and resources. Whilst repertoire is always changing, examples chosen should have intrinsic value and reflect a breadth of styles and traditions. Ways of introducing ICT could also be identified in units of work.

Unit of Work template

| PROGRAMME(S) | | |
|--|--|--|
| Title of unit | Focus of unit (a brief description of the unit) | Where the unit fits in (how it builds on prior learning) |
| Length | | |
| Learning objectives (in relation to the programmes of study) | Possible teaching activities (based on holistic learning) | Points to note (e.g. extension activities, practice differentiation, assessing, illustrations, teaching hints) |
| Repertoire and resources | Expectations: by the end of the unit all pupils will: most pupils will: some will have progressed further and will: | |

Short-term Planning

LESSON PLANS

The content (objectives and activities) for each lesson should be planned in advance. This is a critical element of good practice. The lesson template has been designed to facilitate effective and manageable short-term planning. It provides a tool for teachers to plan from week to week, noting the response of pupils and identifying objectives and activities for the next lesson. Recognising that some teachers are often involved with a large number of pupils and have to travel between several schools in a day, it is advisable to keep records manageable and to ensure that they are updated frequently. The plan can also be used effectively in conjunction with pupils' diaries or notebooks, so that pupils, parents and others are clearly aware of what is to be practised.

Much instrumental/vocal teaching is, of course, of a diagnostic nature and thus requires a flexible approach. Indeed, the best-aid plans often have to be adapted to meet unexpected circumstances or responses of pupils. The intuitive teacher will capitalise on changes to the original plan, note the outcomes and incorporate them into the plan for the next lesson. By keeping brief plans for each lesson, teachers are better placed to change the direction of the lesson and move into diagnostic mode. They are also well prepared for the next lesson, without having to check with pupils what was taught the previous week!



Short-term Planning and Recording template

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Name(s)/Group | Term | Year |
| Targets for the term | Current attainment | |
| | Programme | Grade |

| Date | Objectives and activities | Lesson outcomes and achievements |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |
| 6. | | |
| 7. | | |
| 8. | | |
| 9. | | |
| 10. | | |
| 11. | | |
| 12. | | |
| Record of work (e.g. pieces, studies, scales and exercises, aural, playing/singing at sight, duets/ensembles, improvisation/composition, performances) | | |
| End-of-term summary | | |

Assessment, recording and reporting

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It is a way of measuring what pupils can do, know and understand. At an informal level, assessing is the judgement that teachers and pupils make about the pupil's work, supported by the teacher's questioning and discussion. This on-going 'formative' assessment lies at the heart of teaching and learning. It is through formative assessment that progress is reviewed and teachers and pupils decide what needs to be done next. Formative assessment is complemented by 'summative' assessment. At this formal level, pupils are assessed by performing to others or by taking examinations. This type of assessment can be particularly useful for reporting overall progress in skills, knowledge and understanding.

Musical judgements of a qualitative nature cannot always be captured neatly in marks and grades. For example, some aspects of performance and interpretation can pose particular assessment problems. Interpretation is personal to the performer and performance is transitory by nature. In addition, teachers' opinions vary³. The criteria given in the summaries of learning outcomes at the end of section 2 are designed to help teachers make their judgements as reliable and valid as possible. But caution should be exercised. Assessing performances by a particular set of criteria may not necessarily convey the whole picture. Sometimes performances go beyond criteria and are more than the sum of the individual parts.

There are, of course, crucial elements of assessment apart from attainment. Pupils' effort should be referred to as well. For instance, the effort of a pupil with less ability can be high, even if the attainment is relatively low. Likewise, pupils with special educational needs often make worthwhile progress, even though they may have developed only modest technical skills. When assessing pupils, teachers should take care to separate attainment and effort, and to formulate additional criteria as necessary.

RECORDING

Recording involves gathering and storing pupils' significant pieces of work. It enables teachers to track pupils' progress and forms the basis for reporting and planning. Manageability is a key factor. Brief assessments can be made and logged at any time but it is advisable to keep them clear and simple. It is impossible to assess everything at once and probably best to focus on specific areas of skills, knowledge or understanding. Sometimes pupils gain a clearer idea about what they have achieved and what needs further attention through making their own independent notes. The use of audio and video recordings can be useful for this purpose.

REPORTING

The summaries of outcomes at the end of Section 2 identify the level of attainment for the majority of pupils and are arranged so that teachers can use them to review and assess their pupils' progress and agree targets for future work. The descriptions can also be used to give feedback, record attainment and report to parents and schools. It is suggested they are used in conjunction with other areas of the framework so that a complete picture of pupils' progress can be formed.

Many Music Services, Junior Departments of Conservatoires, schools and private teachers have devised their own report forms covering areas of attainment, progress, attendance and effort. Reports usually identify what pupils can do, know and understand. They may also identify areas for improvement. When writing reports, clear, concise language free from technical terms is advisable. Regular reporting keeps parents / carers and schools informed and can provide an early warning system should any problems arise.

³ DANIEL, R (2001) 'Self-assessment in performance', *British Journal of Music Education*, **18,3**, 227

Practising

INTRODUCTION

Practice and progress go hand in hand. Research indicates that there is a clear correlation between the attainment of musicians and the amount of time spent in constructive practice⁴. The quality, duration and regularity of practice are fundamentally important to all young people who make music, whether formally or informally. Regular and methodical practice reinforces the acquisition of musical and technical skills, and musical independence. But practice requires creative thinking. Too often it is regarded as drudgery. However, when pupils are taught how to practise musically, they can find it rewarding and enjoyable.

Practice also enables pupils to improve broader skills, including:

- using their time effectively
- increasing their independence and ownership of their work
- setting their own targets and working towards achieving given objectives
- evaluating their work and progress and suggesting improvements
- solving problems and focusing on knowing *how* as well as *what* to learn
- developing creative-thinking skills by working imaginatively and reflectively

In many ways, lessons are a preparation for practice. Teachers work with, and demonstrate to, their pupils, formulating short-term targets and providing guidance for structuring their practice during the week. Pupils then develop the ideas and practise them independently. Practice is most effective if distributed evenly throughout the week: at first in short sessions, perhaps helped by parents / carers, and then increasing the sessions as pupils develop independent learning skills. Pupils need to be taught how to practise most effectively. Repetition goes so far but specific practice strategies are needed in order to develop many of the skills of playing and singing and to make the most effective use of the available time.

⁴ HALLAM, S (2001) 'The development of metacognition in musicians: implications for education', *British Journal of Music Education*, **18,1**,37

See also DAVIDSON, J W, HOWE, M J A, and SLOBODA, J A (1997) 'Environmental factors in the development of music performance skills', in *The Social Psychology of Music*, ed. D J Hargreaves and A C North, pp. 192 - 5. See also HALLAM, S (1998) *Instrumental Teaching: a practical guide to better teaching and learning*, Heinemann

RELATIONSHIP TO THE PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

Practice strategies may relate to the programmes of study in the following ways:

listening and internalising

- developing aural and critical listening
- playing/singing by ear familiar tunes
- memorising a piece
- remembering what was done in lessons when practising pieces
- using notational skills when learning new pieces or sections

making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique

- using appropriate warm-up exercises
- developing physical strength and stamina
- consolidating and extending sound technical habits
- repeating technical work to play/sing with increasing fluency
- practising technical exercises allied to pieces being learnt

creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas

- improvising on given musical ideas or stimuli
- composing pieces
- experimenting and making interpretative decisions

playing/singing music

- attending to expressive and stylistic features
- revisiting pieces already learnt
- practising sight-reading new pieces where appropriate
- practising individual parts of an ensemble

playing/singing music with others

- checking intonation, e.g. tuning of chords
- improving the ensemble, e.g. rhythmic co-ordination, balance between parts
- discussing interpretative elements

performing and communicating

- refining a piece ready for performance
- practising performing to others

PRACTICE ROUTINES

Practice routines need to take account of individual circumstances. Common features of effective practice routines include:

- identifying the main areas of practice, and what needs attention, beforehand
- checking timings for different parts of practice and using time effectively
- using enjoyable and relevant warm-up exercises
- gaining an overview of whole pieces or movements
- isolating and practising difficult bars/notes/phrases
- making, and then integrating, improvements
- incorporating sufficient repetition
- attending to expressive, stylistic and interpretative elements
- revising and reviewing pieces already learnt
- improvising on related themes
- creating new music
- recording a simulated performance, listening and self-evaluating
- playing and singing for fun and satisfaction

It is worth remembering that many self-taught musicians develop skills intuitively and independently, motivated solely by enjoyment and satisfaction. Through trial and error, repetition and rehearsal, they develop appropriate skills, imitating others, refining their work, imposing their own discipline and developing personal autonomy, a characteristic that all musicians need.

PROGRESSION IN PRACTICE

Pupils develop practice skills as they mature and gain confidence. In supporting pupils' practice, it is helpful for teachers and parents/carers to bear in mind ways in which routines may change. In the early stages of learning, encouragement and support are needed, with an emphasis on enjoyment. Gradually, however, as practice becomes part of the daily routine, it can be more orientated towards specific targets. Pupils should also become more independent and make decisions about their own learning. Older pupils are usually more reflective and self-determined as they evaluate strengths and weaknesses. Finally, advanced pupils should take responsibility for their own learning, prioritising their practice in relation to other activities in their lives.

PRACTICE STRATEGIES

The following table illustrates the development of effective practice strategies, beginning with those that are generally appropriate for younger pupils, progressing to those that are suitable for older pupils, including adults.

YOUNGER PUPILS

| | |
|---|---|
| ● | • feel relaxed about their practice and are in a quiet and comfortable environment |
| ● | • know the sounds of what they are going to play / sing |
| ● | • understand exactly what they are required to practise before leaving the lesson |
| ● | • practise a variety of short, enjoyable pieces that have elements of repetition built in |
| ● | • are provided with a model in which technical and musical elements are clearly demonstrated |
| ● | • are given encouragement by teachers, parents / carers |
| ● | • are encouraged to listen to a wide variety of music |
| ● | • begin to take responsibility for their own learning |
| ● | • begin to set their own targets |
| ● | • structure the amount of time spent on the different activities and develop a routine that balances the time spent between the acquisition of technical and musical skills |
| ● | • develop an overview of what is to be practised |
| ● | • identify difficulties and break down complex passages into smaller, manageable units |
| ● | • acquire a range of alternative strategies for practice, e.g. using a metronome, using a backing tape, analysing problems, varying bowings, articulation or fingering, making up exercises |
| ● | • develop strategies that help them to learn independently |
| ● | • monitor their progress towards their targets and try other approaches if progress is unsatisfactory |
| ● | • prepare independently for performances, making decisions about learning priorities |
| ● | • make informed choices about interpretation, style and musical preferences |
| ● | • effectively organise their practice time in order to fit in with other activities and pressures on their time |

OLDER PUPILS, INCLUDING ADULTS

DIARIES / NOTEBOOKS

Diaries or notebooks can provide an effective means of structuring practice. They can be used to set achievable and realistic targets, communicate with parents and track progression. Their use will depend on the stage and age of the learner. In the early stages, teachers may wish to complete them for pupils. Later on, pupils may wish to make their own notes. However, at all stages both teachers and pupils can use them to evaluate the quality of practice and progress.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The role of the teacher is paramount in ensuring that practice is productive and promotes independence. The teacher needs to demonstrate how to focus on particular skills and share successful ways of developing practice routines in detail. Although these may vary depending on the age and inclinations of individual pupils, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that pupils are aware of the best ways of practising and that strategies are regularly discussed.

SUMMARY

- Practice is a vital factor in making musical progress.
- The amount of time spent practising varies, depending on the stage of learning and the individual needs of the pupil.
- Teachers should provide a model for pupils to develop a range of practice strategies.
- From the outset, teachers should promote independent learning.
- As pupils progress, they should be given more responsibility for their own learning.
- Practice is more effective when technical skills are directly related to 'real' music.
- Parents / carers and teachers should encourage and support, but not force their children to practise.

Lifelong Learning

EARLY YEARS

Music influences the lives of children from the earliest age. Very young babies respond to music. Evidence suggests that toddlers who enjoy regular singing and movement activities are more likely to develop higher levels of musical skills later on. The more children listen and attempt to imitate, the quicker they learn. Of course, it takes time to acquire the skills necessary for playing a musical instrument, but an early start appears to provide a significant advantage.

From the age of three, all children in nursery settings follow the curriculum of the Foundation Stage. By the age of five, most children are expected to 'recognise and explore how sounds can be changed; sing simple songs from memory; recognise repeated sound patterns and match movements to music' (Early Learning Goals). Pre-school programmes of music activities focus on creative development, providing opportunities for children to sing, move rhythmically to music and explore different sounds on instruments. Some specific approaches, such as the Suzuki programme, successfully introduce instrumental learning at an early age through building on recognised ways in which young children develop.

Young children are active learners: they relish opportunities to explore and create sounds, developing musically through repeating activities. Through secure and structured approaches, effective teachers and practitioners systematically help young children to build on their experiences. Instrumental/vocal teachers need to be aware of these natural links between learning to play a musical instrument and early learning.

In making music with pre-school children, teachers should remember to provide activities that enable them to develop in and through music. To do this successfully, teachers should:

- use games to help children to 'find the sound', explore musical patterns creatively and become active learners
- help each child to discover their own singing voice
- make learning fun, developing children's curiosity and imagination through purposeful 'small-world' play
- use simple, rich language, conversation and carefully framed questions
- be patient, friendly and encouraging, adopting an approach that is always positive
- build on what children already know
- use 'stepping stones' to introduce one new idea at a time
- take advantage of a child's delight in repetition to ensure that music and particular techniques are well learned
- explore the natural links between music and movement
- spend time developing listening and aural skills
- know what children can and cannot do in the early stages of learning
- integrate parents/carers into lessons as much as possible

ADULT LEARNERS

A *Common Approach* primarily focuses on the teaching of children. However, the document can be used, in large part, to assist with the growing number of adults who are wishing to learn an instrument and/or sing.

Adult learners may be attempting to play an instrument and / or to sing for the first time; they may want to take up an instrument they studied in the past or start singing again. Others may be self-taught and would like to formalise their learning in order to gain more skills, knowledge and understanding. Whatever their starting point, it is not unusual to find that adult learners have low confidence. Sometimes they may fear it is too late for them to start. Teachers can assist adult pupils to overcome these reservations by trying to raise their self-esteem and by giving them realistic, positive expectations. Adults can bring many positive attributes to learning, even if their technical expertise is modest and takes time to develop. These may include strong motivation, a knowledge of how to work on their own, persistence in adversity, some understanding of musical styles, an independent initiative which enables research and learning, a wealth of experience and, above all, a love of music. The challenge for teachers is to build on adult pupils' diverse qualities and backgrounds and enable them to move forward, both technically and musically.

Information and Communication Technology (Music Technology)

In music, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can be defined as any process where electronic technology is used to control, manipulate or communicate musical information. More specifically, ICT (also referred to as music technology) includes:

- audio playback and recording
- electronic keyboards, synthesisers
- sound processors
- computers and associated software

Recent developments in digital technology have opened up a new range of opportunities for using ICT to support and enhance music learning. These opportunities can be as effective in instrumental/vocal teaching and learning as in the classroom.

ICT equipment, e.g. tape recorder, minidisc, electronic keyboard, laptop computer, is now available to process, sequence, record, play back and notate music. Through using these resources, many teachers are discovering new ways to support their teaching and enhance pupils' learning. It should be remembered that many pupils have access to this type of equipment in their homes and are often familiar with the technology involved.

To broaden pupils' musical experiences, therefore, and to assist with their overall development, pupils should be encouraged to use ICT, and provided with appropriate opportunities. For example:

- listening to and evaluating recordings of pieces they are learning
- listening to and evaluating recordings of their own performances
- exploring music - using the internet to search for information
- providing backing tracks for improvising
- providing accompaniments digitally
- creating and recording – sequencing and notating music using appropriate software programs
- storing and revising their work using appropriate media
- sharing their work with others through the internet

Music technology cannot replace teachers or traditional instruments, nor should it be used as the only source for musical learning. Nevertheless, used appropriately and sensibly, ICT can integrate with and support other ways of learning and open up new horizons. ICT can also help to motivate pupils of all abilities.

Other considerations

ACCOMMODATION, HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

The health and safety of pupils and teachers should not be taken for granted. The following notes are provided to ensure that lessons are delivered in a safe environment that is conducive to good learning.

Teaching rooms for group and individual lessons should be acceptable in respect of the terms of the Children Act 1989 and the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

For instrumental/vocal teachers, the following should be available:

- a room:
 - with sufficient space to allow necessary freedom of movement for playing, singing and teaching properly
 - having a door with a window so that teaching can be viewed from the outside (for both the teacher's and pupils' protection)
 - with effective heating, lighting and ventilation
 - with suitable acoustics
- chairs and music stands
- a piano or other keyboard
- a lockable cupboard for teaching materials
- a white board
- recording equipment
- a full-length mirror

Electrical equipment should be regularly checked and maintained and positioned so as to avoid trailing leads. (For further information, please see 'Music Accommodation in Secondary Schools', Building Bulletin 86, produced in 1997 by the Architects and Building Branch of the Department for Education and Employment.)

It is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances when these are not all available. However, pupils and parents/carers are entitled to expect that the resources and accommodation are fit for the purpose.

Teachers need to know the procedures when pupils are absent or taken ill, or in the case of an emergency, e.g. fire. Teachers should consequently liaise regularly with schools and take issues of health and safety seriously.

NOISE LEVELS

This is an area of growing concern. It is possible that noise levels in practice and rehearsal rooms are sufficiently loud to cause hearing loss, pitch distortion, tinnitus or possibly pain. It is important, therefore, that appropriate control measures are taken in order to reduce levels as much as possible and to observe the Noise at Work Regulations (2005). These may include:

- playing more quietly
- ensuring that loud pieces are balanced by quiet pieces
- avoiding making sudden and surprising loud noises
- providing appropriate acoustic cladding for specialist rooms, e.g. percussion rooms
- supplying suitable and efficient personal ear protectors if requested by a pupil or parent/carers

Schools, Music Services, Conservatoires and teachers may need to receive training in the estimation of risk and the selection of control measures. Pupils need to be taught the proper control of noise and volume levels in relation to the acoustic, size of room and the instrument. Hearing loss cannot be cured.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT, CHILD PROTECTION, CONTRACTS, WORKING-TIME REGULATIONS

The Federation of Music Services has produced a Code of Conduct for instrumental/vocal teachers. Helpful guidance on these matters is also available in various pamphlets/documents produced by the Incorporated Society of Musicians.



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