S is a two-and-a-half year-old child identified as having speech and communication difficulties. He attended the ten weekly group sessions with his mum and his baby sister. S was one of the older children in this particular group and is also physically bigger than most children of his age.

During the first few weeks s was a bit unsettled and when we were doing whole group activities he would run around the edge of the circle of children and adults or hide behind the curtains in the room, rather than sitting down in the circle. However, S seemed to really enjoy exploring the different instruments during the free play part of the sessions right from the very start. He would sit and play an instrument for a few minutes, and would then move around the room to find new instruments to explore, usually alone rather than interacting with other children or adults. He demonstrated early on that he was able to play a simple beat on a variety of instruments so his initial proactive SOIEY assessment was made at level 3.

Over the weeks S’s preference for the yellow ukulele and for the rainbow chime bars emerged as these were instruments he would go back to almost every session during free play. Over the course of the programme S began to settle a lot more during the whole group activities and would sit down in the circle for increasingly longer periods of time. S showed that he came to recognise many of the songs as the weeks went on, so was assessed as being at level 4 in the reactive domain of the SOIEY framework. For example, he knew to look for the cuddly toy when we sang the song about Benny the bear. His mum also sang the songs from the group with S at home during the week, which would have helped to reinforce the melodies.

S also began to join in with some of the actions to songs and eventually with fragments of songs, in particular the hello song. S would only sing, however, during the quiet repetition of the song, perhaps indicating a preference for quieter sounds or maybe a preference for the actions which accompanied the quiet repetition. He was able to sing with an accurate sense of pitch and rhythm. We were able to assess S as being at level 4 in the proactive domain of the Sounds of Intent framework by the end of the 10 weeks.

We made fewer assessments of S in the interactive domain, as he showed less interactive behaviour in the sessions. S was assessed as being at level I3, as he showed he was occasionally able to explore an instrument alongside someone else. For example, he explored the ukulele with an adult during one of the sessions and seemed aware that he was sharing this musical experience with another. S showed a clear preference for exploring the instruments alone rather than interactively with an adult or another child.

We made an EYFS assessment of S both at the beginning and at the end of the programme. A comparison of the two suggests that he has made progress in over the 10 weeks in terms of listening and attending and managing feelings. He demonstrated single-channelled attention in the context of the music sessions, something which staff had not observed before. S also demonstrated a growing understanding of and cooperation with boundaries and routines, suggesting a development in terms of his ability to manage feelings. Overall it seemed that the group had potentially impacted S’s broader development, as well as his musical development.