



Valuing Music in Special Needs Settings

A collaborative action research project between
soundLINCS and Nottingham Trent University.

Editor-in-Chief: Dr Tony Harris

NOTTINGHAM
TRENT UNIVERSITY



Valuing Music in Special Needs Settings

A training Toolkit developed through a collaborative action research project between soundLINCS and Nottingham Trent University.

This research was developed as part of the National Foundation for Youth Music's Musical Inclusion Programme.

Editor-in-Chief: Dr Tony Harris

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soundLINCS in partnership working



Abstract

Practitioner led research to explore a range of music making and singing approaches for whole class teaching (WCT) and group work in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) schools.

WCT is an approach to providing music and singing opportunities in schools. It is widely established following publication of the National Plan for Music Education in 2011 and formation of Music Education Hubs (MEH) in 2012.

Four MEH in the East Midlands identified that pupils attending SEND schools in their region are not offered the same inclusive opportunities to participate in WCT and group work as their peers in mainstream schools. They commissioned community music organisation soundLINCS to research a range of approaches for WCT and group work in SEND schools and produce a toolkit to support the musical training and development of music tutors and teachers in SEND schools. soundLINCS collaborated with Nottingham Trent University's School of Education to design and oversee the action research project and lead development of the toolkit.

Six soundLINCS community musicians led inclusion projects with participating groups from eight SEND schools. Schools were identified by their relevant MEH and each selected a class group to participate. The groups represented a wide range of SEND contexts. 83 pupils aged 5-19 participated in 96 music making sessions.

The core research questions included: What are the key problems that music practitioners face in implementing WCT and group work in SEND settings and how can these be overcome? What is the skill set required of the music practitioner to work effectively in a SEND setting?

Six sub questions were established that suited the particular skills and interests of individual musicians. For example: How can music and audio technology be employed for WCT and group work in SEND schools? How do we monitor musical progression in special needs learners?

The musicians provided activities that included listening, singing, songwriting, playing instruments and percussion, music technology, movement, composition, improvisation and performance. They maintained reflective journals to support individual professional practice, maintain research focus and weekly planning. The journals directly contributed to the research findings and the toolkit which also draws on monitoring visits, structured feedback from schools and post project discussions.

The research concludes that WCT and group work can be successfully provided in SEND schools and that musical progression was noted across a range of genres. Engaging the support of classroom teachers and assistants is essential and that music practitioners require a responsive pedagogy in addition to highly developed music and facilitating skills. The research noted that low expectations of what pupils with SEND can achieve through music can hold back their progress.

The toolkit offers a training and development framework to be flexibly used in a range of training environments.

Keywords: special educational needs and disabilities, whole class teaching, participation, musical progression, toolkit, inclusion

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1. Introduction

Inclusive musical practice is not a new phenomenon. Rewind a few thousand years and you will find an ancient Hebrew culture that was a 'model for universal participation in music and music education' (Mark & Gary, 2013: 4). Likewise, the ancient Greeks' preoccupation with gymnastics was complemented by a musical diet to ensure both the body and soul were suitably nourished. This commitment to 'music for everyone' has waxed and waned over the centuries, especially in the West where 'professionalism' has become a highly valued asset. But, as the democratisation of modern-era education took hold it became a cultural imperative that a decent education is a basic human right regardless of background, ability or aptitude. Music, that most powerful and mysterious of forces, must be part of this.

The importance of music in the education of individuals with particular needs or disabilities is not especially new either. The pioneering – and, sadly, rather forgotten – American music educator Satis N. Coleman wrote in the 1920s that '*there lies an instrument suited to the capacity of every child – of everyone for that matter*' (Coleman, 1922: 155). In the UK, concerted efforts to engage children with learning difficulties or disabilities goes back to at least the 1960s. John Paynter emphatically stated in 1982 that '*music does have a place as a time-tabled classroom subject in the school curriculum, and it should be available to all pupils*' (Paynter, 1982: xiii). This has perhaps become the fundamental principle of music in our schools over the last 30 years. Anyone working in or around music education will be acutely aware of the tacit cultural expectation that *all* children, regardless of ability or need, are entitled to opportunities for musical engagement, and that it is considered to be a great benefit.

If that is our expectation, what is the reality? Are *all* children given this opportunity? What is the best way of achieving this? How, exactly, does music affect participants? What is the evidence of the benefits? Surprisingly little is known about the impact of music on children with special education needs, with scientific studies few and far between. Science can show that music affects even those with the most profound and complex needs and, indeed, that musical progress can be tangible in such individuals (Ockelford et al, 2011), but the research is in its infancy. The observational record is affirming, with numerous researchers and practitioners making claims of the impact of their work, but often rather nebulous in its links to compelling evidence.

'Getting immersed in whole class music making, where individual contributions may be small but the overall effect is magical, can be part of the awe and wonder of school life and enrich the lives of all children and especially those experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties' (Beach, Evans and Spruce, 2010: 55-6).

Janet Mills, a firm believer that special schools can be 'musical schools', gives a number of examples of such benefits. She cites '*a special school for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties where [music] gives them a 'can do' feeling*' and another where '*students with multiple learning difficulties ... regularly leave the music room with markedly greater physical control and coordination that they had when they entered*' (Mills, 2005: 127-8). But again, the evidence is left to the imagination. The existing literature does offer practitioners some useful hints and tips. The importance of information about the individuals with whom one works is paramount (Adamek, 2002; Beach, Evans and Spruce, 2010); repetition, pace, participant choice

and allowing for increased response time is helpful (Gerrity, Hourigan and Horton, 2013); and, crucially, musical development might not always correlate with technical development.

When it comes to the use of musical instruments it is possible to distinguish 'musical' problems from 'technical' problems, and it is important for teachers to see that a reasonable balance is struck (Addison, 1991: 293).

However, the message heard most clearly, for it permeates the literature, is that teachers and musicians are generally unprepared for teaching music to children with special educational needs (Hammel and Gerrity, 2010; Hourigan, 2001; Humpal and Dimmick 1995; Packer 2001 and elsewhere) and it is this rather worrying fact that forms the starting point of this research project.

2. Aims of the project and context

Research is not something we 'do' to other people. Research should be something we do with people in the pursuit of acquiring a new or deeper understanding. This project, then, is primarily concerned with those young people with special educational needs and disabilities with whom the research team worked, specifically in relation to maximising the quality of their music-making. The processes of making musical progress and the impact of such music-making are important, but of no particular interest to the researchers if considered in isolation from practice. Fundamentally, the project was built around the intention of producing an output that helps practitioners improve their practice, in turn enhancing the opportunities for young people with special needs. The project aims, then, are to

- deepen our understanding of music making in a range of special needs contexts;
- identify the strengths and weaknesses of current practice;
- find out 'what works best'; and
- produce guidance for practitioners working in the sector.

soundLINCS is a not-for-profit community music organisation based in Lincolnshire, operating across the East Midlands. Working in partnership with local, regional and national organisations, soundLINCS provides and develops high quality and innovative music-making opportunities and training for all ages and communities.

soundLINCS delivered a National Foundation for Youth Music Module called Musical Inclusion across the East Midlands involving Leicester-shire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and Rutland. It comprised many strands of work and was delivered in discussion and partnership with many organisations including all Music Education Hubs (MEH) who are tasked to deliver the National Plan for Music Education (NPME).

Through mapping of provision the Music Education Hubs concluded that pupils in SEND settings do not participate in learning to sing and/or play a musical instrument as much as their peers in mainstream schooling. soundLINCS and MEH wished to investigate whether there are musical approaches which can increase the participation of SEND children through Whole Class in-school instrumental and vocal teaching.

This regional breakthrough project aimed to bring Music Facilitators together in learning, development and training to create a toolkit of approaches for engaging young people in music making in SEND settings.

soundLINCS offers opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to music practitioners and others to maximise use of this toolkit.

3. Our approach to action research

The training and development framework presented here is the result of a collaborative action research project between soundLINC'S and Nottingham Trent University. A team of six experienced Music Facilitators, working alongside an experienced university researcher, led projects with participating groups from eight different schools. The participating groups represented an appropriately wide range of special needs contexts, including young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities, emotional and behavioural difficulties, specific learning difficulties and the full range of moderate learning difficulties teachers typically need to respond to.

Prior to commencing the work in schools the Music Facilitators met to explore the existing literature, discuss their prior experience, the challenges they had met, their frustrations and passions, and the questions they were hoping this research might go some way to answering. The conclusions were that our questions were wide ranging, though themes clearly emerged. The core research questions, then, that underpinned the action research are:

- What are the key problems music practitioners face in special needs settings?
- How might these problems be overcome?
- What are the barriers to music learning for young people with special needs?
- What is the skill set required of the music practitioner to work effectively in a special needs setting?
- Which musical instruments are most effectively transferred from the mainstream Whole Class Teaching model into special needs settings?

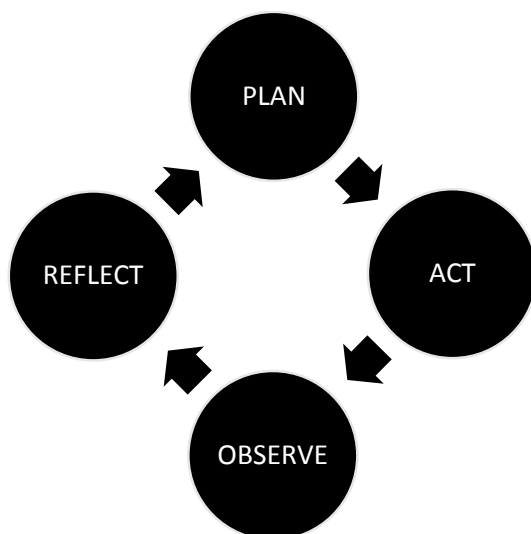
A further set of sub questions was also established that suited the particular skills and interests of Music Facilitators:

- How does the music practitioner cope with the wide-ranging diversity of needs and disabilities within the workshop setting?
- How can music and audio technology be employed within whole class special needs settings
- How can the music practitioner best work with and utilise classroom support staff in special needs settings?
- Which are the most useful resources/ideas to support ensemble music making in special needs settings?
- How do we monitor musical progression in special needs learners?
- How can we best engage special needs learners in creative composition processes?

Having identified the research questions, the Music Facilitators devised and planned sequential series of workshops for delivery with their allocated participating group. These plans then formed the basis for the implementation of the action research process. Broadly speaking, action research is research undertaken through the researcher's active participation in the very problem the researcher is seeking to solve.¹ The team adopted a classic Lewin's model of action research

¹ See Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) for a detailed exploration of the action research processes outlined here.

in the implementation of their work in schools. This method follows a cyclical, upward spiralling process governed by four stages – planning, acting, observing and reflecting – that have the effect of integrating the typical habits of the practitioner with those of the researcher.



(Adapted from Zuber-Skerritt, 1996: 99)

The planning and acting (i.e. delivery) parts of the process need little explanation, and are part of the day-to-day job of the music practitioner. Processes of observation and reflection on one's practice, while never absent from the practitioners' routine, are sometimes less dominant and rarely visible. To achieve the appropriate parity between each of the four stages the process was formalised for the Music Facilitators with the use of reflective project journals in which they would record and describe (i.e. observe) individual sessions, followed by dialogic and critical reflections on their observations, leading to the identification of areas for development to be accounted for in the planning of the following 'act'. Evaluations and feedback from classroom teachers, support staff and, where appropriate, the participants themselves also variously contributed to the 'observe' and 'reflect' stages of the model. The cyclical nature of the model means that the observations and reflections of one 'pass' round the cycle – typically a single instance of classroom delivery – impact on the next pass, 'spiralling' the practitioner up and through a process of deepening understanding, improved practice, and possibly enlightenment or significant change.

The delivered sessions took place over the spring and summer school terms of 2014. Each setting received 12 X 1 hour sessions. Following their completion the team met once more to share their thoughts in relation to the research questions, identify themes, look for resonance between experiences, and, ultimately, to begin to draw together a 'toolkit' for music practitioners based on our deepened understanding. Not every question was answered, but that was not necessarily our expectation. What did result from our endeavours is guidance for other practitioners working in similar settings based not on suppositions and nebulous claims of the benefits of music-making, but on first-hand experiences and detailed reflections on how we can best enhance the music-making opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The research was carried out in strict accordance with the ethical guidelines set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA).

4. The Toolkit

This 'toolkit' for teachers offers a training and development framework to be flexibly used in a range of training environments. It could form the basis of an intensive day of CPD led by an experienced music practitioner. It could be a series of informal meetings between mutually interested practitioners. It could be used by individuals to simply consider the range of issues relating to their work, or it could be used as a prompt for CPD providers in the design of their own training events. It is not intended to be definitive or proscriptive, nor is it necessarily restricted to use by music practitioners, as the issues explored largely apply to any special needs setting. The eight units are formed from the key themes identified by the research team. While providing a more or less sequential structure they are not mutually exclusive and one would expect a good deal of cross-fertilisation between unit content.

With the exception of unit 8, which takes the form of a sort of appendix of resources and materials, the units follow a common structure of 5 elements:



Starting points

This provides some brief detail to be used, perhaps by a CPD facilitator, in setting the scene and introducing the unit. Content is intentionally minimal to help avoid becoming overly didactic or compromising the important participant led activities of the following elements.



Task

This is typically a short 'starter' that engages participants in quickly identifying key concepts or discussion points and ensuring that their personal perspectives are paramount in proceedings. With larger groups of participants this could be an individual, paired or small group task.



Discussion

This is intended for small group or conference-style discussion around the key content of the unit and, where possible, this should draw on the more personalised thoughts instigated by the previous task.



Scenario

The intention here is that participants are able to simulate the application of any new or deepened knowledge in practice. The scenarios give a typical situation a music practitioner might need to respond to, broadly drawn from the real-life situations arising during the action research.



Research findings and notes

This final section gives more detail of the findings and thoughts of the research team. This information might be used to exemplify or clarify themes drawn from the previous task, discussion and scenario, or used by a CPD facilitator to frame a plenary and draw the unit to a close.

Unit 1: What do we mean by SEND?



Starting points

'Special Educational Needs and Disabilities' or SEND is not a particularly meaningful or useful term, but it is one that is widely used in policy and practice. Agreeing some sort of consensus of what we mean by the term, and how it manifests in learners attributed with the label, is a crucial place to start as we work through the proceeding units. This unit, then, engages the participant in a deeper thinking about the label than we generally engage with.



Task

Identify three distinguishing features of learners with SEND.



Discussion

How would you define SEND?

What might be the key barriers to music-making for learners with SEND?



Scenario

You receive an enquiry about delivering a series of music workshops in a special needs setting. What are the key questions you would ask the enquirer?



Research findings and notes

The Department of Education's SEN Code of Practice defines a young person with SEN as someone who has '*a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her*' (DfE, 2015: 15). A learning difficulty is defined as presenting an individual with 'a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age' and a disability as something which 'prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others'.

These definitions are necessarily broad and all-encompassing and the Music Facilitators quickly identified that the sheer range of experiences they had between them made 'SEND', as a label, almost entirely redundant. Rather, judgements as to the precise nature of any particular group or setting, and the individuals within it, had to be made on a case-by-case basis. A number of key characteristics and challenges were identified:

-
- **Groups in SEND settings are all highly individual in their composition. Many groups are also very diverse in age, ability, need and levels of support. Groups taking part in this research included:**

- A group of eight students aged 14-19, all with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).
- A 'highly sensory' group of eight non-verbal students in Key Stages 4 and 5. All working to P scales, all wheelchairs users.
- A group of 14 intensively supported students. All working to P scales 4-8, two with autism, two wheelchair users, and a number with behavioural problems.
- A class of primary aged children all with physical disabilities including pupils who do not speak and those with limited and poorly controlled movement.
- A class of 28 Year 5 and 6 children, seven of whom have SEND and one wheelchair user.
- A group of ten students aged 9-12 working within the higher P scales to NC level 2.

- **The level of information given to the visiting music practitioner varies greatly**

Some of the Music Facilitators were in receipt of detailed pre-session information to inform their planning. This could include the number and nature of the individuals in the class, the levels to which they are working (usually in terms of P scales and NC levels), and the nature of the support available. The most detailed information also included expectations of the length of time the students might engage in tasks, activities in which they had previously engaged, and information on the experience and interests of the class teacher. In one instance a class teacher with a keen interest in music had clear hopes for the sessions and was willing to engage with the Music Facilitator at the planning stage. In one instance the Music Facilitator was privy to only the most basic detail, without key information relating even to group size.

- **The children are regularly required to be elsewhere**

The SEND environment requires flexibility and the school-day and structures are more fluid than is typically found in mainstream settings. The Music Facilitators found that the combination of children coming and going (for instance, for visits to the hydro pool or one-to-one sessions) and nurses coming in to administer medicine could be distracting if not prepared for this. One Music Facilitator reported that from a group of seven, one left complaining of a headache, one was removed for being disruptive, and one removed against his wishes to attend a speech therapy session but returned later. The frequent changes to group size, composition and dynamic clearly presents a challenge in terms of planning and delivery.

- **All children are capable of doing something**

Despite the wide range of abilities and needs the Music Facilitators were in consensus that all children were capable of engaging in music. The use of percussion and technology were especially useful in providing the degree of flexibility required to engage those with even the most severe mobility challenges.

- **Time constraints**

While not unique to SEND settings the often flexible nature of the timetable exacerbates the problem, and sessions can become rushed. Sessions that require complex resources and setting up are particularly susceptible to this.

The central theme to emerge from the research is that there is no such thing as a typical SEND learner or a typical SEND group. If they can be characterised at all it is by being entirely unpredictable in what they respond best to, what they might achieve, and how they might behave. As a result, the music practitioner working in these settings needs to develop a highly responsive approach to planning and delivery and that this can be made more achievable if the right kind of information is made available beforehand. This will be explored in more detail in Unit 2.

Unit 2: Information, expectations and preconceptions



Starting points

The existing literature often refers to the importance of having appropriate information about the learners with whom we work. This unit engages the participants in considering what sort of information is required and how we might use it to inform our practice in terms of what we might expect from learners.



Task

Make lists of the 'essential' and 'desirable' learner information you feel you would need to successfully lead a music session.



Discussion

How would you use this information?

What might this information tell you about the likely nature and outcomes of a music session?

How might this information impact on your planning and delivery of a music session?



Scenario

You have planned for a creative group activity in your session. You are then told that a particular individual will not engage with others. What do you do?

You are told the group will misbehave if given instruments to use. What do you do?



Research findings and notes

There was an interesting range of opinions amongst the Music Facilitators as to the preferred level of information they felt was important. All agreed, of course, that information that might impact on the health and safety of individuals was paramount. However, one Music Facilitator found that information beyond this could have the effect of lowering expectations of individuals and that they would rather simply get to know the learners' strengths and capacities on their own terms. Others felt that the more information they had the better placed they were to make informed choices in the planning and delivery of sessions. Key points to draw from the research include:

- **Information gathering is best done as part of an ongoing dialogue**

Basic information on the groups and individuals, such as that identified in the previous unit, is valuable but only part of the picture. The way such information might be interpreted is multifarious and contextualised. Ideally a pre-session or pre-project meeting should be negotiated to discuss the individual's needs and to pre-empt likely issues. The Music Facilitators also found that this dialogue needs to continue throughout the period of work with the learners, and how it needs to be dovetailed with the Music Facilitators' own reflections on what works best.

- **Information is simply that. It should not be used to form expectations or preconceptions of what might be possible.**

The danger of information leading to preconceptions seemed more prevalent, perhaps counter-intuitively, with the members of staff who knew the learners best. One example of this is best exemplified by this extract from the Music Facilitator's reflective journal:

'I was working with the group one week, and I had given everybody an iPad. As I was setting up one of the teaching support assistants approached me and told me that one of the students didn't like loud noises. I understood but I was so busy setting up that I promptly forgot until the moment he pressed the screen on his iPad, which was plugged into the PA in the classroom. This resulted in a sound which was so loud it made the snares and windows rattle and made me jump out of my skin! I immediately looked at the child expecting to see tears, or a look of shock or terror. But he had the most amazing smile on his face, a look of excitement, exhilaration and very happy. This boy was so happy because HE made the sound. A boy with very limited movement, who relies so heavily on a wheel chair and support, played with an iPad and made an amazing sound.'

It is easy to see how this mistake is made. *'Not liking loud noises'* is an unqualified statement that does not define the nature or source of the loud noise. This qualification might, and clearly did in this instance, make all the difference. A similar phenomenon was identified in other reflective journals. For instance, a child who *'did not engage with others'* engaged with others on a task when she was given a highly specific role; and an individual renowned for wandering around and not stopping still became absorbed in the sonic properties of the activities:

'A large chime bar was played near her and she stopped and felt the vibrations all the time that it was being played near her. After approximately 40 minutes she took herself to the side of the room and sat down on a bench and listened to the activities that were taking place.'

- **Question and challenge your own expectations.**

A recurring theme among the Music Facilitators was the need to constantly challenge their own expectations. Participants had a habit of surprising the Music Facilitators in terms of what they responded to and what they achieved. Physical limitations should not be misinterpreted as an

inability to engage, and efforts need to be made to circumvent the physical barriers. Even the crude fix of taping a beater to an individual's arm had the effect of being '*so successful that he didn't want to stop*'. It would seem that an instinctive response when faced with learners with physical limitations is to worry about what they *cannot* do – a sort of comparative imperialism of the able-bodied. Instead, the music practitioner needs to focus on what they *can* do and how this might be the starting point for exploring musical ideas. This example from a musician's reflective journal shows this approach in action:

'The whole group was in wheel chairs, with limited movement and communication skills. This initially worried me as I knew there could be limitations as to what I could do and achieve, but due to past experiences I quickly reminded myself that it's about getting the correct level of expectations and something small could actually be something big for them. The call and response was then led by each child which enabled them to do whatever they could, like scratching or rubbing or even in some cases blink the amount of times they wanted the staff to hit the drum. Some of these responses would sometimes take a while to happen which left times where people were doing nothing. I would normally be concerned about this but instead everyone spent their time willing each other on, and the lack of playing never became an issue.'

The overriding theme drawn from the research was that detailed information on the individuals' needs, idiosyncrasies and preferences was an essential starting point but should not be allowed to get in the way of exploration and experimentation. It might not always go to plan – one Music Facilitator found that singing caused one learner to '*roll around the floor screaming*' – but finding the right route was a complex process of co-construction with the group, critical reflections by the Music Facilitator, and on-going dialogue with those who knew the children best.

Unit 3: Creating an environment



Starting points

Learning and teaching has to take place somewhere, whether it is in a formal classroom setting, an informal context, outside, online, or elsewhere. But 'environment' could also refer to a lot more beyond the physical and geographical. Logic would dictate that this environment is likely to have some effect on what happens within it. This unit explores both the potential positive and negative impact of the environment in which music-making might take place.



Task

Think of an example of a successful music session.

What were the factors that made it successful?

How many of these factors could be considered as environmental?



Discussion

What factors contribute to the creation of an 'environment'?

What might constitute an appropriate environment for music-making with learners with SEND?

What environmental factors are potentially damaging to the success of a music session?

To what extent can you influence the environment as a music practitioner?



Scenario

You arrive at a special school to run a music session. You are taken to a small classroom full of desks and chairs and no resources. What do you do in the 20 minutes before the session starts?



Research findings and notes

There was a general agreement amongst the Music Facilitators that environment had everything to do with the success or otherwise of music-making with learners with SEND and that the physical environment was perhaps less important than the attitudinal one. Indeed, one Music Facilitator found one attitudinal environment so inadequate as to be detrimental to the learners achieving anything. This could be said for any music-making, though the Music Facilitators' experience suggested that SEND learners are perhaps less able to compensate for environmental difficulties as would be the case with non-SEND learners. The Music Facilitators found that all of the following factors contributed to the 'learning environment' in its broadest sense:

- **The physical space**

The physical space is often the least negotiable part of the environment and is, in large part, determined by the physical needs of the learners, the strictures of timetables and the physical parameters of the classroom itself. Wherever possible, however, plenty of space should be made so that instruments and resources can be interacted with freely and seamlessly. As in any education setting, it is important for music practitioners to consider how they use the physical space to best create a learning environment that allows learners to transcend the physical properties of the space and into an engaging musical one.

- **The instrumental resources**

The Music Facilitators were unanimous in finding that the most successful sessions had a primary focus on the use of musical instruments. Furthermore, the learners' preferences for particular types of instruments were not nearly as important as the simple fact that they were using them. Most importantly, learners engaged well with the exploration of sound and the instruments' physical characteristics.

- **The sense of ensemble and dynamic between individuals in the class**

Some aspects of the environment have a longitudinal quality and, clearly, a strong sense of ensemble (i.e. the learners playing together as a musical unit) or team dynamic is unlikely to happen overnight. However, where this was achieved the Music Facilitators reported high levels of engagement and achievement. Likewise, a lack of co-operation between individuals can prove detrimental. For instance, a Music Facilitator detailed a catalogue of inter-personal disruption that affected progress and which required significant intervention. It should also be noted that concepts of 'musical ensemble' in a SEND setting may differ from typical definitions. In a mainstream classroom setting a music practitioner might judge the quality of ensemble by measures of musical timing, 'togetherness', communication, balance, blend and other technical indicators of ensemble performance. As important as these are, they are not necessarily indicators of ensemble 'spirit', the very thing that inspires us as humans to engage in group music-making. As one Music Facilitator noted, '*there was some ensemble playing in that everyone played together*', despite it not being structured or co-ordinated. This does not detract from the impact and power of experiencing music made as one member of a larger group.

- **Stimulating, challenging and varying activities**

One Music Facilitator noted their striving to '*accommodate everyone's preferences at some point during the session*' and how this was best achieved through stimulating, challenging and varying activities. A significant diversion from working in mainstream settings seems to be the almost whimsical nature of the learners' preference and interests – something that may have sparked imagination in one session has no effect the next, or an activity that seems to labour one moment is brought to life the next. This extract from a Music Facilitator's reflective journal epitomises the range of responses:

'From the outset some children were very excited and engaged by the prospect of a music activity. One young boy with PMLD showed his excitement by smiling and rocking his head around and banging his table like a drum. He really enjoyed the activities where he was asked to bang, scratch or stroke the drum. A girl of about 8 years wore ear defenders for the session as she was sensitive to noise. She needed quite a lot of encouragement to participate, but after some coaxing she did participate with all of the tasks set to her by the musician. One little boy needed a break from the session about half way through. The staff said it was unusual for him to leave the music group but he became suddenly very withdrawn and in the end left the group for a few minutes. When he returned he was happy to take part again.'

- **High levels of stimulation**

A common thread through all of the Music Facilitators' experiences was the need for richly stimulating starting points. Starkly contrasting musical ideas seemed to be particularly effective, though responses differed from learner to learner:

'The students generally responded well to the Dance of the Knights music with students demonstrating preferences for loud and quiet sounds. Some students needed a high level of stimuli before they reacted in a positive manner, other students were disengaged from the activity when the music became loud ... the contrasted dynamics section worked well as some students preferred louder music and some preferred quieter music - as long as each section didn't last for too long all students were engaged.'

Other contrasts of tempo and tonal characteristics (for example metal sounds vs wooden sounds, short sharp sounds vs long smooth sounds) had a similar effect. Curiously, one Music Facilitator noted that extremes of pitch was less effective, though there was not time to explore this further.

The use of visuals, props and other tactile aids was also reported as beneficial by a number of Music Facilitators, and the vibrational, resonant and tactile nature of the instruments was in itself a stimulatory tool.

- **Expertise of the music practitioner and other staff**

'The school is fortunate in that they have an experienced musician as the senior teacher who will be able to carry on providing musical experiences for the students.'

It is an unintentionally sad statement that this school is considered 'fortunate' for having musically experienced leadership, but it is a common problem. As Janet Mills insists, any school can be a musical school (Mills, 2005: 127-9), but a musical ethos embedded throughout a school is more likely to manifest if driven from the top of the school. In the absence of this the music practitioner has the additional challenge of attempting to ignite a musical ethos in the school. This is not too grand a statement, and music practitioners should not underestimate the potential impact of their work on the school environment as a whole.

- **Routines and rituals**

Another longitudinal part of creating an environment, and one particularly pertinent to certain types of SEND learner, is the importance of routines and modes of working. Musical activity often lends itself to this as it has a tendency to be fairly ritualistic in nature – for instance, routines of warming up, repetition and practice, revisiting previously learnt materials, sequential small steps of improvement. Music Facilitators found that the use of ‘name games’ or other routines at the start and end of sessions helped to provide a clear pattern. One Music Facilitator notes how important it was to develop *‘key instructions and routines – for instance, putting shakers on the ground by our feet or using the red flag to stop’*.

- **Engagement and support of all adults in the room**

The importance of sufficient ‘buy-in’ from every adult in the room was crucial to the success of the Music Facilitators’ projects. Indeed, this ‘buy-in’ was the life-force of the attitudinal environment. Of course, the extent to which the music practitioner ‘responsible’ for other adults in the room is contentious, but the music practitioner is responsible for the quality of the session itself and the numerous impacting factors. Furthermore, the quality and clarity of the relationship between the Music Facilitators and the other adults in the room aided the delivery of the session in that judicious delegation and shared management of the session helped the Music Facilitator to maintain an all-important focus on the learners. This will be explored more fully in Unit 4.

- **Patience and tolerance**

This perhaps goes without saying, but a calm and patient approach by all in the room, no matter how chaotic it may at times appear, was central to the maintenance of the attitudinal environment that best ensured achievement.

The ‘environment’, then, cannot be defined by a single aspect, but rather the complex interrelation of a number of factors that offer a multi-sensory experience. We tend to think of music as a primarily sonic phenomenon but, of course, the use of instruments is enormously physical and visual. An environment that synthesises the sonic with the visual and the tactile, in an appropriately sized, ergonomic physical space, with positive ‘can-do’ attitudes of everyone within the environment, is a recipe for success.

Unit 4: Working as a team



Starting points

Special needs environments generally have a higher level of staff to learner ratio than a non-SEND setting. Indeed, in the most challenging circumstances 1:1 support is necessary. This support is essential and highly valued, but does add another level of complexity to the processes of teaching and learning. This unit explores what it means to work as a team in a classroom setting and engages the participants in considering the additional range of skills and attributes required to successfully bring this complex teaching arrangement to life.



Task

Make a list of who you might expect to see in a classroom.

What might each of their roles be?



Discussion

What are your responsibilities as the leader of a music session?

How do your responsibilities 'dovetail' with the responsibilities of others?

What sort of leadership qualities do you need to develop as a music practitioner?



Scenario

There is a classroom assistant in your session but they are not engaging in the music-making activities. What do you do?



Research findings and notes

Effective team working is clearly important within any educational setting, but it was found by the Music Facilitators to be of particular significance within the SEND context. Perhaps the overarching feeling was that effective team work needed a higher degree of planning and preparation than might be expected in mainstream settings. Given that musical activity was not always a regular or familiar practice the Music Facilitators found that other adults in the room lacked confidence or an understanding of key practices. The identification of the lack of familiarity in this area is a significant outcome of this research project and must be seen as a priority in the way the sector develops music making in SEND settings. Outlined below are the key areas that need to be targeted if we are to move towards a greater shared understanding of how musical activity is best achieved through a collegiate approach to the classroom.

- **Class teachers and assistants need to build their musical confidence**

'I think staff are scared stiff of music and are terrified of being shown up or being asked to sing in front of the children.'

There were, of course, also instances of colleagues prepared to be fully immersed in the musical activities. However, the research identified a perennial problem. It was quite clear that some fellow class teachers and assistants were inexperienced in musical activity and sometimes lacking in confidence, perhaps exacerbated by their own feelings of musical inadequacy. This is equally typical in mainstream settings but, given the necessity for high levels of support in SEND, a lack of security in the support mechanisms is to the detriment of the whole endeavour. This cannot be overstated. One Music Facilitator felt undermined by the lack of engagement from colleagues:

'The blank looks and unwillingness from the staff is having a detrimental effect on the sessions as they are the link between me and pupils.'

This notion of the other staff being the link between the music practitioner and the learners is crucial. The team work model is not hierarchical as such, but there is no doubt that there are clear lines of communication, with the music practitioner being the 'expert' and other colleagues expecting to be led. As one Music Facilitator noted:

'My overall view is that having staff that are open minded, enthusiastic, friendly and happy made it what it was. They are the link between me and the pupils and by bridging the gap so well we all became connected and anything seemed to be possible.'

Where this was the case, colleagues gained confidence simply as a result of being engaged and a number of Music Facilitators noted the positive impact of increasingly confident engagement by other adults in the room. Where there was the will, the Music Facilitators all reported a natural growth in confidence in colleagues' musical abilities alongside the use of instruments, their voices and technology. One Music Facilitator noted the positive and empowering impact of the participants observing their own teachers using instruments. But what of those who won't engage, or feel uncomfortable engaging? There seems to be a number of points to consider:

- **Non-engagement is not an option**

This is non-negotiable and must be challenged by the music practitioner. Furthermore, it was found that the *level* of engagement of colleagues was also a factor – as their excitement for a particular activity dipped, so did the learners. The engagement of colleagues is a multi-faceted process and not only of benefit to the learners. As one Music Facilitator reflected:

'One of the key things I have learnt is the importance of learning from the staff and their relationship with the children. I found that spending a bit of time just watching their techniques and ways of stimulation and communication, which has been built up from hours of time with children, was invaluable in bringing me closer and understanding them more. I was therefore able to add that to my own methods to get the most out of the children and create a bond that would help in my future work with them.'

There was a general sense throughout the Music Facilitators' journals that the impact of colleagues' engagement, on both leaders and participants, was underestimated and deserves to be more highly valued.

- **Music practitioners have a significant role to play in supporting colleagues**

This is perhaps the greatest challenge and where we see a significant departure from the typical role of the music practitioner in mainstream settings. Relying on the development of colleagues' confidence simply through engagement is not robust as a mechanism for ensuring quality of provision and, of course, does not target non-engagement. At the root of this problem is the fact that music practitioners are not, in the first instance, engaged to train staff but to teach children. This is a fundamental flaw in the model we have inherited: the professional development needs of the sector are not embedded in the natural cycle of the work in which the professional development is most effectively and efficiently delivered. The concept of dual or blended professionalism – that is, the idea that practitioners might engage in both 'first order' practice (in this instance, music leading) alongside 'second order' practice (training others to lead music) – is still in its infancy. For the time being we will have to rely on there at least being an acceptance that music practitioners in SEND settings have a 'second order' responsibility for the longer term sustainability of music provision. As one Music Facilitator noted, it's the job of the music practitioner to leave a long term legacy that will continue to benefit the learners.

- **Ratio and capacity has to be addressed**

The required ratio of support staff to learners depends very much on the nature of the group and individuals but it was apparent to Music Facilitators that a lack of 1:1 support for individuals who require it had a significantly negative impact on their engagement and, in some cases, prevented individuals from engaging.

- **Successful team work needs preparation, nurturing, and a shared understanding of expectations**

This last point goes without saying, but it is worth reinforcing the importance of the consideration of team-working throughout the whole process of planning, preparation, delivery and reflection. The Music Facilitators clearly identified that the best outcomes were achieved when the team 'spirit' permeated the whole endeavour.

Unit 5: Practitioner skills and attributes



Starting points

While the previous unit identified the power of a team approach to music making, there is no doubt that the role of the music practitioner is in some way different from that of your colleagues. As a music practitioner, you are defined by a very special set of skills and attributes that others may not possess. This is the reason you are brought in to lead and why you are of such value. This unit explores which skills and attributes set you apart from the crowd, which are most valuable in the SEND context, and which you might need to nurture or further develop.



Task

Make a list of the skills you have that you think you employ most in SEND settings.



Discussion

Do you have to be a great musician to be a great music practitioner?

Which skills and attributes do you most highly value in yourself and others in your work as a music practitioner?



Scenario

A group you are working with really want to play music you are unfamiliar with, or want to play instruments you don't play. What do you do?



Research findings and notes

As expected, the Music Facilitators identified a number of key musical skills required of the practitioner, alongside more generic attributes. These skills were informed in the first instance by the Music Facilitators' own skill sets, but through the process of their reflections it became apparent which skills lent themselves most readily and valuably to the sessions they led. While, inevitably, music practitioners will have their own areas of expertise and interest, if one was to recommend the essential 'repertoire' of skills that every music practitioner needs to possess it might follow the list cited here.

- **Rhythmic skills**

Rhythm focused activities were regularly relied upon by the Music Facilitators, especially as a starting point for further exploration. While there are pedagogical contentions around the notion of isolating specific so-called musical elements it was found by the Music Facilitators that the efficiency and simplicity of engaging learners in solely rhythm-based work was a reliable mainstay of their workshops. Therefore a good grasp of rhythm and pulse is as fundamental to the success of the music practitioner as it is to the musician. One would perhaps go as far as saying that if this rhythmic security is not already established in the practitioner, they might want to reconsider their choice of career!

- **Percussion skills**

While rhythm skills can be assumed, a highly developed skill set in relation to percussion instruments is not necessarily second nature. Key knowledge requirements relate to the correct handling of specific instruments to ensure that learners, where possible, glean the very best sonic possibilities. The Music Facilitators reported positive outcomes with both fairly basic typical classroom percussion (tambourines, claves, shakers etc.) and more idiosyncratic percussion such as Samba or aspects of African drumming traditions. One musician also noted the value of percussion based tasks as a starting point for simple composition work.

- **Singing and use of the voice**

Interestingly, the use of the voice was not a tool universally adopted by all Music Facilitators as one may have expected. Given the flexibility, efficiency and (mostly) inclusive nature of the voice it is an essential part of the music practitioner's toolkit. Within the SEND context there may, of course, be specific circumstances, groups or individuals for whom it would not be appropriate but the research shows that, where appropriate, the inclusion of vocal work is incontestably beneficial. It is still, sadly, quite normal within the music education sector for practitioners to consider themselves as either singers or non-singers. The reality is that a practitioner not engaging young people in singing is depriving their learners of a most powerful musical experience.

- **Instrumental skills**

The ability to play one or more musical instruments, usually to an advanced level, is, of course, a defining feature of the music practitioner, along with the sort of specialist technical knowledge of a range of instruments that is less common in the non-music expert. The research highlights, however, that the concept of 'playing' an instrument is more complex than might be first considered. Analysis of the Music Facilitators' journals shows three different 'levels' of instrumental engagement, each with a different purpose and effect on the session:

- **Basic instrumental skills**

These are skills that require no specialist expertise beyond, possibly, a bit of preparation prior to the session. Typically, this level of instrumental engagement involves

demonstrating ideas and techniques to the participant: in essence, no more technically demanding than the expected outcomes of the learners. This technique (typically described as ‘modelling’) was noted countless times by the Music Facilitators, the significance being that this level of instrumental engagement is achievable by all those involved in the delivery of a session. In light of the team-work discussion in the previous unit, this is an important part of how the whole team can be empowered to impact positively on the outcomes of any session.

- Supportive instrumental skills

These are typically moderately technical instrumental skills employed to support some sort of other musical activity – strumming guitar chords or vamping on a piano to accompany singing; maintaining a riff on a keyboard to allow rhythmic improvisation; maintaining a strong groove on a drum to allow for other instrumental work. It is the ability of the music practitioner to offer this dimension to a music workshop that would usually be missing from a session led by a non-specialist and is therefore of such value. In terms of the musical experience of the participants it is this specific instrumental skill that can really bring a session to life.

- Advanced instrumental skill

This relates to those instances where the music practitioner might play their instrument to the learners in the spirit of inspiring or motivating them. It was also the type of instrumental skill employed the least by the Music Facilitators during the project, despite much of the key music education literature noting the importance and value of music teachers demonstrating their musical and technical prowess. Perhaps music practitioners are a humble breed: it is certainly not unusual for music teachers to shy away from what they feel is ‘showing off’. This is a great shame. It is not unknown for a music practitioner’s performance to be the only experience of live music that a young person might receive.

A number of the Music Facilitators also reflected on the importance of using a range of instruments with the range used variously to maintain the pace of a session, the interest of individuals, the variety of the soundworld, the diversity of abilities and capabilities of the participants, and as a ploy to discover the best personalised match for individuals. A typical range of instruments employed in a single session might include ‘*drums, bells, hand percussion, keyboards, electronic drum pads and acoustic guitars*’.

The last word on instrumental skills simply requires a note on the usefulness of mobile instruments. The Music Facilitators specifically found the guitar, accordion, ukulele and handheld percussion as effective in leading ensemble work by virtue of their mobility around the classroom. Hiding behind a piano is a notoriously difficult position to assume as a music practitioner!

- **The use of music technology**

The skills associated with the use of music technology are perhaps a more contentious inclusion on this list of essentials. It is still the case that expertise in music technology is seen to be the realm of specialist technologists. This research shows, however, that such is the power of technology in the SEND context that we should be challenging this status and ensuring it is in the

armoury of all engaged in the practice. Of course, the use of technology is not without its pitfalls. The Music Facilitators' journals cite the usual gremlins and technology fails, and the kit is not always robustly designed with the unpredictability of the SEND classroom in mind. iPads, especially, do not respond well to erratic movement or dropping! Furthermore, the use of technology does not always have the immediacy and efficiency of, say, the voice or simple percussion. However, this is to be balanced by the considerable impact on outcomes that the technology can afford. This extract from a Music Facilitator's journal describes the effects of an iPad app that turns the children's drawings into sound:

'It really captures the imagination and these children loved it. One boy was drawing faces - he made happy faces sound happy and sad faces sound sad. A little girl was drawing fairy dots and making fairy music, she absolutely adored it and was dancing around the room to her creation.'

A significant theme drawn from the research is how technology can be used to allow access to sound-making activities even for those with the most profound physical barriers to the manipulation of musical instruments. As one musician noted:

'Through technology young people and adults who have had no chance to make music before can now have those chances. It gives them the chance to hear and take part in an experience that has been hard for them to get involved in. Technology puts music on an equal footing for everyone.'

- **Knowledge of repertoire**

The Music Facilitators' knowledge of appropriate repertoire, especially in relation to song material, was identified as another distinguishing feature of the music practitioner. Building a repertoire is an accumulative process and part of the natural cycle of self-reflection and evaluation of what works best in a given context. Again, the importance of this knowledge in light of the 'second order' responsibility of music practitioners is paramount.

- **Compositional tricks and techniques**

More than one Music Facilitator focused heavily on creative tasks and drew on a repertoire of 'tricks' that engaged the learners in compositional processes. One Music Facilitator described a process whereby rhythmic warm-ups led to the learners successfully composing their own 4, 8 and 12 bar patterns. Another used drawing activities as a starting point for sonic compositions and chance operations such as dice-throwing to generate musical materials and sequences.

In addition to the specific musical skills identified here, a number of more general, but no less essential, attributes became apparent through the research. There is not room to dwell on these here, and they will chime with any practitioner working in any education setting. These attributes included patience; persistence; creativity; innovation; spontaneity; flexibility; being open-minded; a willingness to experiment and; effective, appropriate and well-judged communication.

Unit 6: Developing a responsive pedagogy



Starting points

Effective pedagogy is the life-blood of teaching and learning. Education is too important to be left to chance. Quality music education functions on two mutually dependent layers. Firstly, the practitioner needs to possess the appropriate skills and attributes required to engage the participants in practical music making. Without this the participants cannot hope to *engage* in music learning. This, however, needs to be underpinned with an understanding of *how* musical skills and knowledge are developed. It is this secondary layer that frames the practical activity, giving it value as a pedagogic tool. This Unit explores how music practitioners might develop their understanding of pedagogy and, crucially, how a responsive approach to the needs of SEND is essential in the development of high quality practice.



Task

Make a list of the key features of successful teaching and learning in music.



Discussion

What would you expect to see in a high quality music session for learners with SEND?

How might teaching learning and learning in SEND settings differ from a more typical mixed ability classroom environment?

How might you ensure that music sessions result in the highest quality musical outcomes?



Scenario

It becomes clear that the song you planned to teach a group is too technically demanding. How might you adapt your session but still meet your planned objectives?



Research findings and notes

Music pedagogy is underpinned by common principles regardless of the context. These principles, generally speaking, can be summarised as follows:

- Music learning must be experiential, in that musical development can *only* take place through the experience of using the voice, playing an instrument, or the use of technology
- Music learning is a complex interaction of the cognitive, the technical, the aesthetic and the expressive. The cognitive and technical aspects depend on the short repetitive, sequentially challenging experiences needed to ensure development. If these developing skills are then applied in increasingly broad range of contexts, the learner also develops the aesthetic awareness and the ability to use technical skills expressively. The new contexts are likely to place new cognitive and technical demands on the learner, and so the cycle of musical development continues.

In simple terms, good music learning (all learning for that matter) is a careful balance of the familiar with the new. The question for the Music Facilitators was, “What might be the specific challenges in achieving this within the SEND context?”

The overwhelming consensus from the Music Facilitators was that flexibility, spontaneity and responsiveness were the key to achieving the best possible outcomes. This is perhaps the case in any education setting, but within complex SEND contexts music practitioners are less able to rely on preconceived notions of what might work best. One Music Facilitator openly noted this imperative:

‘I am starting to realise that in settings like this, it is so important to be relaxed, spontaneous and very aware so that you can pick up what is going well or what needs to change. Having a strict plan could have a negative effect as so many of the things you try to do will not work and it will cause disappointment and despondency and eventually the ideas will dry up and you will lose the spark in yourself.’

Another Music Facilitator felt that they were not able to systematically plan for learning in the longer-term way they might otherwise be used to – *‘each week really felt like taking the best bits from the previous sessions and just continually peppering it with new things to trial’*. This highlights the importance of an iterative and highly reflective approach to practice framed by an ongoing evaluation of the impact of each classroom task of the individuals’ journey toward achieving a high quality musical outcome. To an extent, the highly individualised approach to teaching and learning in this context negates the identification of a list of ‘best practice’. However, a number of threads emerged from the research and while these should not be considered a recipe for success they are all notions that should be considered.

- **Drawing on the broadest possible spectrum**

‘Learners displayed preferences for the extremes of the dynamic range with some preferring the quiet sounds and others the loud sounds. There did not appear to be much reaction from learners when dynamics were played around the mezzoforte/mezzopiano range.’

This was a commonly identified trait among the Music Facilitators and was true across musical parameters. Many participants (though not all) responded best when engaged with making music and sounds at extreme ends of a particular spectrum – for instance very loud or very quiet, very high or very low, very fast or very slow. This ‘magnified’ approach to the elements seemed to trigger responses in some learners that more subtle variances in the spectrum missed.

Conversely, extremes of musical parameters caused some learners to disengage, and some preferred much greater subtlety in the manipulation of instruments. This highlights the complexity of SEND settings and the great challenge for practitioners in terms of firstly identifying individual preferences, and secondly catering for the full range. It was generally considered, however, that bold, polar contrasts were most effective in not only engaging the learners in making sounds, but also in creating simple musical structures.

- **Demonstrating, modelling and other supportive mechanisms**

As noted in Unit 5, the ability of the music practitioner (or other adult in the room) to demonstrate and model is extremely powerful. The Music Facilitators identified this approach as perhaps the most significant pedagogic tool available to them. An extension of this is the practitioner's skill in employing other musical support mechanisms, for instance a cyclic drum machine pattern to enhance rhythmic activities or backing track of various forms. One researcher described how the use of backing tracks turned a session round:

'Using backing tracks was very important in encouraging learners to vocalise. Initially, vocalisations were tried without backing tracks and learners were very self-conscious about making sounds and the activity was not very successful. When the backing tracks were added, two students in particular became very animated and one student who frequently left the room started to participate in the activities.'

- **'Talking their language'**

A particular challenge for the uninitiated in SEND contexts is the extent to which basic communication itself – something largely taken for granted in non-SEND settings – is not always straightforward. For instance while working with learners with profound and multiple difficulties one Music Facilitator noted that *'cues given by learners in their body language as to whether or not they are enjoying or understanding the session may be imperceptible from a distance'*. In other contexts knowledge of Makaton and the signing alphabet is of huge benefit. However, the notion of 'talking their language' runs deeper than this essential communication. The real skill is in developing a deep empathy with the experiential perspective of the participants. How, precisely, are they interpreting your visual and oral cues? How are you interpreting theirs and what assumptions might you be making? The Music Facilitators did not make any great claims to having solved this challenge, but a number noted that beginning to understand each individual was the key to maximising the musical outcome.

- **Repetition and ritual**

As one would expect, all of the Music Facilitators identified repetition as a key pedagogic approach. This would be the case in non-SEND settings as it is a basic principle of musical development, especially in relation to the use of the voice and of instruments. However, its value cannot be overstated and the practitioner's temptation to move on from a task for fear of it becoming boring, always needs to be kept in check. The Music Facilitators also commented on various modes of repetition. Prolonging a particular task within a session was one mode. Similarly, returning to tasks, especially highly successful tasks, in multiple sessions seemed to bare dividends. Repetitive structures within and between sessions also helped, especially in relation to learners' confidence in accessing a task. For some, the regularity and predictable nature of the activity seemed to have a calming effect. For others, it was a valuable developmental tool. As one musician explains:

'Don't be afraid of routine and repetition. As a leader I'm always terrified of people being bored and being thought of as unoriginal but this routine offers real space for confidence growing, exploration and feeling good about what we can do.'

- **Let them lead the way**

The attitude of one musician was that 'this was their session, not mine'. While the music practitioner is ultimately responsible for ensuring musical progress is made, the tools with which this can be achieved are embedded within the learners. By allowing them to influence the agenda and content, the practitioner is able to frame the musical journey with the interests and skills of the participants. In terms of achieving the balance between the familiar and the new this can be very powerful. For instance, at a basic level one musician used songs requested by the learners and their support staff as a starting point, complimenting them with other similar, but progressively wide-ranging, material. The approach of giving the learners greater autonomy over the content and processes of music learning is increasingly common in mainstream settings (see Green, 2008) but there is still a tendency for it to be a 'done-to' experience in the SEND context. Exploring this more fully was beyond the scope of this research, but is a notion practitioners should be thinking carefully about.

- **Discovering the learners' preferences**

All of the points above need to be considered in light of the music practitioner's responsibility for understanding the preferences of those with whom they work. This is not always straightforward – it is not unusual for some individuals to have a rather whimsical approach to what they do or do not prefer, and any number of factors might impact on this whimsy. However, all of the Music Facilitators either explicitly or implicitly made reference to the importance of recognising preferred modes of working as an important factor in achieving musical outcomes. One musician described the value of targeting and re-targeting individuals with a particular way of working as a tool to better establish preferences – in essence, simply because it does not work the first time, it does not mean it might not work at all. A number of Music Facilitators noted the sometimes highly specific preferences of an individual that would inform them in the way they planned and managed sessions:

'One student in particular seemed to enjoy playing the row of bells and was quite engrossed in the activity. The only time that he stopped was if a member of staff went near him with another instrument. It appeared that he didn't like other people playing near him.'

It goes without saying that a responsive pedagogy requires the music practitioner to pro-actively respond. Perhaps the overarching theme to have been drawn from this research project is the impact of the reflective journal process on the Music Facilitators themselves. For some, it was the first time they had engaged in this level of critical analysis of their own practice, and it quickly became apparent that this type of reflection should be *de rigueur* for any practitioner working in a SEND setting.

Unit 7: What's the measure? Monitoring and assessing musical progress



Starting points

The need to monitor, assess and measure the progress learners make is never far from the mind of the teacher. In music education it is regularly also something of a thorny issue. Aspects of musical development, specifically in relation to aesthetic, expressive and creative development, are not necessarily easy to measure. And the purpose of measuring attainment is regularly questioned with the oft quoted 'weighing the pig doesn't make it fatter'. In recent years the culture has shifted much more toward assessment being a tool for helping young people make progress, helping them to identify their successes but also how they can improve and develop (broadly referred to as assessment for learning or AfL).² This Unit explores the concepts of monitoring and assessment within the context of SEND music learning, paying particularly attention to the fact that musical development might not manifest in quite the same way as in a mainstream setting.



Task

Assessment in education settings broadly serves two purposes: assessment that informs the learner and teacher how to make further progress (formative assessment), and assessment that informs the learner and teacher on levels of attainment reached (summative assessment). Make lists of examples of what 'formative' and 'summative' assessments of musical progress might be.



Discussion

Why do we need to assess musical progress?

Who is assessment for?

What are we assessing?

What might we recognise as musical progress? How might we ensure we take account of the cognitive, the technical, the aesthetic and the expressive?



Scenario

Senior management have asked you to make an assessment of your SEND learners by reporting their level of attainment following a 6-week project. What do you do?

² See Fautley (2010) *Assessment in Music Education*, an excellent book that gives the full perspective on this topic



Research findings and notes

Exploring a systematic approach to the assessment and monitoring of individuals was not the aim or concern of this research project. However, being able to make a judgment as to whether the projects had a tangible impact on the musical progress of the participants is significant and it is exactly that broader definition of assessment that the Music Facilitators explored. The time-bound nature of this research project limited the extent to which longitudinal musical progression could be measured, but even within the modest scale of the research a number of important themes emerged.

- **Assessing levels of participation and engagement is a valuable starting point**

Interestingly, in mainstream music education settings, the idea of focusing assessment solely on the extent to which individuals are engaging would be considered poor practice, as it is not necessarily indicative of learners making progress. Within the SEND context, where the very act of engaging the learners in practical music-making can present the practitioner with a challenge, assessing learner engagement is entirely appropriate. Of course, without overcoming the challenge of engagement, musical progress can never hope to be achieved. It is therefore crucial that the music practitioner is fully aware of who is engaging, to what extent, and how their levels of engagement compare with previous form.

One Music Facilitator designed a straightforward but highly effective tool for monitoring engagement by asking staff to assess individual's engagement with a variety of tasks using a simple 0-4 scale (4 points for learners who were fully engaged and successful in their participation of an activity with a descending scale to 0 for neutral or negative responses). While the system will clearly not record nuanced detail of individual participation it did result in valuable data being collected. For instance, the Music Facilitator found that individuals overwhelmingly responded best to playing instruments. It highlights a clear preference for experiencing live music as opposed to recorded music. It also pinpointed specific difficulties such as responding to variance in pitch. The real value of this information was the way in which it could be used to inform the Music Facilitator's practice. This is 'assessment for learning' in action – identifying the existing strengths, preferences and challenges of the participants to inform teaching that maximises engagement through a knowledge of the participants' strengths and preference, with a view to targeting their areas for development.

- **Progress measures have to be contextualised and, if appropriate, individualised**

The Music Facilitators unanimously discovered that the range of measures that might be employed to assess progress was significantly broader in the SEND context than might be the norm in a mainstream setting. For some learners, seemingly trivial measures of '*holding onto a beater for a period of time*' or being able to '*sit and listen*' represented significant milestones in their behaviours and skills. For others, varying levels of responsiveness or autonomy such as recognising musical contrasts or showing preferences for a particular instrument demonstrated progress made from previous experiences. Others could be measured by progression more in keeping with assessment practices found in mainstream settings – technical skill in the use of an

instrument or the voice, creative decision making in the form of composition, or the recognition of specific musical elements or techniques. The key is the music practitioners' recognition of what might be 'new' in the learners' behaviours and skills – what might they be doing or understanding that they could not do or did not understand previously. Furthermore, music practitioners need to be mindful of the 'roadmap' through these multi-layered measures and what they might do to ensure that progress is made one step at a time. For instance, what might be the progression 'roadmap' of the learner who struggles to hold the beater and what might be the important milestones to look out for? Perhaps holding the beater for an increased period of time, leading to evidence of showing preferences for a particular instrument, leading to increased control of the instrument in response to a given musical stimulus, all within the context of what is appropriate and realistic for the specific learner. Progress by this definition is nothing to do with pre-determined targets of musical or technical attainment, but more to do with how the practitioner is aware of the *distance travelled*.

- **Distance travelled is more important than pre-defined attainment targets**

Music assessment in the SEND context is less concerned with 'end points' that focus solely on what learners achieve, and more concerned with where they start from. It is not insignificant that the Music Facilitators' journals discuss what the participants were *not* able to do more than would be typical in mainstream settings. While some might consider this an unhealthy deficit model, it could also be argued that it is symptomatic of a much greater attention to the *distance travelled* as the cornerstone of assessing learner progress. *Distance travelled* is highly personalised, with the measure of success being two-fold – the assessment of *actual* distance travelled and the assessment of the potential of the individual to progress from the starting point. The level of attainment is the actual distance in relation to the potential. So, the same actual distance travelled for two individuals might result in very different levels of attainment. In the SEND context actual distance travelled may appear infinitesimal within a mainstream setting but represent significant achievement against potential for the individual.

- **Timescales have to be appropriately considered**

The notion of appropriate timescales for making realistic and accurate assessments of musical progress is a hot topic across the music education sector, especially in a culture where progress is increasingly expected to be measured and recorded at very short intervals. Many aspects of musical development are inherently dependent on significant periods of time. For instance, you are unlikely to see evidence of genuine progression within an individual singing lesson in the way you might in a maths lesson dealing with a specific mathematical concept. The danger for the music practitioner is assuming that a learner is not *capable* of a particular task, when in fact they are actually not *capable with the given timescale*. This is often contentious with managers in schools who like the unrealistic appeal of 'tidy' assessment models with all curriculum areas subject to the same structures and timescales. Moreover, music practitioners need to ensure that whatever they choose to measure is appropriate to the timescale within which they wish to measure it.

- **Completion of task is not the same as musical progression**

The confusion and conflation of musical progression with the completion of a given task is a perennial issue that permeates music education. It is quite possible for a learner to make speedy progress through an entire music curriculum in the form of a sequence of given tasks. However if this sequence is not underpinned by the progressive acquisition of increasingly sophisticated technical and creative skills then musical progress will not be made. The Music Facilitators' reflective journals identified that this is just as likely to be a problem in the SEND context as it is in many mainstream settings. The 'roadmap' approach identified above goes some way to addressing this. The best practice identified in the project was where Music Facilitators combined a detailed knowledge of the learners' starting points, difficulties and potential, with a sense of each individual's 'roadmap' and then planned sessions based on their ongoing reflections on this information with sequential activities designed to help learners make step by step progress.

Unit 8: Resources and repertoire

Vocalisations

Music Facilitators included vocalisation activities during workshop sessions. The activities included:

- the use of students' names during hello and goodbye songs
- the use of names and other vocalisations to develop a group activity
- recording students' vocalisations and subsequent manipulation of those sounds for live playback within improvisations
- recording individual student vocalisations as compositional elements for a group piece

A Music Facilitator developed a vocalisation activity over the course of 11 weeks:

Week 1 - AIM: Unaccompanied vocalisations. *'Some students were reluctant to vocalise when the microphone was placed near them and I felt that students and staff felt inhibited by the lack of supporting background music...'*

Week 2 - AIM: Create call and response vocalisation with backing music. *'Interesting to note that students appeared to be unwilling to create vocalisations when the microphone was placed in front of them but become more vocal when it was away from them...'*

Week 3 - AIM: Create call and response vocalisation with backing music. *'Students are still reluctant to vocalise individually and the format will be changed to incorporate whole group vocalisations...'*

Week 4 - AIM: Create call and response vocalisation with backing music. *'The session was livelier with a whole group vocal activity to start. The group worked in a circle and invented vocal sounds. One student vocalised various sounds which the group then copied...'*

Week 5 - AIM: Create call and response vocalisation with backing music. *'The session started with using the students' names to a backing drum beat. Other greetings were mixed in amongst the names. It was observed that students were starting to anticipate when it was their turn and some started to create the opening sound of their name...'*

Week 6, 7, 8 - AIM: Create call and response vocalisation with backing drum beat. *'It was decided to include this activity at the start of every session...'*

Week 9 - AIM: Create call and response vocalisation with backing drum beat. *'The name activity is still proving popular and some students are starting to anticipate this start to the session...'*

Week 10, 11 - AIM: Create call and response vocalisation with backing drum beat. *'The name activity with vocalisation is working well in engaging students and creating a sense of anticipation. There is still a distinct difference between students who prefer live music to recorded music and these preferences have been consistent throughout the project...'*

A Music Facilitator used music technology to record student vocalisations.

'This week I used a combination of the iPads and instruments that individual students had shown a preference for. I used recording equipment to record the students (ensemble and individually) and created short loops that I played back as the elements for a tune. The best reaction seem to come when I was able to record and playback the students making vocal sounds that they could recognise as themselves...'

'I want to build on my finding that the students like to hear themselves and also experiment with their personal recording devices. They are very simple to use and can often be operated by the student. I wanted to use the devices as samplers that the students could use as instruments. They each recorded themselves vocalising sounds or words which were subsequently played back to a simple drum beat or keyboard phrase. The piece became a little chaotic but the laughter and excitement from some of the pupils was the biggest reaction I had seen in any session so far. The pupils really enjoy hearing themselves and seemed excited they were in control of the recording process and activating their recordings...'

A Music Facilitator recorded individual student vocalisations as compositional elements for a group piece. The group were already engaged with the topic 'Seasons' and it was agreed that they would create four short compositions based on the four seasons. Two sessions were allocated to each season and an identical structure was devised for each season.

Session One involved making and describing a drawing for the season, and exploration of sounds related to the drawing. The sounds were vocalised and recorded.

Session Two continued with drawing-related vocalisations and simple percussion sounds and rhythms that supported the vocalisations. Again, the sounds made were recorded.

Spring Session One - *'Drawing the scene really helped students to access the compositional content and most were able to verbalise their drawing. Some students found it difficult to initially vocalise the sounds but with encouragement their confidence grew...'*

Summer Session One - *'the group responded quickly to drawing their pictures and started to vocalise their pictures spontaneously. One boy started to make a car sound as he drew a car. This led to a narrative being set for the summer composition which was a journey to the seaside and what happens when you get there...'*

Summer Session Two - *'Using a simple story worked well for the young people to follow which could then be turned into a soundtrack...'*

Autumn Session One - *'The group made autumn pictures with many students vocalising before the drawing begins. The group now know what is going to happen in the sessions leading to increased confidence, enjoyment and performance...'*

Winter Session Two - *'The group drew winter pictures last week. They have a full understanding about what to expect this week. Percussion instruments were asked for in readiness of how they are going to play them for the winter drawings. The playing included different ways of playing the instruments with respect to tempo, dynamics and timbre...'*

Final week of the project - *'The group really enjoyed listening back to the CD that contains their Seasons compositions created from their vocalisations and percussion playing...'*

Music Technology

Two Music Facilitators used music technology resources in some or all of their sessions. The iPad was the most widely used resource, occasionally supplemented by a laptop computer. The iPads were made available to participants and the laptop computer shared between the Music Facilitator and participants.

Participants were engaged in music technology through offering a variety of music apps which could then be explored in more detail.

- iPad Apps
 - AirVox
 - Axylophone
 - Bloom
 - Figure
 - Garageband
 - iDaft
 - iKaossilator
 - iMaschine
 - Jelly Band
 - Loopesque
 - Magic Piano
 - Singing Fingers
 - Small Fish
 - Sound Drop
 - Speak Up
 - Voice Jam
- Other Music Technology Resources
 - Laptop with Ableton Live music software
 - Amplifier and speakers for iPads, computers and electronic instruments
 - CD and DVD to play back pre-recorded music and videos
 - Electronic drum machine and electronic keyboards
 - Microphones for recording and amplifying the voice

'I have been using a selection of music making apps on the iPad. There has been an element of trial and error, but they have proved very successful and the ease of use has been very popular...'

'What I have noticed is that it's not important what I, or an onlooker, might think of as a 'good' song. These children have been so happy because THEY are making music. They have been making the sounds, creating their own arrangements. It has been their own creation. It's the taking part in an activity, being involved and given a chance to be creative that really matters...'

'With the app we were using on Tuesday, one of the students got so excited that he nearly fell out of his chair, so we suggested he sit on the floor. And he did! He got very comfy, tapping out rhythms, changing settings within the application until he found what he wanted. Then he was making music, and so pleased with himself. I've never seen a young person respond in such a positive way to music before - it was pure, uncontrolled, happiness! He wasn't trying to hide his joy, or be something else, he was just genuinely pleased with what he was doing and showing everyone what he had done. The student wouldn't usually be able to select the sounds, navigate to different windows and make the music he wanted totally on his own because technology just hasn't been versatile enough. But through the

swipe technology, and the iPad's ease of use this boy really found something he could do. He was in his element. It made sense to him, and it all clicked into place...'

'Another boy was playing with an application called Bloom. Bloom is a wonderful app where you draw dots and if they are high up on the screen they are high in pitch and if they are low they are low in pitch. It works on a loop function and can repeat what you've played but on what can be a long loop. There is no metronome. Just beautiful sounds on a beautiful interface. It really captures the imagination and these children loved it. One boy was drawing faces - he made happy faces sound happy and sad faces sound sad. A little girl was drawing fairy dots and making fairy music, she absolutely adored it and was dancing around the room to her creation...'

'I have found technology to be very useful and successful, the young people loved engaging with the iPads and sequencing and making their own songs. They also liked me recording them and sampling. And using the various different applications, made it a very versatile tool. I did a few combination sessions where we combined the iPads and drumming which worked, but through talking to the children on the last session, they particularly enjoyed the iPads and would have happily done more sessions using these, I think the idea of making their own tunes and being able to play to each other went down really well, and they really valued being able to to share what they had done. iPads are very hands on and the students can really play it, and feel involved in the music making experience. There are lots of applications that are out there that visually look great, or have a very graphic interface which can excite young people and adults as well. This makes for a very stimulating music making experience...'

'When using technology, I think it really is necessary to have more than one member of staff, I would have struggled to work the group in a productive way if it was not for the teacher and teaching assistants because of the level of disability in the group. If it was not for the TA holding an iPad, or positioning drums, or just helping with selecting sounds, this could have been an impossible task. Also the kids could be easily distracted on occasion, and having extra pairs of hands and eyes, to make sure the kids were doing what they should be doing was really helpful...'

Not all activities with iPads were as successful as the experiences noted above. A Music Facilitator noted:

'Today was all about the iPads, unfortunately the school did not have enough for one each so they had to work in pairs. I had got the school to download a list of apps so I spent the session going through the apps with them allowing them time to play with them. I used simple music apps like sounddrop and bloom which seemed to have a good effect on them all...'

'The problems I am finding with iPads is that some of the pupils have very erratic reflexes that the iPads cannot cope with and they end up turning the app off or returning to the home page, or in some cases the iPad goes flying...'

'I am huge iPad fan, but I am realising that they have they limitations in a group like this. They are designed for soft, gentle and natural control, where as some children in this group have quite erratic and aggressive reactions which would be great for a bell or drum but not for iPads. This generally frustrates the children, which causes them to get bored. But for the calmer, quieter pupils it has a great effect and allows them to get lost in another world and escape from the chaos around them...'

During sessions at a different setting, the Music Facilitator wrote:

'This week I decided to use the iPads with the group. Unfortunately the technicians had been unable download all of the apps I had requested but managed to get a few, so after a warm up (with percussion instruments) we had a go using some of the apps. Their reaction to the iPads were good but they did not seem to be at the same levels that were created when handling the instruments. As well, the atmosphere seem to drop slightly and the excitement had been replaced by something more calm. And without meaning any disrespect for the staff I felt that their excitement levels had also dropped. This could have been down to the fact they were not as comfortable assisting the children with the devices when I was not alongside them. I used my own iPad with the vibrating speaker to go around and show the children some of the other apps and to observe how they reacted with the speaker on parts of their bodies. Some seemed apprehensive and some became very excited by it, to point it seemed to enhance their enjoyment of the iPad...'

'I have found that despite the many plus points music technology has, a problem is that it can be isolating and has a tendency to draw people in and shut them off from their surroundings. This is great in some circumstances but in the case of group work I believe it sometimes has a negative effect and drains a lot of atmosphere out of a room...'

One Music Facilitator integrated school keyboards into the sessions.

'Having spoken with the staff, I found that there was a cupboard full of keyboards that had been very rarely used so I was able to give one keyboard per pupil. I had found so far that keyboards had created the biggest spark with most of the pupils, so after a warm up I tried some different ways for us to play together. I started by playing one note in a simple rhythmic pattern and then encouraged the pupils to copy me. For some this had no impact but one boy picked it up quickly and for a short while he copied whatever I played. I then tried a more relaxed approach whereby I put on a beat (electronic drum beat), played a simple melody and encouraged the students to add their own parts. With the help of the staff this started to work well but with pupils being taken out for medication it started to die

off. When the group got very small I just spent some one on one time with remaining pupils and out of all the approaches, this was the most effective...'

'For the next session we followed a similar routine. I also experimented with getting them to play along with me as I played a drum. We also tried putting on some of their favourite songs like Pharrell Williams and Miley Cyrus. It definitely made them happy and again created a great atmosphere...'

'I have found that the keyboards are really great tools as they are very accessible and make good sounds very easily. It is not necessary in these situations for them to be played to any high technical standard or even to be taught to achieve any standard; it's the simple fact that when they press a key they get a response...'

Singing and Songs

Singing and vocalisations were offered widely, with five settings being offered regular group singing activities.

The singing activities included hello, goodbye and name game songs, warm up songs, action songs, and sing along songs.

- **Hello, Goodbye and Name Game Songs**

Hello, goodbye and name game songs are typically drawn from popular repertoire or invented by the singer and are based on a simple melody and structure appropriate for the group. The lyric invariably includes the participants' names and may involve other ideas such as the day of the week or introducing a different language. They can be unaccompanied or accompanied.

One Music Facilitator notes:

'Hello Song – do it in small groups to reducing waiting time...'

'Hello Song – it is becoming more familiar and more students are alert and starting to engage...'

'Goodbye Song – try various languages...'

Another Music Facilitator notes:

'We began with a hello song which was great fun. They seem very keen to sing and get involved in music. The next time we will encourage all the students to sing their own name solo...'

'The Hello Song was great and its part of our starting routine. Really important to use name games at the start and end and very useful to have a clear pattern of how we begin – i.e. by greeting each other / saying each other's names / signing each other's names. Feels very valuable...'

'We did the Hello Song and changed the key as we went round and the variation in key just keeps the enthusiasm for us to get through everyone's names...'

'We did the Hello Song in Spanish singing Hola. This week was a larger group than usual so it took us a LONG time to get through everyone's names, but still important to do this as vocalising / hearing individuals' names gives a great sense of belonging and empowerment to the children...'

- **Warm Up Songs and Sing Along Songs**

'We did some little breathing warm ups at the start and hummed low notes and high notes. Great for warming up the voice and introducing the concept of pitch...'

Music Facilitators introduced a wide range of popular songs to their groups. They also learnt from groups the songs that they like to sing.

'This session was very song focussed and we worked through a whole pile of songs including I Like The Flowers, Marching Around The Room, Pirate Ship, Grand Old Duke Of York, I Am The Music Man, and a goodbye song. It was lovely as the group shared some songs that they sang in a choir, e.g. He's Got The Whole World In His Hands and This Little Light Of Mine...'

'Last week students and staff requested songs they really like (Twinkle Twinkle, The Lion Sleeps Tonight) so I'm trying to build up a repertoire that includes everyone's tastes...'

'Come Dance With Me was a beautiful spontaneous eruption of dance. It was so enjoyed and free. It is lovely to see the children interact and naturally respond to music and song through dance. We have two students who are wheelchair users and it was touching to see how the other children managed to include them in their dances...'

'The Lion Sleeps Tonight went on for a long time and the repetition was great as it just got better. We split into two groups and helped to encourage each group to take turns in watching and listening to each other. Repetition is not boring but key to involvement and familiarity...'

'The Lion Sleeps Tonight - the singing was great and did particularly well with the ooohs and aaahs. We split into two and took it in turns to echo...'

'Yellow Submarine went down well with everyone singing, clapping and dancing...'

'Songs that use simplistic lyrics with lots of extended vowel sounds are great...'

'For Mexican Week I taught the melody for La Bamba and we all sang together adding shakers and using the flags to start and stop...'

'We learnt a new song - Little Green Frog - and all played our instruments during the chorus...'

Other sing along songs:

- Happy Birthday
- I Wanna Be Like You
- I'm A Believer
- There Was An Old Woman
- Three Blind Mice

- **Action Songs**

'The Hokey Cokey was fun and great that staff managed to include wheelchair users by moving them in and out of the circle...'

'We added Makaton actions to The Lion Sleeps Tonight which relied on the expertise and knowledge of the teaching assistants which gave us more of an equal role. Basic Makaton is really helpful...'

'We developed actions for The Lion Sleeps Tonight which were really useful. We had our percussion instruments to hand for the percussion sections. Also introduced clapped rhythms and body percussion whilst singing along to wimba way...'

'Student A chose the song The Lion Sleeps Tonight. Alongside student C, they stood at the front demonstrating the actions for the other children. It was great to depend on the children to help lead. We sang quietly, loudly, and worked on the use of dynamics. We eventually split into three parts, each group giving a solo performance and then all coming together...'

'During Come Dance With Me, everyone offered suggestions for actions which added to the sense of 'owning' the song...'

'We sang Happy And You Know It with invited contributions from each of the students. Great for self-esteem and feeling valued...'

'We explored parachute songs - Little Green Frog, My Old Wagon, Popcorn...'

Other action songs:

- Baby Shark
- Big Pig
- I Once Saw An Elephant
- Peel Banana Song
- Ram Sam Sam
- Rain Song

- **Resources to Support Singing**

'I made a set of laminated song cards so that we have a visual reminder of each song. Each card has an image on one side and the song title on the other...'

'I took in props for the Pirate Song (pirate hat, hook, parrot). Student D held the parrot whilst we all sang and played which gave him a role and the Pirate Song has become 'his' song. Student L took the role of pirate and was a lovely way of engaging with her. Both students struggle with vocalising and so great to find ways of including them properly. The song includes counting and rhyme so also useful educationally...'

'We used a large piece of blue cloth as our ocean for the Pirate Song. We rocked it this way, that way, forward and backwards. Great fun...'

'Props and visuals are key to enabling such a diverse group of SEND students to engage and participate...'

'I took along some green and red flags to help with conducting. They worked well along with the song cards and prop basket. Great to be able to give out roles (to students and teachers) during the session...'

'I bought a big blue foam wavy hand for the Hello Song...'

'Using symbols and colour to reiterate instructions for songs are essential, e.g. waving the flags. We are using a drum roll to finish...'

'I took in the megaphone for our ending song The Clock Says Tick Tock and we all said our name into the megaphone as it went round. This caused much hilarity and was a lovely way of individually vocalising...'

'I asked student M to choose a song from the song cards and we all sang I Like The Flowers. There was fantastic singing and everyone contributed suggestions of things they liked that included sunshine, church bells, the breeze, and bluebells...'

'For Mexican Week - we did the Hello Song in Spanish singing Hola. We tried a Mexican Wave which was tricky! Everyone strummed their ukuleles as I played the accordion to our Mexican Hat song. I took along Mexican hats for people to wear. There was real joy on the students' faces as they played ukuleles, wore sombreros, and did spontaneous dancing...'

'We projected a DVD of action songs and all sang and danced together...'

Musical Instruments

A wide range of musical instruments were used across the eight settings. These included Music Facilitators' own instruments and school resources. This section draws together a range of approaches the Music Facilitators used to engage and develop the musical interests of students.

'We continued with the Train Song and went for a ride to the seaside. We used a bench for the train and included instruments for adding sound effects...'

'I hid the instruments behind a blanket. I played one (unseen) and asked the students to guess the instrument...'

'I took along some flutes and it was really fun and educationally beneficial for the students to get them out and have a go. Most of them didn't know what a flute was let alone touched one. I couldn't really play it but one of the teaching assistants had played in the past so at least she could show us what it sounded like...'

'The children really enjoyed taking out the violins and got an incredible sound from them. I was amazed at how they took to it, some handling them more naturally than others but everyone really enjoyed exploring sound. They were very excited...'

'I introduced boom whackers which went down a storm. I thought as an exercise that we could try to put them in order, i.e. length, and thus demonstrating pitch. This seemed to confuse everyone and perhaps my instructions were too long / needed something simpler...'

'Student C, is renowned for wandering around and not stopping still. A large chime bar was played near her and she stopped and felt the vibrations all the time that it was being played near her. After approximately 40 minutes she took herself to the side of the room and sat down on a bench and listened to the activities that were taking place...'

'This week I took ukuleles so we all strummed away on our mini-Spanish guitars which they really enjoyed. Everyone strummed as I played the accordion to our Mexican hat song. I took some Mexican hats for selected people to wear which seemed to go down well...'

'Having done a warm up with the handbells I set up musical stations around the room for the students to visit. There were iPads, a guitar, a drum machine, a keyboard. I had intended that the group rotate every 10 minutes but eventually the students gravitated towards the sounds they enjoyed - which was fine! The keyboard and drum machine worked well for those who were energetic. I managed to cater for the needs of all students during this session. The downside was that it felt like doing lots of one to ones in the same room rather than a whole group session...'

'Pitch does not seem to be creating much response from the students; it might be that the ability to recognise different pitches needs to be done over a longer period of time or at a developmentally suitable moment for each student...'

'Some of the students are starting to show preferences for creating different sounds, e.g. metallic or wooden. Students appear to be following the cues provided by the staff rather than listening for the sound of the trumpet or clarinet...'

'The majority of students seem to enjoy the movement activities to the fast and slow tempo music but I am unsure whether they are making the connection between the music and movement or if they are just enjoying the experience of different speeds of movement and seeing lots of different people as they move around the room...'

'One student today reached out for the trumpet when it was being played and later explored the texture of the slides, bell and water keys. All removable parts were held on to as the student has a habit of dissecting equipment...'

'One student with SLD as opposed to PMLD, started to play the gong independently and shaking the maraca. She has previously not showed much response in the sessions and had quite an animated response to the very loud playing with a huge grin on her face. One student enjoyed having the glockenspiel played directly in front of him in a descending glissando pattern. This student enjoys listening and exploring music but generally prefers the quieter sounds and can often become quite immersed in the music that he is making...'

'The focus again this week was providing contrasts whether in terms of dynamics or tonal colours e.g. metal harsh sounds versus quiet sliding sounds from rainmakers and other wooden instruments...'

'There appears to be four main areas that encourage students to participate in the sessions and these are: participating on instruments, loud/quiet music, fast and slow, and live music...'

- **Rhythmic Games**

'We started making two-way musical conversations (copy and repeat a rhythm) with tongue drums and shakers. Developed it to include three-way conversations. The group enjoyed inventing more complicated rhythms to try and catch each other out! Developed it further to include call and response. Introduced ideas of pulse and tempo and started to play together as a group. We did simple copycat rhythms using sticks and then moved onto drums. We practiced fast and slow tempos. We started to include different percussion instruments and more complicated rhythms. We swapped leadership roles in the group and introduced solo/chorus playing. Rhythm progression is good - better than expected...'

'When doing group work we played percussion, touching on samba rhythms and instruments and African drumming. The young people took it in turns to lead the circle, and each had the opportunity to solo their own part which went down really well. We did a few sessions of this and then we started to investigate the iPads, working through a different application a session. These were great sessions, where the young people really engaged and loved the apps...'

'Using Djembe drums, I did a lot of call and response exercises and then moved on to the whole group starting to play the same pulse. I repeated the activity in the following week and then encourage the students to explore all the different sounds they could make with a drum. This developed into a copying activity. The students seemed to enjoy exploring the drum and discovering the different sounds it could make, e.g. scratching, knocking, sweeping...'

'Today I started with drums as a point of familiarity but then quickly moved on to introduce hand bells and other percussion instruments. The hand bells were a great success. Taking it in turns around the circle worked well and the notion of being part of a tune seemed to be good for the group. I also had taken along my keyboard and try to play along with their rhythms, and for them to play along with me. This added something extra to what we were doing...'

'I used the session to get back to playing together as a group. Using drums and percussion I encouraged them to copy me, and then to copy each other, and then we moved on to playing together. Compared to our initial sessions, I could sense that there was an improvement in their participation and excitement but it was sporadic...'

'I decided to focus on percussion as I feel this is the most accessible of all the instrument families and a good way to gauge the abilities of the group. I kept everything simple with a combination of playing a pulse and developed call and response patterns...'

- **Ukulele Group**

'The group are very keen to play instruments like guitars so will try to start with ukuleles. Everyone chose a ukulele. I named the parts and the strings...'

'We practiced counting and strumming down and picking individual strings. We strummed and then tried to be silent (counting in head). I taught G chord...'

'I taught F chord. We strummed up and down and practiced changing chords. We wrote a song about school and added in drums, shakers and ukuleles...'

- **Big Band**

'I took in loads of stuff and it was very tricky to carry it all! Two cellos, six violins, two drums, boom whackers and more. We created our very own Big Band with the group dividing up to create different sections of our orchestra i.e. low strings / strings / percussion. There was a lovely sound as we all prepared to play like a real orchestra. I explained about the concept of an orchestra and the conductor and we had staff at the front waving the flags conducting. We tried to keep a rhythm of three, singing along to Three Blind Mice. Could I possibly find a better more enjoyable way of getting the different sections to play? Mass instrumental tuition in such a large group feels a bit too much...'

'We trialled a new instrument, the xylophone, and had our orchestra. Student E was very engaged throughout and we gave her the guitar as she seems to benefit from the

vibro-acoustic element of music. The feel of the vibrations are just very powerful. Maybe need to build in more time allowance for individuals to explore this but very tricky in a large group setting...'

'I trialled working on call and response work working with single beats / double beats and dynamic variations with drum rolls / crescendos. Very tricky with such a large group and varying learning needs / difficulties...'

'The Big Band – we set up our orchestra with cellos / double bass / violins / ukuleles / drums and percussion and played along to Little Green Frog. A teaching assistant led the conducting and whilst we were a little slow at following at the start due to overexcitement we improved at responding to her instructions. One of the other teaching assistants was confident enough to lead her section on the flute which was real progress from the earlier sessions. We sang and played but I didn't try to push rhythm too much just being aware of starting / stopping...'

- **Graphic Scores**

'We are developing a graphic score so that the group have a different opportunity for composition. So far we have shapes for simple rhythms and four different note durations. Next week I need to bring instruments that can make sustained notes...'

'Today we added shapes for dynamics and different sounds/timbres...'

'Wow! Completed and played through our 24 bar score that includes rhythms, dynamics and instruments. The group particularly enjoyed performing and sharing what they had created and learnt with other students...'

- **Other Compositional Approaches**

'I used a chance composition technique to make specific sequenced sections for a piece. The main prop was a large foam dice. The idea is that rolling the dice specifies the order of instruments or pitch value that are then played in the sequence. The score is a series of numbers that are derived by chance. The young people enjoyed rolling the dice to create the score. Practice runs of the sequences were made using bells and percussion or a combination of the two. Young people enjoyed conducting the different sections through using the red and green cards we have been using for stop and go...'

'I used all the percussion instruments available including drums, hand bells and tambourines to try and create a party atmosphere. I set the scene by saying we were on a beach, it was a hot day, and encouraged the students to add in their own details to the scene. I also made sure staff had instruments so they could contribute to the scene...'

- **Stories**

'We explored Jack and The Beanstalk using instruments, songs and props. This is a story that the group have been working on in the school...'

'We shared out the instruments and explored their sounds. We applied the sounds in the context of storytelling or to integrate into a song. For example - 'Can you play a shaker? Can you play a drum?...'"

'We explored the story of Three Billy Goats Gruff using high and low pitches for voice and with instruments...'

'I did some story telling using descriptive sound which I thought would go down really well. This is a workshop I have run with children before. Some students had difficulty in the freedom of making their own story or relating sounds to the story...'

- **List of Instruments used during the project.**

- Percussion Instruments (Unpitched)

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| • Cabasa | • Rhythm Sticks |
| • Clatterpillar | • Shakers |
| • Djembe Drums | • Stirring Drum |
| • Football Rattle | • Tambourine |
| • Gathering Drum | • Tongue Drum |
| • Lollipop Drum | • Tubano Drum |
| • Maracas | • Vibraslap |
| • Ocean Drum | • Wooden Agogo |
| • Rain Stick | • Wrist Bells |

- Percussion Instruments (Pitched)

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| • Bell Board | • Handbells |
| • Boom Whackers | • Vibratone |
| • Chime Bars | • Whistles |
| • Dream Drum | • Xylophone |
| • Glockenspiel | |

- All other Instruments

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| • Accordion | • Flute |
| • 'Cello | • Harmonica |
| • Clarinet | • Piano |
| • Double Bass | • Trumpet |
| • Electric Drum Kit | • Ukulele |
| • Electric Drum Pads | • Violin |
| • Electric Keyboard | |

5. Appendices

Appendix 1: What the schools said

Eight Schools were sent generic feedback forms that soundLINCS uses across all programmes. These tables collect their responses together.

Schools 3 and 8 were unable to provide feedback. In one case this was due to the relevant staff member leaving the school.

		School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7	School 8
1	The soundLINCS facilitator was consistently on time. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)	4	3		4	3	4	4	
2	The soundLINCS facilitator engaged well with the participants. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)	4	4		4	4	4	3	
3	The workshop/s were flexible enough to accommodate the needs of the participants. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)	4	3		4	4	4	3	
4	The workshop/s provided new creative opportunities for the participants. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)	4	3		4	4	3	3	
5	The aims of the project were clear at the start. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)	4	3		4	4	3	3	
6	The workshop/s met our expectations. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)	4	4		4	4	4	3	
7	This setting and our practitioners are more enthusiastic to use/support creative activities with participants. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)	4	4		4	4	3	4	
8	Overall, the workshop/s have had a positive effect on our setting. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)	4	4		4	4	4	4	
9	The workshop/s have contributed to increased self-esteem and/or confidence for many of the participants. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree)	7	7		8	9	7	8	
10	The workshop/s have improved the musical ability and/or creativeness for many of the participants. Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree)		9		8	9	6	8	
11	Would you recommend soundLINCS to others? Scale: YES or NO	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	
12	We would be interested in having further soundLINCS workshops. Scale: YES or NO	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	

	What were the highlights of the workshops?	Were there any low points or areas of concern?	We would welcome any further comments you may have including anything you would change.
School 1	Working really hard helping the staff to gain confidence about what they do musically. Constant dialogue. Trying to improve responses from children. Very professional. She spoke to each individual participant	None	The musician was amazing! Every week she documented how each individual child responded to each activity, then created lesson plans that were bespoke to each child in order to see a change in response to them week by week. She made sure that each week was devised to actively stimulate someone different. She changed activities regularly to keep them all engaged. 12 weeks in the terms of our children is the click of a finger - that if throughout the course of an entire year a child is able to learn 5 new words that is enormous progress, so to quantify the progression of the child over just 12 weeks is almost impossible. If the musician was there for a year they would definitely see a progression in each child. The project exceeded our expectations. Question 10 asks about improving musical ability - we saw 'moments' in every session but they can't be quantified.
School 2	Seeing pupils motivated, enthusiastic and engaged	Slightly worried for first session. Worries gone within 10minutes. Superb, met needs.	Love to do it again. The project went over and above what we expected. For the future - probably better to meet our pupils beforehand and see their ability.
School 3			
School 4	Pupils learning new ways to access music making.	Not really, it soon became apparent that pupils were more interested in exploring on their own than in playing together and this was not a problem.	It was a very good opportunity to have access to new technology for a long period of time and really learn some new skills. It would have been nice to have longer sessions so that pupils could share their achievements in a less rushed way. For the future - it is hard getting pupils singing in lessons, so maybe work which links voice with technology.

	What were the highlights of the workshops?	Were there any low points or areas of concern?	We would welcome any further comments you may have including anything you would change.
School 5	All of it. Seeing the children so engaged. Loved the ukulele.	The children were upset at the session when the musician was off poorly!	No, we would love to have her again!
School 6	The musician working with mixed groups and engaged all really well. The kids loved his visits	Sometimes a child would need to leave the group then come back, but this is ordinary for the group. Not a concern.	The musician engaged really well. Thank you.
School 7	Some particularly enjoyed the musicians own instruments (e.g. the guitar) and things we don't have in the school, plus white board activities	Some children (large group) found there was too much turn-taking	Too much turn taking for groups of this size. For the future - more opportunities to get out of chairs.
School 8			

Eight Schools were sent feedback questions that were designed for this programme. This table collects their responses together.

Schools 3, 6 and 8 were unable to provide feedback. In one case this was due to the relevant staff member leaving the school.

Question 1	Do you think the music workshops engaged most of the students most of the time?	If not, what proportion of the group was engaged most of the time?
School 1	Yes.	N/A
School 2	Yes, certainly.	N/A
School 4	Yes.	N/A
School 5	Yes, I have never seen the students so engaged with all the activities.	N/A
School 7	Not all the time. When the instruments were out it was good. They were more engaged when out of their chairs.	Estimate of 60%.
Question 2	Specifically – which music activities do you think engaged students the most? (For example – singing, using instruments, using technology, songs with movements, composition, improvising, the sound of chimes and bells, etc.)	Can you speculate about why this might be?
School 1	Chimes fond favourite. Live music was great for some. Quiet great for others. Responded well to vocal work.	Every child is very different, they all respond to different things. The musician kept the session varied and changed activities often enough to keep everyone involved.
School 2	All enjoyed tactile instruments that created a sound. For example the bells, keyboard, and drums.	Cause and effect - their actions produced something that they can see and hear. They were having an impact.
School 4	Certain iPad apps were more successful than others. Bloom and Loopseque worked well.	Some iPad apps are more engaging than others, they could offer instant results like Bloom or have lots of different possibilities like Loopseque.
School 5	They loved the ukuleles. They enjoyed the introduction to percussion as well as the work with the glockenspiel.	
School 7	Using instruments and movement songs when TAs join in.	The group loses interest when they are not actively involved in something, so listening to music without playing would lose their interest. They like to be able to leave their chairs if they are physically able to do so and the group was very young so their attention is that much shorter than those from other settings who are a few years older.

Question 3	Specifically – which music activities do you think engaged students the least? (For example – see list above.)	Can you speculate about why this might be?
School 1	The work on pitch was a concept that was trickier for some of the students.	Their abilities are such that they could just about grasp tempo, but pitch was just one step further for them to grasp - if the musician was able to be there longer she thinks they would have been able to revisit this.
School 2	Trying to copy a beat.	They physically struggle to produce that action once never mind more than once and in time, motor skills are an issue here.
School 4	Building textures on iPad together wasn't so successful.	Probably because the pupils didn't have great enough control of their music making on these apps and because they were more interested in just experimenting.
School 5	Reluctant to sing at the beginning.	Self-conscious until they got to know the musician.
School 7	White board activities - sometimes just music on and it was just listening. Hard for student with hearing impairment.	As above (Question 2), it involved sitting and listening and the group prefer to be active. The student with hearing impairment didn't get much out of the listening activities, he needs to be able to feel instruments vibrate and to be hands on.
Question 4	In general – do you think that most students achieved some musical progress over the 12 weeks?	If not – what proportion of the group did achieve some musical progress?
School 1	Saw 'moments' for each of them. Progress hard to quantify. If she could see into the future, with another year of it there definitely would.	
School 2	Yes, though it is difficult to assess the sustainability of that progress as most seemed to be starting from scratch at the beginning of each session.	
School 4	Their progress was mostly in learning to use different apps and finding which gave the most scope for them to create.	
School 5	Yes I do.	
School 7	Yes.	Most did, if only a little.

Question 5	Specifically – in which music activities did students show the greatest musical progress? (For example – see list above.)	Can you describe any examples of musical progression that you have seen/heard?
School 1	One of the biggest impacts was a beat box backing a 'hello' session. This was a weekly intro.	All children throughout the course of the 12 weeks gained confidence to have a go at joining in with this in any way they could.
School 2	Doing the same routine each week helped them to explore the musical instruments.	
School 4	1) Instrumental skills on iPad. 2) Control of sound making in instrumental work.	1) I think it is too soon in learning to use the technology for pupils to make new musical progress but since completing the course and continuing to use the technology, some pupils have developed their control of sounds in instrumental playing. 2) Being able to play more accurately, finding and repeating a note, making very simple repeating patterns.
School 5	They learned to follow a beat and write songs. They did 16 bars of music which was brilliant.	
School 7	Using instruments - especially instruments that the musician brought in that we don't have in the setting.	Liz got them to follow patterns and rhythms sometimes. Some of the more able students were able to copy it which was good.
Question 6	Specifically - in which music activities did students show the least musical progress? (For example – see list above.)	Can you speculate about why this might be?
School 1	The work on pitch was a concept that was trickier for some of the students.	Their abilities are such that they could just about grasp tempo, but pitch was just one step further for them to grasp - if the musician was able to be there longer she thinks they would have been able to revisit this.
School 2	Following the rhythm.	As above in question 3.
School 4	Ensemble playing.	Pupils were mostly interested and absorbed in trying out the technology.
School 5	None of them, it did take them a while to grasp the ukuleles.	
School 7	In the listening activities. Their attention span was too short, and it didn't work well with our hearing impaired student.	

Question 7	Did you see any music resources (instruments, technologies, books, internet, etc.) that you would like to use at your school?	What are they?
School 1	Yes.	Backing tracks that the musician used. Her own live instruments.
School 2	We have a lot of these instruments in school however it has inspired us to take greater care of the ones we have and put more time and effort into the upkeep of these instruments. Now that we have seen how beneficial these sessions were to the pupils, we need to make sure they are all in working order.	
School 4	Yes, and we are using Bloom and Airvox now in lessons.	Bloom, Airvox, other apps which we will install as and when.
School 5	Yes, we already have percussion equipment but we really liked the work with the ukuleles.	
School 7	White board activities (the ones that were audio and visual), music for Swan Lake. Stories on USB - visual and auditory, fitted in with what class was doing in week.	
Question 8	Did you see the Music Facilitator overcoming any barriers that prevented a student from engaging with a music activity?	Can you describe any examples?
School 1	Yes. Because such mixed ability, every week she changed the activities someone different would benefit.	One student particularly liked the quieter calmer music and vice versa.
School 2	Yes.	Extremely patient and waiting for the pupil to reply and swapping instruments when one didn't work.
School 4	Yes.	Being able to control sounds more effectively.
School 5	A couple of the pupils were really shy and the musician managed to bring them out of themselves. Very encouraging.	
School 7	One child that has hearing impairment can be hard to engage but towards end of sessions he got more confident with the musician and would go over to her. We think he liked her guitar and he liked to go and engage with her on a one-to-one basis, this was nice to see because he doesn't warm to people easily.	

Question 9	Have you (or the school) learnt anything that will increase the amount of music activity provided in the school?	Can you give examples of what you/the school learnt?
School 1	The music teacher has been rethinking what she does in the school. She's going to provide CPD for other teachers now and use lots of ideas from the musician.	
School 2	We are more aware of how music can engage them. We concentrate mainly on their core subjects but through watching how they engage with music we will put more emphasis on this. It was great to see them progress and to watch them experience using different skills and be fully engaged.	
School 4	Yes, it helped us get our iPad orchestra off the ground.	Useful textures which can be obtained using apps on iPad.
School 5	Yes, writing of music and engagement in a beat taught really well.	
School 7	Yes. The classical week (Swan Lake) and the music teacher then got some dance music for group to hear so they could recognise the contrast of style. They like the different instruments, we would now like to invest in particular ones!	
Question 10	Would you be interested in joining in with a training event/s that specialise in the use of music activities within SEND schools?	
School 1	Yes.	
School 2	Sure the music co-ordinator would be interested to hear about events.	
School 4	Yes.	
School 5	Yes.	
School 7	Yes, quite possibly!	

Appendix 2

Statistical summary of the project.

The project involved:

- 6 Music Facilitators from 3 community music organisations
- 8 SEND schools from 4 music hub areas
- 96 sessions x 1 hour duration delivered
- The average participation per week was 70 Children and Young People (CYP) aged 4 - 19; their cumulative total was 841 attendances across 12 weeks
- The average participation per week was 25 teachers and teaching assistants; their cumulative total 298 attendances across 12 weeks
- The biggest class size encountered was 17 CYP; the smallest was 4 CYP
- The largest number of teachers and teaching assistants supporting workshops in a single school was 11; the smallest number was 1
- 8 parents/carers at 3 schools supported the workshops for durations between 4 and 12 weeks; their cumulative total was 80 attendances across the 12 weeks

Evidence Summary

- Registers from 8 schools
- Reflective journals from 8 MFs
- Written notes from 5 monitoring visits
- Feedback forms from 6 schools
- Completed questionnaires from 5 schools
- Voice recordings from discussions at Development Day 2 at Nottingham Trent University

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