



Music Matters @ MOPS Term 5 Report

KEY:

Jingle Sing (JS)

Little Star (LS)

Music Therapy (JMT)

Music Leader (ML)

Key Workers (KW)

CHILDREN: IE, IAN, MO, LA, RA, JB, NE

Introduction

The Term 5 report for Music Matters @ MOPS summarises a collection of written observations by ML's across the 3 providers (**LS, JMT and JS**) and presents a distinct perspective on the musical experiences of the children involved in the project. The data provides further clarity and support for the ideas discussed throughout the project of the potential benefits of musical experiences for children with additional needs and the planning and practices of the ML's and their interpretation of the children's musical explorations. Consistent observations occurred in areas such as (i) musical achievement (ii) enjoyment (iii) musical interaction (iv) communication (v) Makaton. We also highlight further examples of (i) reflective practice (ii) adaption of experiences and resources (iii) planning considerations.

The Term 5 data accentuates the importance of musical experiences on a fundamental level for young children, particularly those with additional needs, in providing joy, excitement and fun. We note the reciprocal impact of this enjoyment on both the children's musical and communicative achievements and ML practice.

Aims and Outcomes

Overall Aim: To develop children's participation in group & 1-1 music-making, improve workforce/children's Makaton skills with songs & rhymes & to share the results & benefits of this project.

The Term 5 report is based on the written observations of ML's in **LS, JMT and JS** sessions. Data for Term 5 reflects changes in provision in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) including video data not being collected, music sessions towards the end of the term concluding early, final sessions being impacted by social distancing, and postponement of sharing concerts and performances.

The Term 5 report therefore represents a ML focused reflection of the musical experiences of the children and the reporters own interpretation of the written data only and not a combination of analysis of video footage matched with written data as with previous terms. The written data provides an interesting and valuable perspective highlighting areas such as (i) continued musical achievements in group and 1-1 music making experiences (ii) the impact of consistent use of Makaton on children's communicative and musical responses (iii) new considerations in planning and practice (iv) reflections for future practice.

Although sharing concerts and performances did not occur during Term 5, there was a visiting musician in two of the **LS** music sessions, providing further examples of the benefits of these extension opportunities within the Music Matters at MOPS project. Opportunities for these additional musical moments enhance children's musical awareness and experience of (i) different instruments, timbres and ways of performing (ii) sensory and musical exploration (iii) interaction and response to different sounds, pieces and performers.

Outcome 1 - MUSICAL

To improve group/ensemble music making experiences that enable MOP's children to develop performance skills.

Throughout the project Outcome 1 has explored musical achievement with a focus on developing musical skills, performance of these skills, and improving the musical experience through reflection and analysis of planning and practice. We have considered why music in particular may support new exploration and achievement with reference to the musical features themselves and effective practice in their application. For example, we have described the (i) appealing

nature of the repetitive form and structure of music (ii) incorporation of musical features such as anticipation, dynamics and tempo changes (iii) use of familiar songs and particular sounds and patterns within ML planning and practice. We explored these areas with consideration of the sensory needs and responses observed across the sessions.

In Term 5 we look beyond the musical features and their application to appreciate the joy, excitement and fun that musical experiences can bring to young children. This 'joy' provides its own intrinsic value where motivation to explore music's many facets comes from within. For young children with additional needs, where many aspects of daily life can be confusing and at times upsetting, creating space and a focus on these joyful musical moments can support emotional wellbeing and individual growth. In Term 5 this enjoyment and internal motivation appeared to lead to further exploration and achievement, highlighting music's potential to support children in many areas of daily life.

Both small and large ensemble experiences across the project have provided multiple examples of musical achievements, increased confidence, independence, communication and interaction. Perhaps the joyful, fun and compelling nature of music is why ensemble musical experiences in this cohort can be some of the most successful group experiences. Joy can also be 'contagious' and encourage others to show interest and join in. Early social interactions may be extended in musical experiences where children are motivated to copy, process, accept and engage with others musical responses. In Term 5 we also consider the reciprocal value and impact of the children's enjoyment and musical exploration on ML's own enthusiasm, commitment and practice.

Finally, we continue to highlight the multi-sensory input musical experiences can offer, which combined with the enjoyment observed, presents music as a fundamental tool in the support and interventions provided to young children with additional needs. **VIGNETTE 1** provides examples of children's enjoyment during the musical experiences and ML's reflections.

VIGNETTE 1 – Joy

Examples:

JS: *ML* describes **OM** expressing his enjoyment and interest in the music session. *ML* notes that **OM** often keeps a distance from the group during the music sessions. In this particular music session *ML* describes **OM's** successful participation: 'Although not part of the circle, he was clapping his hands and jumping up and down to the music during the intro songs and kept coming to look at what we were doing. He loved the cymbals and played them through the instrument section (and beyond!)'.

JS: *ML* notes an abundance of smiles and laughter during scarf, lycra and parachute activities within the **JS** music sessions. *ML* describes **LA's** enjoyment during a parachute activity: 'Lots of smiles and laughing today, especially during the parachute'. In another example *ML* describes a lycra activity where there 'was laughing right from the start'... 'we added the stars to Twinkle Twinkle and there were lots of smiles and laughs as the stars flew off the lycra'.

JS: *ML* describes one child's enthusiastic musical exploration 'she joined in throughout the whole session, was smiling all the time, saying some words (thank you, pop for the bubbles) and did lots of actions on her own – clapping, moving feet and arms as directed in the song'.

LS: *ML* describes an observation of one child's delight and focus during musical interactions with the *ML*. 'Every time I looked at her and made sound towards her, she would giggle and laugh out loud. Very focussed with her playing and lots of eye contact'.

JS: *ML* describes one child's musical responses and enjoyment during the session. 'She was watching me the whole time, following all of my arm movements etc with her eyes, looking very interested in what was going on. She absolutely loved the bubbles and her little face was a picture – her eyes lit up and she gave the most beautiful smiles'.

LS: Two of the sessions in Term 5 had a visiting musician who played alto saxophone for the children. **LS:** *ML* notes the engagement and joy experienced by the children. 'They were captivated. Lots of looking at where the sound was coming from. Lots of open mouths and really listening'.

JMT: *ML* describes **JB** who appears to be really enjoying the music session: 'smiling, clapping and banging the guitar in the Hello Song. He took the 2 maracas out of the box straight away when offered and began to shake these happily, in bursts throughout the next activity. He followed the cue to 'stop' once and enjoyed pausing before starting the music again'.

JMT: *ML* shares another observation of **JB's** enjoyment, confidence, engagement and musical skills: 'He immediately picked out many instruments from the box when offered, needing very little encouragement to get involved. He banged on the small drum, shook a maraca, played the glock and other bits of perc. He followed the 'stop' cue in 'Noise' and laughed each time. He banged the big drum with both hands during 'Duke of York' and copied some of my actions during this activity. He initiated the playing/singing at times, as well as joining in with others'.

JMT: ML describes **LA** and her extended engagement, enjoyment and musical achievements as the session progressed: 'She eventually did hold a maraca and gently shook it along to 'Noise', the most consistent that she has played an instrument in our sessions. She began to get more engaged whilst using the big drum, smiling and giving me more eye contact. She was gently banging a lot and initiating the music multiple times. Took the bells 3 times during 'Pass the Bells', which was a first for her. Also passed them to me twice and her KW once. After this activity she took my hands and she communicated wanting to sing/do "Row Your Boat" with her actions. She wanted to keep going through the instruments as I sang the Goodbye Song and kept passing the bells to me'.

JMT: ML highlights reciprocal motivation, extended exploration and enjoyment during a musical interaction with **RA**. **RA** 'was getting into playing even more this week, first strumming the guitar with her LH with support and smiling when offered during the Hello Song. She was then quite consistently hitting the shekere when held near her, predominantly with her LH but also sometimes RH, moving her whole body at times. Very motivating. Very strong eye contact and listening to the music at times. Anticipating cues in the music as well, raising her eyebrows, as well as smiling'.

JMT: ML describes his interpretation of **HN's** musical responses and adaption of the activity to support further musical exploration. ML also shares his own delight in **HN's** musical achievement. **HN** 'was calm throughout, moving her head and eyes towards the sound at times. She followed the cue at the end of 'My Bonnie' 3 times with a slight movement of her hand in mine, which was fantastic'.

Summary

The examples above are a small selection from the Term 5 data and further examples can be observed across the project of the joy musical experiences can bring and the musical exploration and achievement that is observed alongside it. We see confident exploration, performance and initiation of musical skills and understanding, and musical interactions with ML's and others.

Many of these examples are during activities providing multi-sensory input and opportunities to explore, move and engage freely with a variety of props and songs. This provides further clarity to the sensory nature of musical exploration described throughout the project and suggests that in musical experiences achievements can be made in musical learning, confidence, communication, motivation and engagement.

From the Term 5 written data, we can also see ML's own enthusiasm and motivation coming through. Perhaps this is a result of the positive feedback and interaction which can occur during these enjoyable musical experiences, and sense of achievement in their own practice as children succeed in ways that are individual and valuable to each child.

It is uplifting and inspiring to describe such joyous moments in the musical explorations of the children in the Music Matters at MOPS Project, however, we are also aware that at times some children may face challenges which can be observed within the musical experiences. Across the project we have found that many of these challenges may relate to sensory processing difficulties and sensitivities resulting in overstimulation and/or seeking particular sensory input. In Term 4 we observed ML's sensitive approaches and adaptations of resources and experiences to support individual children's needs and promote participation and musical exploration. We see further examples in Term 5 of ML's responsive, reflective and adaptive practices which we will discuss in Outcome 3 relating to effective practice.

Outcome 2 – PERSONAL

To improve communication in a vocal, emotional or physical way in response to thematic music & singing sessions.

In Term 5 two focus points relating to Outcome 2 and communication were prominent. The first was the impact of the continued use of Makaton on children's musical and vocal communication with some examples of children instinctively accompany both musical and communicative responses with Makaton. This included using Makaton to share their musical understanding, accompany vocalisation of lyrics, and respond to ML cues. The use of Makaton appears to be supporting and extending the children's communicative and performance skills.

In Term 4 we shared examples of the use of Makaton during **LS** sessions. In **VIGNETTE 2** we focus on **JS** music sessions and share a few examples of extended use of Makaton by the children in their communicative and musical responses.

VIGNETTE 2 – Makaton JS Sessions

Examples

JS: ML describes examples of children using Makaton during different musical activities, often accompanied by singing and in response to particular musical and lyrical cues.

- One child signs some of the words to a song whilst singing the lyrics.
- **NE** uses Makaton during the Hello Song and counting during 3 Little Ducks, in time with the song.
- One child makes the sign for duck whilst creating 'quacking' vocal sounds during each verse of 3 Little Ducks.
- One child brought a bunny toy from home and shared this with the ML, making the sign for rabbit.

The second focus point relating to Outcome 2 was consideration of the different musical activities and types of experiences which encouraged and extended musical and communicative responses. The data from Term 5, as well as examples from across the project, suggest that musical experiences which are open, flexible and adaptable (in response to children's musical explorations) result in extended musical, communicative and vocal responses and increased initiation and performance of these skills. Within these experiences ML's could make spontaneous musical adjustments such as adding pauses, stops, starts, dynamic and tempo changes, lyrical changes (such as including names) and changes to the form and structure of particular pieces of music and musical patterns.

This focus point crosses over into other Outcomes of the project and previous reports have explored particular musical experiences and ML adaptations within discussions of musical learning (Outcome 1) and effective practice (Outcome 3). In Term 5, Outcome 2, we discuss experiences and adaptations which promoted extended communicative and musical responses, where children were supported to share their musical ideas and preferences through verbal, non-verbal, physical and emotional forms of communication.

Adaptions such as these were observed predominantly during live musical experiences where ML's would sing and/or play an instrument. The music was focused towards the child/group with ML's observing their responses. ML's would then make changes to their singing/playing based on these responses and allow space/pauses for individual exploration, interaction, initiation, communication,

performance of musical understanding and opportunities to play solo. ML's could then extend and adapt the activity even further to support continued engagement and allow children to practise new skills. Musical concepts such as cadences, form, repetition, dynamics, tempo, pitch and pulse could be explored more freely within live musical experiences.

Examples where pre-recorded songs were the main focus also promoted musical response, in particular (i) copying ML actions and ways of performing on different instruments and using props (ii) performing the pulse (iii) vocalising lyrics (iv) memorising and responding to different musical cues. Pre-recorded songs also provided opportunities to explore and listen to a variety of ensembles, musicians and genres as well as specific forms, sounds, timbres and tempos. However, extension of responses through reactive musical changes were observed more consistently in live musical experiences, particularly for children with significant needs who may need a little longer to process, share their musical ideas, make choices and perform solo. Pre-recorded music can also be restricted by its own musical parameters and difficult to make within the moment changes based on children's responses.

This interpretation and analysis of the data is noted, however, does not suggest one experience should replace the other, as the goals and outcomes of particular musical experiences vary for different children and represent one element of a complete lesson structure. Perhaps the successes observed across the Music Matters at MOPS project as a whole, are a result of a combination of both types of musical experience and the holistic and extensive music provision provided, which supports and allows for a variety of musical opportunities and goals.

VIGNETTE 3 presents examples from Term 5 of children's communicative responses to live musical experiences.

VIGNETTE 3 – Live Musical Experiences
--

Examples

JMT: ML describes **RA's** communicative and musical responses when space/pauses were created during a guitar and singing song. ML also notes **RA's** motivation and attention increasing as the guitar started to play. '**RA** explored the tambourine and 'played' along as I went around the song, as well as in the appropriate place at the end when given lots of space'. During another song ML describes 'cueing' **RA** to play the bells during a vocal song: 'After being 'taught' it **RA** was able to play perhaps 6 times at the end, holding the bells with my support. We had to be patient and would applaud her effort when she moved and played the bells'. The flexibility within this live instrument/vocal piece allowed the ML to create space, pauses and repetition to support **RA** to communicate and perform her musical understanding.

LS: ML: describes **IAN's** musical exploration during the start of a music session. **IAN** was 'dancing in front of the guitar for the first two songs. Excited. Anticipated stops and starts'. The ML was able to respond to **IAN's** musical cues in the moment and create further stops and starts, musical changes, and pauses to build anticipation and promote further musical exploration. **IAN** communicated his musical understanding through physical movement.

LS: ML describes one child's drumming exploration and initiation of the lyric cue 'hey' which he repeated, leading/conducting the group. The ML was able to support continued vocal and musical exploration by responding to this vocalisation and adapting her own performance to support and extend this.

LS: ML describes **IE's** vocal requests for more at the end of a song. **IE** 'shouts with sounds that she wants more. We play again'. In live musical experiences, repeating a sound or song when requested can be done in a responsive and interactive way where the ML has the ability to vary its musical features to promote further communicative responses and engagement.

JMT: ML describes **LA's** communicative responses during drumming exploration. **LA** 'drummed with me quite consistently, as well as again indicating that she wanted me to play by reaching out to my hands. Smiling, also initiating the song with her playing after pauses'. The ML was able to support and extend **LA's** non-verbal request for more and create pauses of varying lengths to support **LA's** communicative and musical responses.

LS: ML describes one child's vocal exploration. She was 'smiling throughout and clearly wanted us to hear her voice. When I left gaps in songs, she would fill them with vocal sounds and giggles'. ML was able to adapt her playing/singing to support the child to explore her own voice and share her vocal performance with others. ML also interpreted joyful emotional communication as a request for continuation and responded to this request, providing space/pauses for extended vocal exploration.

SUMMARY

The musical and communicative responses observed reflect the flexibility of live musical experiences, where ML's can make 'in the moment' adaptations based on the children's responses, interest, attention, exploration and engagement.

Outcome 3 - WORKFORCE

To develop MOP's Workforce Makaton skills to encourage children to sign, sing & hear songs & rhymes.

Across the project we have discussed the developing use of Makaton and its potential to support children's communication, understanding, confidence and musical exploration. ML's continue to utilise Makaton in their music sessions and staff incorporate Makaton into daily communication, preparing a variety of resources and experiences including songs and stories. Examples in Term 5, Outcome 2, outline children's extended use of Makaton in communicative and musical responses showing their familiarity with this communication tool and how it can support interaction and sharing of music ideas and preferences. We will discuss the overall impact, including ML and staff reflections, on the use of Makaton across the project, in the Term 6 report.

Outcome 3 has explored effective practice in ML's planning and approaches, highlighting successes as well as challenges around interpretation and observation. We have noted the value of thinking reflectively about our practice in both our achievements as well as things that may need further consideration. In Term 5 we observe further examples of reflective practice and celebrate the sensitive, responsive and adaptable approaches of ML's as they strive to support each child to achieve in their musical exploration.

In Outcome 2 we explored the flexibility within live musical experiences for ML adaptations, resulting in extended communicative responses. In Outcome 3 we continue this exploration and discuss reflective practice, awareness and interpretation of children's responses, and changes in approaches which resulted in musical and communicative responses, participation and engagement. These include (i) adapting musical experiences and resources in response to children's

exploration, interest and engagement (ii) awareness of positive changes in children's responses and implementing strategies to extend this (iii) supporting further exploration by providing opportunities to practise skills (iv) consideration and reflection within written observations.

VIGNETTE 4 presents examples of these adaptations, considerations and responses.

VIGNETTE 4 – Adaptions

LS and JS: ML's have continued to provide opportunities to explore the microphone in Term 5 based on the positive responses observed in Term 4 and across the project. Examples of consistent vocal responses and musical achievements using the microphone are also described in Term 5.

LS: ML describes different musical responses observed during the use of the microphone. During one music session there was loud vocal exploration in the microphone by one child and very quiet vocalisations by another. One child was repeating particular vocal sounds many times and appearing to really enjoy the amplification of the voice. In another example where there was a lyric cue from the musical activity, saying 'ACHOO', one child said the lyric cue very quietly into the microphone. This was the first-time vocalisation with the microphone had occurred for this child. Also, **IE** continued to explore many different vocal sounds and volumes throughout Term 5 with increased confidence and communicative intent.

JS: ML continues to incorporate sensory props such as scarves, lycra and the parachute into every session based on the consistent responses observed during these experiences across the project. These include children's enjoyment, engagement, exploration, vocalisation and awareness of musical and lyrical cues. In one example in Term 5, JS ML describes a child whose participation and exploration changed as soon as the parachute came out. The child did not appear to want to explore the instruments during the session: 'Instruments were discarded almost immediately but came to life during the parachute and fluffy pom poms (he loves the parachute, loves the feel of it) and really enjoyed the bubbles today'.

LS and JS: We see a collection of observations of **OM** who in previous sessions often kept a distance from the group. At times he would show signs of being upset or frustrated and appeared to be focusing on gaining sensory input through physical movement. ML's consistently attempted to engage **OM** in various ways providing positive feedback, offers of instruments and props, and inviting him in with verbal and non-verbal cues. In Term 5 we see a dramatic change in **OM's** participation and musical exploration with successes particularly evident during activities with actions and space to move. Awareness of the physical nature of **OM's** responses and ML's sensitive, adaptable approaches appears to have supported **OM** to join the group, share his musical enjoyment and explore props, actions and songs.

JS: ML describes **OM's** explorations during a music session: 'although not in the circle, was jumping up and down in time to the music either on the floor or the trampoline just outside of the circle'.

LS: ML describes **OM's** musical explorations as 'amazing' and picked up on his engagement providing further musical stimulus to support and embed his musical connection within the session: 'He joined the session at the very end and started to dance. When the session had finished, I did a few extra songs with him and he was totally engaged' 'he was jumping to the music and sleeping when it was quiet'.

LS: ML describes a very successful music session for **OM** with many new responses and also notes the impact of a change in the set-up of the space: 'We did the session in the middle of the room which worked much better for **OM** as he likes to move around. He played my guitar for every song and as soon as I stopped, he would reach for my hand to start playing again. He also sat down with us for a short while and played a shaker. **OM** has never done this before. He kept dipping in and out for the whole session'.

JS: ML describes the use of cymbals in the session and **OM's** participation when ML adapted ending based on **OM's** sensory needs: 'These were well received today and all of the children were using them, on their own or with help, even **OM** who was somewhere else in the room!' ... 'When we stopped in "We all Play Together" we held the cymbals up instead of going ssshhh'. ML notes that in previous sessions **OM** has become upset when this vocal sound is made therefore has been consistently adapting the experience to support all children's participation.

LS: ML describes a child's interest and enjoyment in the Ukulele. She 'picked up a ukulele from the box before class started and imitated how I played it throughout the first half of the session. Lots of smiles and eye contact'. ML and staff supported the child to explore and engage by recognising the musical significance of the exploration even it was in a different part of the session than planned.

LS: ML describes a child who is non-verbal with limited physical movement who has significant sensory sensitivities, participating, exploring and interacting during a full music session: 'This week he was listening, watching & moving. He held a bell throughout and made little movements when he was enjoying the experience. He did not like the pom poms for dancing and told KW by tapping his knee'. Within this written observation, the ML celebrates musical and communicative achievements and reflects on the sharing of preferences and non-verbal forms of communication.

JMT: ML describes one child's potential aversion to the guitar (becoming upset) and his response to these non-verbal cues. ML reduced how long he played the guitar within the session and adapted his planning, making a note for future sessions.

SUMMARY

ML's adaptive approaches and awareness of each child's needs, interests and communicative responses, form part of reflective practice. ML's share their written observations after each session, celebrating musical and communicative achievements and reflecting on both their own and the children's responses. Considerations for future sessions are often noted.

CONCLUSION

The Term 5 report for Music Matters @ MOPS celebrates the musical and communicative achievements of the children and further explores the impact of effective practice. Musical exploration, participation, sensory needs, communication, interaction, engagement, confidence and learning were all supported through musical experiences which were adapted to reflect the children's changing needs and responses. The Term 5 data also highlights the compelling and motivating nature of musical experiences providing joy, excitement and fun, and the reciprocal impact this can have on both ML's and children's continued musical interactions and achievements.