

Music Subject Narrative

Music overview

The music units are well sequenced to provide a coherent subject scheme that develops children's skills of singing, composing and performing, and their knowledge of musical terminology, genres and styles. Opportunities are given for musical performance in each year group and time is allocated in curriculum music lessons to the preparation of these presentations, focusing on the vocal elements of the curriculum. Children are also given the opportunity to learn the basics of a different musical instrument each year, with those skills then being developed in and applied to other areas of music, such as improvisation, composition and performance. The sequence of the instruments taught takes into account the developing dexterity of the children, putting the more complex instruments in the later year groups.

Key Stage 1

In Year 1, children begin by preparing for their Harvest Festival assembly. This allows them to focus on their singing and performance skills, which will have been first established in EYFS. Their other Autumn unit allows them to begin to examine and gain an understanding of different genres of music. The remainder of the year allows them to explore several of these genres in more depth (hip-hop, Latin and rock), through listening to and appraising music, singing, and playing untuned percussion instruments, including experimenting with different sound combinations. The focus in Year 1 is on rhythm and pulse, but also introduces the concepts of pitch, duration, tempo and dynamics.

In Year 2, children move from untuned instruments to tuned and begin to expand on the concept of pitch in music. They spend the Autumn term learning to play the glockenspiel and, through this, gain their first exposure to staff notation, which they will develop through their learning in Key Stage 2. They then apply their skills with the glockenspiel to several units of work on different genres (South African music and reggae), when they will also practise their listening and appraising skills, as well as their first look at composing their own music as a class. Their musical production takes place at the end of the year and so they finish the year by preparing a full stage play, developing their singing and performance skills.

Lower Key Stage 2

In Year 3, the children move to playing recorders, a more complicated instrument than those covered in Key Stage 1. They are taught notes that only require the left hand to play. They build upon their knowledge of staff notation whilst playing the recorders. Their understanding of playing the recorder is then applied through units of work on different genres (world music and disco), where they listen to and appraise music, sing, play recorders, compose as a class, and start to look at the concept of improvising. Their production is the school Easter Concert, for which children prepare a formal presentation, developing their singing and performance skills from Year 1. Their learning of the recorder culminates in a performance opportunity to parents in May, when they participate in a concert to parents.

In Year 4, children are introduced to steel pans, building on their knowledge of untuned percussion from Year 1. They learn about the techniques of playing and the cultural significance of the instrument. Children develop their understanding of performing as an ensemble, including playing

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different parts at the same time, and reading staff notation. This tuition is provided by the Walsall Music Hub and culminates in a concert to parents. The Year 4 performance is a production, allowing them to build on and develop their singing and performance skills from Year 2.

Upper Key Stage 2

In Year 5, children begin by looking in more depth at composition, building on their learning from Year 4. They compose a rap in a small group to a given backing track. The Year 5 performance is the school Christmas Carol Concert, which is a formal presentation, allowing them to build on and develop their singing and performance skills from Year 3. They are then introduced to the ukulele as their instrument, which requires two hands to play - the left to press frets and the right to strum. This develops their musical dexterity from Year 3. The ukuleles are then used through the remaining units, where children study the genres of pop and ballads, and the music of composer Carole King, continuing to develop their listening and appraising skills (including being introduced to the concept of texture in music), singing and their performance skills as an ensemble in two parts, building on their ensemble work in Year 4.

In Year 6, children complete units on rock, Motown and hip-hop. These units cover these genres in significantly more depth than in Year 1, allowing children to see their own progress in learning as they discuss all of the inter-related dimensions of music, including the new addition of timbre. They practise and develop their listening and appraising skills, singing (including singing in two parts during Motown), performance skills and reading staff notation. They also look at the societal elements of music through the Motown unit, discussing the historical context of Motown in relation to the Civil Rights Movement. They are introduced to the keyboards and learn to play them, applying their knowledge of reading staff notation from previous years. Through a unit on female composers, children look to compose their own personal musical work to a given backing track, as well as studying the societal attitudes towards women in music. Access to keyboards and their sound banks allows them greater personal freedom when composing. The musical production in Year 6 is a full musical, allowing them to build on their performance experiences in Years 2 and 4.

Throughout the music scheme, there is complete coverage of all national curriculum programmes of study.