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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MUSIC EDUCATORS**

**working for the best in music education**

## **How to Teach ... Providing Opportunities for Pupils to Work with a Range of Musicians**

**Jayne Price and Fran Hannan**

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### **Introduction**

Opportunities to work with accomplished musicians who can model creative processes can be inspirational and motivating for pupils. It can help them to develop their own creative work as they observe and work with musicians to generate ideas, explore possibilities and take risks. It is an important part of helping pupils to connect with the role of music and musicians in society and to gain a deeper understanding of the music industry.

Potentially, working with a range of musicians can provide opportunities to broaden the music programme of study and to develop pupils' understanding of musical conventions, processes and devices from a variety of diverse musical styles, genres and traditions.

### **The National Curriculum for Music in Focus: What's new?**

The new National Curriculum outlines how pupils should develop their understanding of music by working collaboratively together and with others as musicians. 'Participating, collaborating and working with others as musicians, adapting to musical roles and respecting the values and benefits that others bring to musical learning' is part of the key concept of Integration of Practice.

As part of this process, the Curriculum Opportunities statement asks us to provide pupils with the opportunity to:

*4d. Work with a range of musicians and watch and listen to live musical performances where possible, to extend their musical learning.*

The explanatory notes makes clear that the range of musicians could include instrumental tutors, community musicians, professional artists, amateur musicians, pupils from peer

groups and other groups within the school and also web based learning opportunities.

## **The New National Curriculum for Music in Action**

### *1. Types of engagement with musicians*

There are three different types of engagement with musicians that could be provided for pupils, with many different permutations:

- Pupils watch musicians at work, e.g. they could attend a rehearsal for a performance, or a composer could model how they generate ideas to meet a brief. This develops the pupils' understanding of the creative process and where the musician's inspiration comes from and they gain insight into the music industry and musicians' working practices;
- Pupils could attend a performance. The pupils experience high quality work and they may have the opportunity to visit a specialist venue. This can inspire pupils by raising expectations and demonstrating excellence;
- Pupils could work alongside a composer or performers to develop music together. This gives the pupils opportunities for practical engagement in creative processes, fresh techniques and ideas to develop their skills and access to new role models.

Successful projects include aspects of all three, if not with the musicians themselves, then before and afterwards as the teacher sets the experience in a wider context. Working with other musicians has potential benefits for teachers as well as pupils. Teachers can learn new skills alongside pupils that can feed into curriculum development. There may be an opportunity for teachers to observe pupils working with musicians which can give new insight into their potential and achievement. There is also the potential for raising the status of Music as the pupils actively engage with and perform their work in the school and possibly beyond.

### *2. Organising a project*

The initial step is to identify the need for the project, how the experience will enhance existing provision and what the learning objectives and outcomes will be. The aims of the project need to be clear for all concerned and practical aspects such as time-tabling, arrangements, space and equipment needed, project roles and responsibilities for the various participants and opportunities for performing or composing activities should be identified. It is especially important to define the teacher and musician roles carefully and to have an open discussion about the way in which pupils will engage with activities to ensure that everyone is clear about working practices.

Evaluation of the project involves making judgements about the quality and value of the experience which enable decisions about future projects to be made and should lead to improvements in teaching and learning.

### *3. Funding*

When designing a project, funding is often the biggest concern. Musician's fees, travel and subsistence, materials and equipment, insurance, supply cover if needed, performance

costs and sundries such as photocopying, refreshments etc. will need to be taken into account. Sources of funding for projects in school are available, e.g. projects involving pupils working towards Arts Awards can apply to the Access Fund for help to fund workshops with visiting artists. By March 2009 the Arts Council England will have a small grant programme which will replace the Awards for All programme. MusicLeader (<http://www.musicleader.net>) is a good source of information for other funding opportunities.

It is probably worth reiterating the National Curriculum guidance for work with a wide range of musicians at this point; every experience pupils have may not be with visiting professional musicians. Pupils can gain new insights by working with more experienced musicians in the school (e.g. in higher year groups or members of school ensembles), with instrumental teachers and online opportunities for observing how musicians work.

### **Some Short Case Studies**

At the end of their PGCE course, students at Huddersfield University worked collaboratively in small groups for a week in a number of Kirklees schools. Their brief was to design projects which would allow pupils to work with them as an ensemble. The students taught all year groups in their normal music lessons during that week, avoiding the need for timetable changes.

Key to the success of the project was the time made available to plan the sessions fully with music teachers in the weeks leading to the start of the event. This ensured that the work enhanced the unit of work already being taught or acted as an introduction to work that continued after the students had gone. The projects were varied, examples included an African drumming workshop which started with the PGCE students playing as an ensemble leading to the whole class performing the same piece with the students; a 'stomp' workshop where pupils composed and choreographed their own pieces; and a pop group which performed a number of contemporary pieces before leading the pupils through some song writing techniques. The students described the pupils' response to them as 'overwhelming' and the teachers particularly commented on the opportunities it gave for them to observe pupils working.

In Leeds, ArtForms is offering high schools the opportunity to receive a 5 week block of curriculum enhancement called 'Music Xtra' led by teams of three staff with specialisms in keyboard, guitar, drum kit, vocals and music technology. Teams will visit schools on Thursday mornings and teach the classes that are timetabled for music, bringing with them a range of instruments and equipment. The programme is designed to enhance existing units of work, giving pupils chance to work on creative projects supported by professional musicians. The work is heavily subsidised by Education Leeds with schools contributing £150.

The music department at West End Middle school uses Soundjunction ([www.soundjunction.org](http://www.soundjunction.org)) to give pupils the opportunity to engage with professional musicians, performers and composers and to learn more about their work and the music industry. There are video resources where composers model composing processes and interactive tools which enable pupils to try the techniques themselves.

### **Summary**

The new National Curriculum requires that pupils have the opportunity to work with a range of musicians. Using the whole range of opportunities available, including web based resources will make this financially viable. Important points to remember include:

- Musicians can model creative processes for the pupils and help them to develop a deeper understanding of conventions, processes and musical devices;
- Setting the visiting musician's work in context is important to maximise the impact of the experience and to enable pupils to incorporate ideas and processes learned into their own creative work;
- Evaluation afterwards ensures that projects undertaken add real value to the existing music curriculum.

## Key Questions

*How often do I need to provide the opportunity for pupils to work with musicians?*

Many units of work will be enhanced by looking at ways to engage pupils with musicians. The KS3 strategy materials (<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/music>) provide a proforma for you to audit and map this across the Key Stage. It is suggested that you provided one opportunity for each year group initially and then actively seek ways of expanding this. Involving the full range of opportunities suggested in the National Curriculum guidance will help you to do this.

*What can I do without funding?*

Explore possibilities of involving older musicians with KS3 classes. For example is there an Y11 or 6<sup>th</sup> form band that could support some Musical Futures work? Try your nearest higher education institution with music programmes. They often need placements for students following work based and education based modules. Contact your local music service who will run projects that are financially viable for schools. You could also explore the possibilities of creatively working with visiting instrumental staff to support class work. Explore web based opportunities for engaging with musicians.

*Where can I find musicians to support projects?*

Your local MusicLeader network is a good source of information about local music leaders who can provide projects to schools. There are other local organisations such as LONSAS based in London. Many local authorities have a database of local project leaders.

## Further Information

- <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/music>. There are specific references to the role of musicians in the classroom in Unit 4: Modelling and in Unit 5: Feedback. Planning resources are available to support teachers in developing opportunities for pupils to work with musicians across the key stage;
- <http://www.soundjunction.org>. This website enables pupils to watch a range of musicians talking about their work and engage with suggested creative projects;
- <http://www.showmehowtoplay.com>. This site enables pupils to interact with musicians by learning to play songs on pop instruments;

- <http://www.numu.org.uk>. This web site allows pupils to upload and promote original music and communicate and collaborate with peers;
- <http://www.lonsas.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=458>. There is range of useful information here to help you to plan projects involving visiting musicians.
- <http://www.musicleader.net>. A source of information for developing music projects;
- <http://www.creative-partnerships.com>. This outlines the government's approach to creative partnerships in education;
- Further support and guidance is available by following the music links at the QCA curriculum site: <http://www.newsecondarycurriculum.org/>.

## Disclaimer

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