

Pick up the baton

The IOE's **Jessica Ellison** shows you how to conduct a creative, forward thinking music department...

Music is an integral part of life. It accompanies many of our most memorable events and is accessible to all as a listener or participant. Researchers, policy makers and practitioners all recognise the value of music; be it in the realms of personal, cultural, social, artistic or cognitive development. It can however, cause anxiety when teachers are asked to teach it.

Therefore, if you are thinking of taking over responsibility and leadership for this subject, it's important to think about what resources you need to support you and the staff in providing outstanding music education.

Working in harmony

As co-ordinator (or co-ordinator-to-be) you probably feel confident about teaching music, but chances are some teachers in your school do not. Perhaps the school also has visiting teachers or musicians who come in specially to provide music education (for instance, small group instrumental lessons, whole school singing, Wider Opportunities and/or whole class work).

Both types of teachers make a valuable contribution to children's music education and musical experiences. Classroom teachers know their children. They may be a little "off key" in subject knowledge, but will have outstanding behavior management and teaching and learning strategies and styles. The visiting musicians or music teachers, meanwhile, have outstanding subject knowledge, but room for improvement when it comes to teaching style or behavior management. Therefore it makes sense to work together. This can be done through collaborative planning to link music to

topics within other curriculum areas, sharing behavior management systems and supportive team teaching to share good practice.

Get planning!

First, you will need to make an audit of all the resources in the school. That includes instruments, music and other equipment as well as staff and their knowledge. This will give you a starting point from which to work. At this point, you might also need to start rewriting the Music Policy, and to approach the headteacher for a yearly budget so that the existing stock and resources can be built upon.

Stock yourself with some good catalogues from music companies such as Omega and

workshops and free concert tickets for pupils (and occasionally staff and partners).

Think about what and how many instruments you need (generally at least five of each for composition, as well as extras for musical play and exploration in the Foundation Stage) and whether you'll require resources such as CDs for singing assemblies or school musicals.

There is also support from national initiatives. Under Wider Opportunities every child in KS2 has the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. They also include singing, which brings us nicely to the second initiative, Singup (www.singup.org), which is available free to teachers and parents, and provides a wealth of songs and resources.

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Chamberlain or from educational suppliers. I'd guess that about half your yearly budget will go on replacing existing instruments, and adding a few unusual or less common ones, and the other half will go on supportive materials such as CDs, music posters, musicals and plays, and buying in workshops such as African drumming, a jazz band or a Tudor instrument group. These provide hands-on activities for the children and expand their experiences of music and the wider arts both within their locality and society.

You can also apply to the education departments of Arts providers such as The Philharmonia, The English National Opera, The English National Ballet, and regional groups for

Mixing music across the curriculum

Once you have a baseline of teachers' prior experiences, subject knowledge, and feelings and fears, you can begin to create together a holistic approach to music education. This can be built on children's prior experiences, staff strengths, curricular and extra-curricular resources available, and current curriculum developments.

Music is naturally a supportive tool for other curriculum areas, and so is a vital component of the creative curriculum. For example in Y5 when you may be covering vibration and sound in science, it seems appropriate to look at the

Finely tuned

IMPROVE MUSIC TEACHING AT YOUR SCHOOL...

If you're quick, there's still time to sign up to the Institute of Education's course on teaching music across the curriculum. On the day, you will discover musical approaches to maths, art, geography, science, language development and more. Teachers will also learn about the advantages and possible pitfalls of using this approach in a primary school setting.

MUSIC ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

8 June 2010, 10am-4pm, Course Code: DC403-10C1, Cost - £150

For more information, email cpd@ioe.ac.uk, call 020 7612 6000 or visit www.ioe.ac.uk



instruments of the orchestra and begin to compare material, size and pitch.

When looking at the Great Fire of London in Y2, you may start a topic on rounds, beginning with London's Burning. Maybe your topic is Tudors; you could create a Tudor Dance, sing *Greensleeves*, look at Tudor instruments and finish by listening to Holst's *Saint Paul's Suite* which has *Greensleeves* hidden within.

You may choose to write school musicals collaboratively with the literacy coordinator or other teachers. And there are many resources connecting ICT with music. For example, 2Simple software, which is readily available in most schools, contains a nice music program to explore sounds and symbols. Or you might use digital cameras and video to record images and sounds or capture performances for assessment. You can also buy in specific music programs from Sibelius such as *Super Duper Music Looper* and *Groovy Music*.

Galvanising and supporting your staff

You and your staff need to develop a philosophy about music education. Consider the aims for children across the age phases before attempting to think about what to teach. What are the concepts and skills that will underlie the subject? Teaching for progression is key. Children need to expand upon previous experiences, by incorporating new and refined concepts and ideas.

All schools embark upon music education differently. Some have relied on QCA or commercial schemes. Though at the time of writing the future of the primary curriculum is up in the air, it seems likely that schools will now have a chance to move away from these, taking the best ideas and incorporating them into their own schemes of work. These can then be linked to the topics relevant to their particular school, and the needs and previous experiences of the children within them.

Teacher collaboration in medium and longer term planning is crucial. Critical reflection upon what has previously taken place, and worked (or didn't) and why is essential. Part of the power in developing your own music schemes is the ownership involved.

Collaborative planning is the start, but an extension would be collaborative teaching in a supportive environment. By getting your colleagues to observe your teaching, you have

the opportunity to model good practice, and up-skill teachers in a helpful way.

Finally, it's important for you to network. Attend local authority-wide music coordinators' meetings or steering groups, seek out its Music Service, network with local musicians and strengthen home school links by inviting parents in to demonstrate their musical interests and skills. Once you start to explore, you will discover a range of talent lurking within the school gates. Find out what children are doing musically outside school, and integrate this into what they do at school.

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