

SETANTA SCHOOL MUSIC PLAN

At our in-school planning day, all staff agreed with the key messages from the PCSP music in-service days:

- Music is for all teachers and for all pupils;
- The three strands of the Music Curriculum (listening and responding, performing, and composing) are equally important;
- Active enjoyable participation is fundamental to the music curriculum;
- Music enhances the child's life.

We agreed as to how these messages relate to current practice in our school:

- All of our teachers are involved in music education in our school.
- All children are included.
- Teachers and children enjoy music in our school.

Class Group Reflection:

The teachers reviewed the teaching in our school of the three strands of the Music Curriculum -i.e.(i) Listening and Responding, (ii) Listening and Responding, and (iii) Composing. We identified the areas that needed attention and drew up an Action Plan to implement the changes.

To help identify a strand(s)/strand unit(s) of the music curriculum which we could develop over the (i) next month, and (ii) next year, the teachers broke into class groupings: **(a) Junior Infants to 2nd Class**; and **(b) 3rd to 6th**. Teachers in each class grouping discussed how they have engaged with each of the strands since our PCSP music in-service seminar, with reference to the relevant pages for each class unit in the Curriculum Statement and related exemplars in the Teacher's Guidelines.

Teachers in the **(a) grouping** felt that the strand units satisfactorily dealt with at this time were: (i) Exploring Sounds, and (ii) Listening and Responding to Music; Song-Singing, and Playing Percussion Instruments (in the Performing Strand); and Talking About and Recording Compositions (in the Composing Strand). From September to Christmas, they plan to develop Early Music Literacy (in the Performing Strand), and Improvising and Creating (in the Composing Strand).

Summary of Plan to Develop these Strands:

Using the laminated picture bank, the children will be enabled to match selected sounds with their pictured source. Simple rhythm patterns will be performed and explored, again using the simple picture sources. The children will be encouraged to draw simple symbols to represent a sound. Also, working in small groups, the children will be encouraged to be creative, inventing symbols that depict the passages of a story.

Approaches and Methodologies:

In the case of early music literacy, it is felt that direct teaching is initially vital. When sufficiently familiar with the material, the children will then be encouraged to devise their own rhythm patterns. Improvising and creating lends itself to team work and group activities designed by the pupils themselves.

Strands to be Spread over School Year:

It is felt that all three strands and their strand units should be spread out equally throughout the school year for all four classes, with events such as the loaning of percussion instruments from XXX Education Centre providing particular opportunities at certain times.

Integration:

English (oral language, new music vocabulary, stories);

Mathematics (number songs and rhymes);

History (development of music and instruments through the ages, lives of famous composers, different traditions);

Geography (origins of instruments, music from different countries, cultural links);

P.E. (dance: appreciation of various genres of music and dance styles).

The teachers in the **(b) grouping** plan, over the next month, to develop the following Strand Units: Listening and Responding to Music (with a focus on film themes), and Exploring Sounds. The children to be enabled to: Make instruments, explore Percussion Sounds for sound pictures, experiment with Vocal Sounds and Body Percussion. They will also introduce listening to the music of Mozart (the CD is among the school resources, along with explanatory notes) as a learning aid for the classes. Our teachers have also planned to introduce Mozart's music into their classes as a learning aid (see 'The Mozart Effect—Music for Children' notes; see also notes on 'The Enchanted Forest—Imagination Gym' which is in use in the school).

From September, higher classes will further develop the Strand Units of Music Literacy, Improvisation and Creating. Through actively completing the strand units of the music curriculum, the children should be enabled to develop a deeper understanding of the musical concepts.

Whole School Reflection:

After the reporting back of the class groupings and ensuing discussion, it was felt that there was continuity, progression, and consistency from class to class in what we have planned. When passing on their class, each teacher verbally informs the new teacher of children's ability and progress in music

over the previous year. The main music areas to be addressed when assessing children are their ability to (i) sing in tune, and (ii) keep in time to the beat (rhythm).

All teachers agreed that the three strands should be, and are, afforded equal importance, and will be comprehensively covered when our school plan is implemented, and that starts immediately. From May to June, we agreed to build up a picture and word bank that would be a useful resource for rhythm exercises. For lower levels, the picture bank areas were identified as Fruit, Animals, Toys, and Clothes. Areas for Third to Sixth Classes included names of towns, counties, countries, etc. Those picture and word banks are to be laminated.

The school adopts a thematic approach at certain stages of the year: e.g. the seasons of Autumn, Winter, Spring, and Summer; Hallowe'en; Christmas; St. Patrick's Day; Green Flag Day. These occasions provide ready-made opportunities for integration and cross-curricular activities. Music is integrated with other subjects in ways that complement curriculum aims and objectives in both subjects.

We have a good bank of resources built up in the school, due to long-established interest of our teachers in Music. The main requirement is the designing and laminating of picture resources for exploring sounds, rhythm and early music literacy exercises. The development of a music vocabulary is seen as a priority, and teachers are already developing such a vocabulary in their classes.

All teachers agree with the aims and objectives of the Music curriculum as stated on pages 12 and 13 of the Curriculum Book, and add one more aim: to use music as a learning tool/aid in our school.

All teachers are familiar with the musical concepts of pulse, duration, tempo, pitch, dynamics, structure, timbre, texture, and style.

Music Literacy

It was decided to introduce both tonic solfa and staff notation into the school in a phased manner to facilitate music exercises and develop pupils' music literacy.

Resources required: Picture resources for exploring sounds, rhythm and early literacy—to be designed and laminated for long-term use.

Approaches and Methodologies:

All children and teachers are actively engaged in music education in our school. The approaches and methodologies used foster active enjoyable participation in the music curriculum through the organisation of visiting musicians, outings to 'Music in the Classroom' (by the RTE Symphony Orchestra), etc. and follow-up school and class activities. Such opportunities are provided to enhance children's lives through music. There is a positive musical environment that encourages and values sharing of ideas, skills, and resources among teachers and pupils alike.

The Role of our Teachers: Our teachers establish a musical environment that embraces the approach to music in the school and that links naturally with other areas of the curriculum. We devise a programme of work that seeks to meet the needs of all the children in the class. We provide a range of musical experiences through a variety of approaches. We provide linkage between the three strands. We facilitate, motivate, and respond to the children's work. We evaluate the programme and assess the children's work. We communicate information with parents, in line with the school policy, about the programme in music and the child's progress. We participate in listening, singing, playing, and improvising activities. The teachers have taken responsibility for the general organisation of the teaching of music in the school. Their co-ordinating roles include functions such as: creating a positive musical environment; assisting colleagues in the preparation of schemes of work and in subsequent implementation; collecting and communicating information about in-service training, school

visits and tours and musical events; maintaining and monitoring resources in the school.

Listening and Responding to Music Strand Unit:

Children in our school are provided with opportunities to listen and respond to music by experiencing a wide range of musical styles, traditions, and cultures. Our teachers provide opportunities for active listening and responding by questioning, prompting, suggesting, listening to short examples repeatedly, etc. in line with Teacher Guidelines p.55. Children are given opportunities to respond to music in a variety of ways which include: moving, talking about it, listening for specific instruments and/or specific features, drawing and painting, following/creating a pictorial score of music, writing in response to music, composing, singing or playing along with music, musical games and action songs. Children are provided with opportunities to work in different groupings: whole groups, small groups, pairs, and individually; children are especially encouraged to work collaboratively and co-operatively.

During these activities, children are provided with opportunities to offer varying and creative solutions to presented problems. Opportunities for live performances are provided in class, at School Assembly, School Concerts, and other occasions.

Listening Materials:

A broad range of listening materials are provided:

Audio tape, C D, recorded music on video, music technology (see our ICT and Music section);

- Tuned and untuned percussion instruments;
- Environmental objects, e.g. assortments of metals, wood, fibres;
- Instruments of children in the class;
- Melodic instruments—tin whistles, pianos, guitars;

- Instruments of teachers on staff—e.g. keyboards;
- Performance of a group, individual, band, orchestra visiting the school or at another venue—e.g. local Concert Orchestra, R T E Symphony Orchestra.

In both music and environmental recordings (e.g. ‘Dawn Chorus’ CD) selected for listening, the focus is on discriminating between sounds and describing them in terms of their source, timbre, texture, structure, pitch, dynamics, tempo, duration, structure, and style. In selecting recorded music, a balance is maintained between music from Ireland and other countries, choral and instrumental, music for different occasions and purposes (e.g. religious ceremonies), solo and ensemble, classical and folk. Our Senior Class teachers are seeking a CD containing animal and environmental sounds which the children will be asked to identify.

Performing:

In the Performing strand, the following are emphasised:

- Active enjoyable participation;
- Development of skills, understanding, and knowledge;
- Fostering of children’s attitudes and interests;
- Development of creativity.

Song -Singing:

Because the voice is everyone’s first instrument, it forms the key to access to music education in the classroom. Song singing is seen by our teachers as an ideal way of engaging large groups in enjoyable and fulfilling music making. Our teachers are aware that the range of notes of a song should be within the range of children’s voices. Some of our teachers teach a song by ear—i.e. using their own voice—which is seen as the best method. Others use a melodic instrument, which also works very well. Some teachers use a recording to teach songs. Teachers are aware of the fact that some of the

songs in the Alive-O Religion programme are pitched too high for the children's voices.

In teaching song-singing, teachers keep in mind the recommendations of Teacher Guidelines pp.70-73, and 76-80. When teaching singing with the musical elements in mind, teachers refer to Teacher Guidelines pp.74-76. Simple round singing may be introduced in 2nd class, as preparation for part-singing (see pp.84-85 of Teacher Guidelines)

All children are given the opportunity to use the percussion and melodic instruments which are available in the school. Opportunities are also provided for children to perform for an audience, in their own class and for other classes.

Composing:

Children are encouraged to improvise, discuss, evaluate, and record music as part of the Composing Strand. Opportunities are provided to improvise and/or compose in a variety of contexts—e.g. to accompany a rhyme, song, poem, or story; to explore the musical concepts/elements; to experiment with sound; to portray a character, mood or setting; to illustrate events; to convey an abstract concept; to explore melody. Children are given opportunities to compose/improvise using vocal sounds, body sounds, instruments, and environmental sounds.

Children are given opportunities to contribute to the setting of ground rules for creative music activity: when organising composing activities, teachers refer to pp.111-112 of Teacher Guidelines.

Assessment:

Teachers are aware that assessment is needed to determine where adjustments are needed in instruction: that assessment for learning goes hand-in-hand with assessment of learning. The assessment tools that our teachers use include: teacher observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests, projects, curriculum profiles, recording of the children's work,

graphic/pictorial scores. Our teachers understand the importance of having clear learning objectives for each music class.

Teacher's observations feed directly back into the teaching and learning process, emphasising areas of weakness or strength in the children's achievement, providing useful summative information and guidelines for future planning. In looking at the children's work in each of the three strands, the teacher will also discern the development of the integrated musical elements as they emerge. When assessing the three strands, teachers refer to pp.125-127 of Teacher Guidelines.

Our teachers are aware that assessment in music may produce evidence of learning needs in other areas of the curriculum.

Equality of Participation and Access:

In planning and implementing the music programme, our teachers promote equal access to music-making among boys and girls. They work in accord with our school's Equality Policy, and Teacher Guidelines p. 41.

Timetable:

The time allocated to music is spread over number of days, rather than as a single block.

Resources:

Resources are centrally stored, and their security is overseen by the two named teachers. There are adequate resources for all classes, except for requirements already stated.

Information and Communications Technology:

The teachers realise that the child's understanding and experience of music can be broadened and enriched in various ways through the use of ICT. Many

programmes encourage active listening, musical playing and meaningful composing, and heighten the relationships between the Listening and Responding, Performing, and Composing strands.

Multimedia technology supply high-tech support for a range of graphic, textual, and sound sources which can greatly enhance understanding in music.

CD-ROMs and the internet mean that the children have alternate opportunities to see and hear various instruments; also for exploring sound through electronic media, acquiring skills at their own rate, recording their improvisations and compositions, and reviewing their work alone or in collaboration with others.

Through the use of websites, schools, classes and individual children can share written, aural, and visual accounts of their musical traditions, performances, compositions or preferences in music. Many themes and topics of local, regional or global relevance can be prepared and presented in a variety of electronic media and communicated to a wider audience.

(See our list of ICT and Music Resources)

Health and Safety:

When planning for music, consideration is given to the following:

- Hidden dangers if children are moving about the classroom;
- Storage facilities;
- Access to, and transport of, equipment/instruments;
- Ventilation of the classrooms;
- Amount of space for children to sit or stand when doing choral or instrumental work; Appropriate volume levels when using audio equipment and instruments.

Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting:

Teachers refer to the whole school plan and the curriculum documents for music to provide information and guidance for their long and short term planning. They plan using the strands and strand units, and on occasions, a thematic approach. The Cuntas Míosúil plays a part in reviewing and developing the whole school plan and individual planning, by the Principal's monitoring of work completed by individual teachers and suggesting improvements.

Staff Development:

Teachers have access to reference books, resource materials, instruments, equipment, and websites dealing with music. School personnel are encouraged to research new methodologies, try out materials /instruments, and assess whether or not they should be purchased. Information about in-service courses, school visits, and musical events are communicated to all. Teachers are encouraged to attend in-service courses, and to share the expertise acquired at these courses. Time is allocated at staff meetings to discuss aspects of the music curriculum. Colleagues, who may need assistance, are given help and advice on the preparation and implementation of the music curriculum.

Parental Involvement:

Parents are asked to give support to their children's music activities by encouraging active listening, discussing attitudes towards and taste in music, allowing time and space to practise or improvise on an instrument, and by encouraging positive attitudes to music in general and to school-based activities in particular. Parents are sometimes invited to attend school or classroom music events, playing the role of critical listeners or supportive audience members for children's performance, or assisting in the supervision of movements of children. At times, the skills of parent-musicians are included when planning for live performances or when creating a class composition. At times also, the Parents' Association are involved in the organisation of workshops by visiting musicians.

Success Criteria:

This plan is intended to make a difference to the learning and teaching of music in our school. We will know that the plan has been implemented when teachers' preparations are based on this plan, and when procedures in this plan have been consistently followed.

We will know that the plan has achieved its aims when :

- Children have a positive attitude and appreciation of music;
- Children have an interest in expression through music;
- Children engage in listening and responding, performing, and composing music;
- Children have explored sound, including vocal sound, body percussion, instruments, and environmental sounds;
- Children have listened and responded to music from a wide range of genres and cultures in a variety of ways;
- Children sing songs appropriate to their vocal range, from a wide variety of genres and cultures;
- Children play a variety of instruments;
- Children experience a variety of ways of recording music, which may include graphic, pictorial, I C T, and traditional music notation;
- Children improvise and create music using a variety of sound sources;
- Children talk about, evaluate, and record their work.

Implementation:**Roles and Responsibilities**—

The plan will be implemented and developed by the teachers, and supported by the Board of Management. The principal and deputy principal

will co-ordinate and monitor the progress of the plan in the classrooms by formal and informal discussions with the teachers, encourage and accept feedback on its implementation, and report to staff on findings.

Review:

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the music curriculum in the school. The review will provide an opportunity to report on findings and to take feedback from staff.