

# Music in schools: what hubs must do

The challenging conversation with schools

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This short survey report challenges all music education hubs to be bold in implementing the National Plan for Music Education and to grasp the opportunity to lead, with schools and other partners, improvement in schools on a major scale.

The survey found that music hubs, working at their very best, can challenge and support school leaders to bring the numerous benefits of a good music education to all pupils, not simply the few who choose, or who have the resources, to specialise in the subject or an instrument. However, Her Majesty's Inspectors found few examples of such good practice.

The report is based on visits to 31 schools, and detailed discussions with their associated hubs, by Her Majesty's Inspectors between February and July 2013, within the hubs' first year. It draws also on findings and recommendations from other recent Ofsted music subject reports, which have consistently concluded that music provision in schools is often weak and poorly led.

The report is accompanied by three short interviews with hub leaders, which focus on challenges and how they are being overcome. The interviews are available on the Ofsted website at:

[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/20130018](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/20130018); [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/20130019](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/20130019)  
and [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/20130020](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/20130020).

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**Age group:** 3 to18

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**Published** November 2013

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**Reference no:** 130231



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## Executive summary

In line with the National Plan for Music Education, 123 music hubs began work in September 2012.<sup>1</sup> They are funded via Arts Council England. From 2012 to 2015, £171 million is allocated to them in order to improve music education by achieving specific 'core' and 'extension' functions.<sup>2,3</sup>

This survey builds on, and can be read alongside, Ofsted's 2012 report *Music in schools: sound partnerships*.<sup>4</sup> The current report begins as that one did: in pointing out that there is much to celebrate about music education in England.

The hubs visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors often brought new energy, collaborative approaches and vitality to working musically with young people. They continued to provide instrumental teaching and support orchestras and ensembles, choirs, festivals and holiday music courses.

While this work is essential it reaches only a minority of pupils. This survey is focused on the role of hubs in promoting an effective day-to-day music curriculum in schools for all pupils. It recognises the significant contribution that music can make to the wider life of each school and to broader school improvement.<sup>5</sup>

Previous Ofsted music surveys have reported persistently wide variation in the quality of music education in schools, with too much being inadequate and with meagre musical content.<sup>6</sup> Music was too often found to be poorly taught, even in schools judged to be good or better overall.

Little has changed in this respect. Key recommendations from previous Ofsted survey reports appear unheeded.<sup>7</sup> Too often, the schools visited expected little of pupils. They failed to ensure that all pupils understood, and could use practically, common musical features such as notation, time signatures, scales, melody shape, chords and key signatures.

Many primary schools considered, without good reason, that pupils were not ready for such learning involving musical theory, and believed that they would not enjoy it. At Key Stage 3, schools often gave students a range of experiences of different musical styles but musical learning was disjointed and superficial. Classical music was

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<sup>1</sup> *The importance of music: a national plan for music education*, Department for Education, 2011; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-of-music-a-national-plan-for-music-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-of-music-a-national-plan-for-music-education).

<sup>2</sup> See the Arts Council England website: [www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/music-education-hubs/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/music-education-hubs/).

<sup>3</sup> These are shown in Annex C.

<sup>4</sup> *Music in schools: sound partnerships* (120282), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-sound-partnerships](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-sound-partnerships).

<sup>5</sup> The national plan for music education summarises some wider benefits of music education.

<sup>6</sup> *Music in schools: wider still and wider* (110158), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-wider-still-and-wider](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-wider-still-and-wider); *Making more of music: an evaluation of music in schools* (080235), Ofsted, 2009; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/making-more-of-music-evaluation-of-music-schools-2005-08](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/making-more-of-music-evaluation-of-music-schools-2005-08).

<sup>7</sup> The most relevant recommendations recently made by Ofsted are shown in Annex B.

rarely introduced to pupils. At Key Stages 4 and 5, music had become a specialised activity for a small minority.

The root of the problem lay in a lack of understanding, and low expectations in music, among the schools' senior leaders and their consequent inability to challenge their own staff, and visiting teachers, to bring about improvement.<sup>8</sup> More often than not, they evaluated the quality of music in their schools too optimistically. In each of the 31 schools, HMI observed a music lesson jointly with a senior leader; in only five of the 31 lessons did the senior leader judge the quality of teaching accurately by making informed reference to pupils' musical learning.

Local authority music services, which received central government funding before hubs were established, often historically saw schools as 'customers'. As the 'customers' were frequently not expert enough to know what constitutes high-quality music teaching, or demand what was needed, improvement was unlikely to thrive.

Hubs, therefore, should not be simply asking schools what they need, or offering services that schools can take or leave. They must act as champions, leaders and expert partners, who can arrange systematic, helpful and challenging conversations with each school about the quality of the music education and how the school and hub can work together to improve it.

Some of the hubs visited were beginning to realise this ambition. Many showed the potential and commitment to make a real difference to the quality of class-based music teaching in schools. They noted that two of their funded core functions, which can particularly help hubs to reach out to schools and develop their role among all pupils, are:

- the First Access programme, under which every child should have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument through whole-class teaching in schools
- the singing strategy, intended to ensure that every pupil sings regularly.<sup>9</sup>

In too many cases, however, First Access lessons did not relate to other music teaching in the school and were ineffective. The teaching observed lacked rigour. Many of the hubs visited, especially in large county areas, were failing to reach out to all eligible schools, despite receiving funding to do so. Smaller hubs usually achieved higher participation rates than the larger hubs. The hubs' singing strategies were rarely influential or well-established.

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<sup>8</sup> This also is not new. Ofsted's report *Music in schools: wider still and wider* (see footnote 6) said that more effective musical leadership and management by headteachers and other senior staff in schools was central to bringing about improvement. Not enough school leaders held external partners to account or robustly challenged the quality of classroom music in their own schools.

<sup>9</sup> See Annex C.

All this needs to change if music education is to take better hold in our schools. The hubs have the remit and funding to bring much-needed transformation. In this report, Ofsted urges them to do so and offers its support.

## Key findings

- The hubs' work in 22 out of the 31 schools visited was little different to that provided by the former local authority music services. Too little had changed. In nine schools, however, the advent of the hub had made some difference, not least by beginning to improve the quality of dialogue about music education with the school.
- In all but a few of the 31 schools visited, the music curriculum lacked depth and rigour. Most school leaders in the survey understood neither these weaknesses nor that the local music hub could be a source of expert advice and support in bringing about improvement.
- In some schools, hubs found it hard to get noticed, especially by senior leaders, and gave up too easily. In eight of the schools – six primary and two secondary – the hub's involvement was either non-existent or irregular.
- Too often, hubs provided or sold music services to schools without asking about the schools' existing music provision and failed to challenge the school to improve it.
- Teaching provided to schools by the hubs visited, such as in the First Access programme, was often separated from the schools' own provision; it was not part of a coherent music curriculum in each school.
- Those hubs that had been traditional local authority music services, with leaders whose main experience was in providing instrumental teaching, found it harder to understand how they might engage and challenge schools about teaching in class lessons.
- Some more successful hubs had started tackling weaknesses in schools' music teaching, for example by introducing systems whereby hub staff had periodic discussions about how it could support the school in improving music education.
- Arts Council England asks hubs for considerable amounts of numerical monitoring data but is not yet able to gauge the quality of hubs' work, or help hubs to do so.
- The hubs visited could not show how their work in schools provides, or will provide, best value for public money. We must expect greater impact on music education for all pupils in schools.

## Recommendations

**Music hubs should, by April 2014, each prepare a school music education plan that enables them to:**

- promote themselves with schools as confident, expert leaders of music education in their areas, not simply as providers of services

- expect and secure that all schools engage with them and the National Plan for Music Education
- have regular supportive, challenging conversations with each of their schools about the quality of music education for all pupils in that school
- support all schools in improving the music education they provide, especially in class lessons, and support them in evaluating it robustly
- offer expert training and consultancy to schools, which supports school leaders and staff in understanding what musical learning, and good progress by pupils in music, are like
- ensure that their own staff and partners are well trained and ready to do this work
- spend a suitable proportion of their staff's time on working with school leaders strategically, alongside their work in teaching pupils directly
- publicise their work effectively to schools and explain how it can contribute to school improvement
- facilitate school-to-school support as appropriate
- promote high-quality curriculum progression in schools and ensure that hubs' work in schools is integral to this
- robustly evaluate the impact of their own work on pupils' music education.

### **Schools should:**

- make better use of the provision and funding provided through hubs as part of the National Plan for Music Education
- expect music hubs to provide them with expert advice and challenge – the challenging conversation – and take action on this
- evaluate their musical provision more accurately, especially teaching and the curriculum, and seek training and advice as needed.

### **Arts Council England, supported by the Department for Education, should:**

- take rapid action to improve the reporting and accountability framework for music hubs, ensuring that it contains evaluation of the quality of the work of the hubs in schools; this should include the evaluative examination of hubs' work
- challenge hubs to achieve the best value from the public money they receive
- guide hubs in developing and implementing their school music education plans.

## Music education organisations should:

- support the hubs in developing their work and their school music education plans
- help develop better understanding of what works in achieving a better music education for all.

## Ofsted will:

- through its National Lead for Music and, as appropriate, other specialist music inspectors, support and challenge hubs in improving their work in schools, by:
  - discussing its findings within the music education sector, thus contributing to understanding and the debate with national bodies concerned with music education
  - visiting a sample of hubs and schools and looking at their work.
- ensure that all school inspectors are familiar with the findings and recommendations within this report.

## Introduction: what are music hubs?

1. After its election, the coalition government asked Darren Henley, of Classic FM, to review music education in England. This report was published in February 2011.<sup>10</sup> It outlined and led to a National Plan for Music Education (NPME), published in November of the same year.<sup>11</sup>
2. Traditionally, central government funding for shared music services was channelled through local authorities. The NPME provided for such funding to continue for all state-funded schools within each local area, but through a different route – music hubs – with some new responsibilities. The hubs were selected through a bidding process, arranged by Arts Council England and established from 2012.<sup>12</sup> Their functions are shown in Annex C. Hubs are, in effect, federations of local organisations with an interest in music education. In most cases, however, local authority music services, or their successor organisations, are the dominant or lead partners delivering most of the work in schools.

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<sup>10</sup> *Music education in England: a review by Darren Henley for the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport* (DfE-00011-2011), Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2011; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-education-in-england-a-review-by-darren-henley-for-the-department-for-education-and-the-department-for-culture-media-and-sport](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-education-in-england-a-review-by-darren-henley-for-the-department-for-education-and-the-department-for-culture-media-and-sport).

<sup>11</sup> *The importance of music: a national plan for music education*, Department for Education, 2011; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-of-music-a-national-plan-for-music-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-of-music-a-national-plan-for-music-education).

<sup>12</sup> Details can be found on the Arts Council England website: [www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/music-education-hubs/music-education-faqs/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/music-education-hubs/music-education-faqs/).



3. The NPME guides hubs in their work. Paragraphs 29 to 31 of *The importance of music: a national plan for music education*, entitled 'The importance of quality', are especially relevant to this survey. They conclude as follows:

'Schools will want to hold hubs to account for the services they arrange, and at the same time hubs will be able to challenge and support schools to improve their music curriculum.'

4. Music is, in its very essence, a practical and active subject. But it is not just for fun. Music is powerful; it transcends time and cultures and can speak to us deeply. As Plato argued:

'Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul.'

5. Hubs, therefore, have an important job to do for our young people. They must seek to work with schools to ensure that all pupils, whether they learn to play an instrument in depth or not, appreciate what makes music powerful and why, and its capacity to affect them and others.
6. This report looks at the serious problems that continue to exist in the leadership of music in schools. It considers how music hubs can, and are partly beginning to bring in changes for the better.

## Leadership of music in schools

### Performance and enjoyment are not enough

7. When asked about the purpose of music education in their schools, headteachers spoken to during the survey usually said that they wanted pupils to enjoy music with the opportunity at some point, if the pupils wished, to perform to an audience. When further challenged, the headteachers were surprised that more might be expected. Few spoke of music as a rigorous, academic subject for all.
8. In addition, leaders often did not check on the quality of music teaching rigorously or even check that it took place regularly.<sup>13</sup>

A Year 8 class music lesson was the culmination of a unit of work on chord sequences and layers in pop music. Students had to perform a recurring chord sequence on keyboards. Most were unable to do this accurately and many gave up. Furthermore, the students showed little understanding of the purpose of this chord sequence in the music or how

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<sup>13</sup> Previous Ofsted surveys have found that music teaching in primary schools can be hit and miss. Too much often depends on the expertise of individual class teachers and whether they find time to teach the subject or not.

it connected to the tune, as this was not taught. The lesson was slow-paced and did not achieve its objectives. The school senior leader who observed the lesson, a non-specialist, over-graded the lesson for non-musical reasons: 'Teamwork, use of objectives, energy by the teacher.'

In a primary school, the class music curriculum did not include opportunities for pupils to learn about basic musical structures. There was no teaching about time signatures, for example, so pupils knew little of bars or beats. It was not clear either that the curriculum was followed in every class. The school's leaders did not know how well, or frequently, music was taught.

9. In some of the primary schools visited, music was sometimes used only to supplement other subjects. For example, in one school, when a Year 5 class studied the Tudor period in history, the music curriculum was to listen to some Tudor music, without proper consideration of what musical learning might accompany this.
10. In the secondary schools, senior staff often expressed pride in high-profile performing groups, talent shows or productions. However, these usually only involved a small proportion of students.<sup>14</sup>
11. In some of the secondary schools visited, as seen in the previous surveys, elaborate whole-school assessment systems, encouraged by senior leaders, disrupted the flow and musical purposes of the lessons.
12. It was common for music teachers, in primary and secondary schools, to be led by line managers whose knowledge of music and music education was very limited. It was rare for senior leaders to be able to challenge the music teachers about the quality of their teaching or the curriculum. This often led to weak practice.
13. Senior staff in both primary and secondary schools sometimes said they were in awe of the specialist music provision in their schools, even when Her Majesty's Inspectors noted that it required improvement or was inadequate. The headteachers trusted that their music subject leader, or the hub teachers, were getting it right and frequently over-estimated the quality of the musical activity in their schools.

### **Expectations of pupils and students are low**

14. Music is a demanding academic discipline, developed through exciting practical musical activity. However, 26 of the 31 schools visited, including all of the primary schools, shied away from teaching pupils about fundamental aspects of music such as time signatures, note lengths, key signatures, scales, musical form, chord sequences, and their relationship to melody, at an appropriately

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<sup>14</sup> The fact that school musical activities can be unrepresentative of all the different pupil groups in the school is clearly documented in previous Ofsted music surveys.

challenging level, or at all. Typically, the schools were not sure enough how to teach these aspects and thought them too difficult for pupils. They were unduly worried that pupils might not enjoy lessons that included theory.

15. When pupils performed, especially when they sang, teachers rarely showed pupils the musical notation. They saw notation as too difficult, or a complicating factor. Too often, they focused only on creating a performance and failed to develop pupils' musical understanding.

A small primary school choir sang with reasonable accuracy and good diction. The specialist teacher sang and modelled well. But the pupils were only shown the song words and not the notation. Good opportunities for pupils to see and understand melody shape, rhythm, beat and rests were missed.

16. Even very expert teaching could be limited by underestimating pupils, as the following example from Key Stage 1 shows.

A teacher recommended by the hub, with excellent subject knowledge, taught a fast-paced, thoroughly enjoyable, practical lesson to a Year 1 and 2 class. Pupils accurately tapped crotchets and quavers in bars of four beats, but without knowing this was what they were doing or understanding the musical reason for it. A composition activity which followed, about making sound effects for the Three Little Pigs story, was less demanding than the earlier activity and unconnected to it. A listening piece, in 4/4 time, was not linked to the initial activity either. The staff involved later realised that pupils had had a very enjoyable musical experience, and had shown good skills in performance, but the theory underpinning the practical work was missed.

17. In primary schools, and at Key Stage 3, the planned curriculum in the schools visited was too often a shallow musical odyssey, with blocks or units of work on various styles of music, such as world music, blues, hip hop, rap and pop. While each genre was justifiably studied, it was rare for links to be made between them. Variety was more important than musical substance and depth. In 2011, Ofsted similarly noted that:

'Nearly all schools recognised the importance of promoting a diverse range of musical styles but far fewer had an understanding about how all students should make good musical progress as they moved through the curriculum in Key Stages 1 to 3.'<sup>15</sup>

18. Classical music, as a serious component of the curriculum, was treated as a step too far in most of the primary and secondary schools surveyed, at least

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<sup>15</sup> *Music in schools: wider still and wider* (110158), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-wider-still-and-wider](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-wider-still-and-wider).

until Key Stage 4. It was felt by teachers and leaders to be too difficult or inaccessible for pupils. This reluctance created an unnecessary gap in pupils' musical and cultural education. Schools failed to grasp the fact that, for example, a Mozart symphony or song may be based on the same three chords – tonic, dominant and sub-dominant – and be in the same time signature as many pop songs and a typical 12-bar blues pattern, and that understanding one of these styles could lead directly to understanding another.

19. The teaching and curricula in music, as implemented in 26 of the 31 schools visited, lacked sufficient rigour, coherence and depth to differing degrees. This is similar to previous survey findings. Sadly, the laudable wish for musical learning to be relevant, accessible and enjoyable too often ends in a curriculum that is unchallenging, demotivating and sometimes dreary.
20. No one advocates an irrelevant or inaccessible curriculum. But part of the role of school leaders and teachers is to stretch and challenge pupils to delve deeper and further than they may be initially comfortable or familiar with. Too often, the leaders of the schools in the sample, even the good and better schools, did not have the expertise to do this in music.

### **Few students are prepared to study music in school after age 14**

21. Some of the best class music teaching seen in this and previous surveys was in Key Stages 4 and 5, when students have chosen to study the subject and where school leaders are focused on examination outcomes.
22. However, the take-up of music at GCSE and A level is low compared with many other subjects, including art and design, physical education and drama.<sup>16</sup> Most older pupils in the secondary schools visited were not involved in any significant school musical activity at all. The low take-up of GCSE music prompted some schools in the sample to offer other Level 2 qualifications in performing arts, or BTECs in music or music technology, which require a different type of experience.
23. In the secondary schools surveyed, headteachers and senior staff offered different perspectives on this. Some said that the introduction of the English Baccalaureate had made it harder for them to recommend that students take GCSE arts subjects, and certainly more than one arts subject.<sup>17</sup> As a result, students' options were more restricted than in the past. There may be many

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<sup>16</sup> Provisional GCSE full course results for England in June 2013 show that, for example, 167,894 students took art and design subjects, which was four times the number taking music, at 41,580. About 7% of Year 11 students took GCSE music. At A level, 40,878 took art and design subjects and 7,793 took music. The full details can be seen at [www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results](http://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results).

<sup>17</sup> The English Baccalaureate is a performance measure that recognises where pupils have secured a C grade or better at GCSE across English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language. Its rationale is explained on the Department for Education website: [www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/the-english-baccalaureate](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/the-english-baccalaureate).

reasons why students do or do not choose to take music at GCSE; but the overriding reason found by Her Majesty's Inspectors in the schools visited was a lack of preparedness due to low expectations to the end of Key Stage 3. The students who had chosen GCSE music almost always had experience additional to the mainstream curriculum through playing instruments or singing.

In a successful comprehensive school, students taking the GCSE course said that the Key Stage 3 music curriculum they had taken had not given them the theoretical and conceptual understanding they needed for GCSE. In a Year 10 lesson, students showed very limited understanding of musical form, even a form as simple as ABA, as this had not been covered in Key Stage 3 or earlier.<sup>18</sup> The students felt they needed to be able to play an instrument to be successful and the subject had an average take-up, despite good results and evidently strong teaching in Key Stage 4.

However, in another comprehensive school, the Key Stage 3 curriculum was expertly designed and refined with well-linked exploration of musical theory and concepts across a range of music styles. Students' musical learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 prepared them well for the GCSE course, even if they were not accomplished instrumentalists. They appreciated a diverse range of musical styles and could see the musical links between them. Students were equally at home discussing music from early baroque to pop and house music. The take-up of the subject was high at GCSE and A level, with excellent results.

## Singing is underused in schools

24. Corporate singing in the secondary schools visited was rare, even though the school leaders often said they regretted this. They did not know how to develop it and singing became a specialist activity for a few students only. In schools undertaking collective worship, communal singing was sometimes sustained. Singing was rarely used in the lessons observed as a means of communicating musical ideas and promoting better learning, by students or teachers.

A secondary school head of music considered there was a strong culture of singing in the school, because the quality of singing in Year 7 lessons was good, there were some choirs and older students took part in an annual show. However, the repertoire of the Year 7 students was very limited. Singing was used for performance, but not to promote learning or explore musical ideas. The choirs were small and few boys attended. The productions involved a minority of students. Most students in the school did no singing at all.

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<sup>18</sup> ABA, or ternary, form is a common, simple structure for a piece of music, which starts with one musical idea (the A section) and then moves on to a contrasting B section, before returning to the initial idea.

25. Singing together was far more common in the primary schools. The standard of the singing heard in the survey, however, was very mixed. The repertoire in many of the primary schools was very limited and undemanding.

In a nursery class, children enjoyed a calm and well-paced singing lesson, with a useful focus on fast and slow. However, not all joined in and this was not picked up by the teacher.

## Hubs co-leading music education with schools: filling the expertise gap

26. When faced with the serious leadership problems identified above, the school leaders often said they had not known that their music hub might be able to provide them with support and challenge to help bring about improvement. They said that they would welcome such contributions.

A teaching school had not realised that its local hub could provide the expertise it needed to support school system improvement and teachers' professional development.

## The challenging conversation with schools

27. The hubs visited had actively developed partnerships with local music organisations and gave evidence of vibrant musical events or initiatives taking place in their localities. Music centres and local ensembles continued to provide some pupils with opportunities to sing or learn instruments, sometimes to a very high standard, and to progress from one instrument or musical experience to more advanced learning. Hubs are right to do this, as these are some of their functions.
28. Too often, however, hubs emphasised this higher level work more than supporting and challenging schools to do better for all pupils. This especially applied to hubs whose lead organisation was formerly a traditional local authority music service, focused on instrumental teaching. Individual and small group instrumental teaching is vital. A few hubs argued, however, that their main or equal priority was the day-to-day curriculum and teaching in schools. This survey concludes that the best hubs emphasise their role in supporting all pupils in this way.

A hub serving about 250 schools had a well-organised and publicised approach to providing class curriculum support to schools at all stages from Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4. The hub used its Arts Council funding to provide a free 'bronze package' to all schools, which included music advisory support, the singing strategy, staff training and, for primary schools, one term's First Access instrumental teaching. The take-up was almost 100% across all primary and secondary schools. Many schools paid for carefully tailored higher-level packages which involved, for example, the hub leading school choirs or ensembles or extending the

First Access teaching for the whole year. The hub recognised that its next step was to challenge the schools to ensure that the packages were used well as part of a demanding music curriculum.

29. All hubs, even those highly committed to doing so, were finding it hard in their first year to influence the day-to-day practice in schools for the better. None of the hubs sampled felt fully confident in this role, even when embracing it clearly as an ambition. In the worst cases, the work of hubs consolidated poor practice.

A secondary school presented a detailed and effusive self-evaluation of its music provision. However, music was not taught in the school in Years 8 and 9. There were no curriculum music courses at Key Stage 4 and no extra-curricular music groups. Year 7 students were given a 15-week block of music teaching: a 'performance project' led by three members of the music hub, using saxophone, brass, drums, keyboard and guitar. In the lesson observed, students showed poor instrumental techniques, some were miming rather than playing, and others played inaccurately. The project was narrow; it did not include singing or technology and focused only on jazz styles. The hub said that it had found it very difficult to get into the school to discuss this situation. But the fact that the hub willingly provided the project, in the knowledge that the school did not make any other curriculum provision, was tantamount to condoning the situation.

30. Some hubs perceived a conflict between their traditional approach of treating schools as customers and, at the same time, challenging them.

From its regular appraisals, the hub knew that the quality of its own staff's teaching in schools was mixed. However, it reported that schools were often satisfied even when the teaching it provided was weak. Although this suited the hub's business, selling services successfully to schools, it was not content and was actively working to improve weaker teaching, and wanted to share its evaluations with the schools.

31. The thinking of other hubs had gone beyond this.

One large county hub saw its role just as much as developing schools' own music curriculum as providing instrumental lessons and activities. To this end, it was developing its area structure, not just as a system for providing music centres and ensemble opportunities, but to engage proactively with school leaders about their own internal provision.

32. Some hubs felt able to engage schools in challenging conversations sometimes, but not consistently. They had occasional successes.

The leader of a small hub had spent much time and effort in building relationships with schools. As a result, the hub had begun to have some

useful conversations about improvement with some of its schools. It had successfully challenged all of its secondary schools to offer music GCSE.

33. Some hubs reported that significant numbers of schools would not engage with them. Other hubs, however, did not accept this and highlighted the need to build relationships and develop a new culture.

One school declined to take part in hub activity but the hub leader, realising the dangers to the pupils in the school of non-engagement, booked the school in for a hub event anyway. The school was later persuaded to take part and has subsequently continued to work with the hub.

A county hub was not active in all its schools. It needed to be more confident and influential. To this end, the leader was attending a course in marketing and establishing better personal contacts.

34. Several of the hubs sampled had organised an increasing number of conferences, courses and meetings for schools and school leaders. Some hubs provided online networking opportunities. Sometimes, hubs contributed usefully to wider local authority training packages. However, such activities were often taken up by only a minority of schools, with hubs unsure that they were reaching the schools and staff most needing the opportunities.

A secondary school's head of music had limited contact with other schools or with the local networks provided by the hub. In turn, the hub had failed to encourage the school to join these and did not engage with the school. The head of music became isolated and did not have benchmarks, or different ideas, against which to measure his school's work. He over-estimated the quality of provision in the school.

### **First Access and the singing strategy: a way into schools**

35. Whole-class specialist instrumental teaching, as now funded through the First Access programme, has existed for some years through the Wider Opportunities scheme.<sup>19</sup> From this experience, many hubs have learnt the importance of giving clear guidance about how school staff should work alongside hub staff. Often hubs would not allow First Access teaching to be used to cover teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time.<sup>20</sup> This ensured involvement of the school staff in the First Access lessons. Hubs often focused their First Access teaching in one particular year group. They might insist that the classes involved gave a concert at the end. This showed potential among hubs to challenge schools.

<sup>19</sup> All music hubs are funded to provide every pupil in their area with at least one term's weekly whole-class instrumental teaching in school. This is called the First Access programme. It superseded a similar programme called Wider Opportunities.

<sup>20</sup> All teachers with a teaching timetable are entitled to some release time, during lessons, to plan, prepare and make assessments.



36. A successful First Access music lesson might include the best elements of the following two good lessons, both taught to classes in lower Key Stage 2 by teachers from two different hubs.

The Year 3 cohort, as their final lesson in a singing unit, sang in three part harmony to the whole school. The teaching was expert and encouraging and the quality of the pupils' performance truly excellent and very uplifting. But, as the teacher and hub leader recognised, the pupils had not seen the notation of the song, learning to sing it by copying the teacher. The pupils were in the dark about the chord sequence, time signature and melody shape they had sung so beautifully.

In a Year 4 whole-class recorder lesson, a knowledgeable teacher showed the pupils the notation they were using and ensured their understanding of crotchets and quavers, as well as accents, with the pupils reading and playing them. Pupils were taught to count four beats in the bar accurately and their playing became increasingly precise as a result. The standard of recorder playing among the class was mixed but the pupils clearly enjoyed the challenge of learning musical theory and using musical notation successfully for themselves.

37. The hubs rarely ensured that First Access work, or the choice of instruments made by schools, was linked well with the schools' own curriculum. It stood alone. Hubs were only too aware that, in some cases, schools in their areas were delighted to receive First Access teaching, as they felt it took pressure off them to provide music for the pupils themselves. Far too often, in the survey sample, First Access lessons were poorly evaluated by hub and school.

Pupils in a Year 4 class were learning recorder through the First Access programme, taught weekly by a hub teacher. After 22 lessons, pupils only knew the three basic notes: B, A and G. Most pupils could not play them accurately. The lesson observed lacked musical learning purpose, was not adjusted to suit pupils' different abilities and the teacher's expectations were very low. The school was not aware of the very slow progress made over time by the pupils and judged the lesson observed as good, principally because of the positive relationships between the teacher and pupils. The hub's leaders also were uncertain of how to evaluate pupils' progress in class recorder teaching.

Another primary school was in its fourth year of Wider Opportunities and First Access class instrumental teaching. However, there was no link between this and other curriculum music provision. There had never been a conversation between the school and music service or hub about this. The hub considered that music at the school was good, due to the high number of instrumentalists, and said that hub provision 'complements curriculum work', but showed little knowledge of what the curriculum in the school was.

38. Some hubs were beginning to realise that there was little point in providing a series of 10, or perhaps 30, First Access class lessons, which were then not effectively linked to pupils' other musical learning. They realised that a proportion of the hub staff time involved would be better used for the challenging conversations and planning with the school. They also recognised the need to train their own staff, as needed, for this skilled work, and that this could not wait for long.
39. Worryingly, the take-up of First Access teaching by schools was too low across the sample. Many of the smaller hubs did well and were working with almost all the eligible schools. Larger hubs, in county areas, tended to find this more difficult, often reaching only about two thirds of eligible schools. In one hub, only about a quarter of eligible schools were involved.
40. The singing strategy is much newer and was less well-established in the hubs visited. Many had appointed a member of staff to lead it and work had begun but this was at an early stage with limited impact and was certainly not reaching all pupils.

### **Ensuring value for money: evaluation systems**

41. None of the hubs visited could provide a telling, qualitative, overall evaluation of the quality of the music education in schools in their areas. Most had anecdotal information about the work of schools but few had experience of rigorously sampling this. They had, however, helpful tracking systems to show which aspects of their provision each school participated in.
42. Hubs usually evaluated their own work mainly through responses from schools and their own staff appraisal arrangements. This gave only patchy information. Hub lead organisations almost universally found it difficult, at this very early stage, to evaluate the impact of the work of their partner organisations.
43. Some hubs had used numerical data well to check on whether particular groups of pupils were over- or under-represented in musical activities. One hub had usefully noted that traveller pupils had not accessed its services and took successful action to remedy this, through a well-targeted project. In the sample of schools, pupils entitled to the support of the Pupil Premium were sometimes underrepresented in musical activity, particularly instrumental lessons, even though such lessons were often provided to them free.<sup>21,22</sup>
44. Arts Council England actively scrutinises and supports hubs through a network of regional relationship managers. It seeks to monitor hubs' success in their

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<sup>21</sup> The Pupil Premium is additional funding given to schools to support their disadvantaged pupils and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. Further information is available on the Department for Education website: [www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/premium](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/premium).

<sup>22</sup> This is part of a much bigger picture which is of significant concern to Ofsted. See the 2013 report *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on* (130155), Ofsted, 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/unseen-children-access-and-achievement-20-years](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/unseen-children-access-and-achievement-20-years).

core functions through an annual return questionnaire completed by all hubs.<sup>23</sup> The questions that this asks are mainly about the numbers of pupils participating in musical activities, related to hubs' core functions. There are also questions asking for descriptions of hubs' activity. The hubs sampled had understandable concerns about this questionnaire. They pointed out that:

- the data collected, although very useful, are unlikely to be fully reliable as different people, and schools, may interpret the questions differently
- the questionnaire does not emphasise the quality of the hubs' provision.

45. One member of a hub's governing board said:

'We can meet all the Arts Council key performance indicators without doing anything about quality.'

In discussions with Ofsted, Arts Council England shared this unease. It has established a Music Education Hubs Quality Advisory Group and, through this, has begun to discuss with a group of hubs ways of evaluating the quality of hubs' work. This is at an early stage of development.

## Notes

Between February and July 2013, Her Majesty's Inspectors visited 31 schools, of which 16 were secondary schools and 15 were primary schools. Six were academies. These schools represented a range of geographical and socio-economic circumstances and were of varied sizes. At each visit, the following activities took place:

- an observation of a music lesson, taught either by hub or school staff, made jointly with a senior leader from the school
- a discussion with the school's senior leaders and the subject leader for music, looking, as needed, at school documentation such as curriculum plans
- a detailed discussion with the headteacher or senior representative of the music hub – this discussion considered the hub's work in the school visited as a case study, as well as its wider work; the meeting often included scrutiny of hub documentation such as the business plan
- a short concluding discussion with all parties.

Her Majesty's Inspectors also held meetings with:

- Arts Council England

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<sup>23</sup> This questionnaire is available on the Arts Council England website: [www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/music-education-hubs/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/music-education-hubs/).

- the Department for Education
- the Music Education Council.

## Annex A: Hubs and schools visited

Barnet	The Compton School
Bexley	Belmont Primary School
Birmingham	St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School
Blackpool	Montgomery High School
East Sussex	St Peter and St Paul CE Primary School
Enfield	Eastfield Primary School
Gateshead and South Tyneside	Whickham School
Greater Manchester (Salford)	St Paul's CE Primary School
Greater Manchester (Stockport)	Cheadle Hulme High School
Greater Manchester (Trafford)	Broadoak School
Greenwich	The John Roan School
Hampshire	Locks Heath Junior School
Hertfordshire	St George's School
Islington	Vittoria Primary School
Kent (Soundhub)	Tunbridge Wells Girls' Grammar School
Lambeth	Platanos College
Lambeth	St Anne's Catholic Primary School
Lancashire	Parklands High School
Leeds	Queensway Primary School
Wirral with Cheshire West and Chester (Musical Routes)	Parkgate Primary School
Norfolk	Notre Dame RC High School
North Tyneside	Marden High School
Oxfordshire	Charlbury Primary School
South Gloucestershire	Bromley Heath Junior School
Southwark	Robert Browning Primary School
Swindon	Isambard Community School
Tees Valley	Oxbridge Lane Primary School
Torbay	Torquay Girls' Grammar School
Tower Hamlets	Redlands Primary School
Tri-borough (Westminster)	Paddington Academy
Warwickshire	Bishops Tachbrook CE Primary School

## Annex B: Pertinent recommendations from recent Ofsted music surveys

Among the recommendations made in *Music in schools: wider still, and wider*, were that schools, all other funded providers of music education and providers of continuing professional development should:

- plan for pupils' good musical progression through and across the curriculum by:
  - giving sufficient and regular curriculum time for the thorough and progressive development of pupils' aural awareness and understanding
  - providing robust curriculum plans that identify the landmarks of musical understanding pupils are expected to achieve, in addition to the range of musical styles and traditions that they are to experience
  - ensuring that different initiatives, including whole-class instrumental and vocal programmes, are planned as part of an overall curriculum vision for music for the school.
  
- strengthen senior leadership of music in schools by:
  - increasing headteachers' and senior leaders' knowledge and understanding about the key characteristics of effective music provision, including the appropriate use of musical assessment and the importance of teachers' musical preparation, so that they can more effectively observe and support music in their schools.<sup>24</sup>

Among the recommendations made in *Music in schools: sound partnerships* were that schools and their music education partners (including music hubs) should, through good communication and dialogue, ensure that:

- music education partnerships are well resourced, planned thoroughly and monitored robustly to ensure good value for money
- partnership programmes and projects coordinate with, augment and support other music provision in the school, taking particular account of the specific needs, interests and abilities of pupils
- school leaders and music partnership leaders work alongside each other to develop their understanding of good practice in music education and consequently bring about improvements in access and achievement for all groups of pupils.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Music in schools: wider still and wider* (110158), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-wider-still-and-wider](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-wider-still-and-wider).

<sup>25</sup> *Music in schools: sound partnerships* (120282) Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-sound-partnerships](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/music-schools-sound-partnerships).

## **Annex C: The core and extension roles of music hubs**

### **Core roles**

- Ensure that every child aged 5 to 18 has the opportunity to learn a musical instrument (other than voice) through whole-class ensemble teaching programmes for ideally a year (but for a minimum of a term) of weekly tuition on the same instrument.
- Provide opportunities to play in ensembles and to perform from an early stage.
- Ensure that clear progression routes are available and affordable to all young people.
- Develop a singing strategy to ensure that every pupil sings regularly and that choirs and other vocal ensembles are available in the area.

### **Extension roles**

- Offer continuing professional development to school staff, particularly in supporting schools to deliver music in the curriculum.
- Provide an instrument loan service, with discounts or free provision for those on low incomes.
- Provide access to large-scale and/or high-quality music experiences for pupils, working with professional musicians and/or venues. This may include undertaking work to publicise the opportunities available to schools, parents/carers and students.

Source: *The importance of music: a national plan for music education*, Department for Education, 2011; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-of-music-a-national-plan-for-music-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-of-music-a-national-plan-for-music-education).