

Assessing Musical Learning and Progression

at Key Stage 3

Module 2

Module 2

In this module music teachers will consider how they might construct and map a Key Stage 3 music curriculum by comparing a range of curriculum models.

Mapping a Key Stage 3 curriculum

How you choose to construct your KS3 curriculum will clearly impact hugely on your pupils' progression and the assessment of your pupils' musical learning.

In Module 1 the tasks required you to articulate what you want your pupils to know, understand and be able to do by the end of Key Stage 3. This module will allow you to explore how you might map a curriculum that will allow your pupils to gain this range of knowledge, skills and understanding as effectively as possible and demonstrate progression in their musical learning.

Over many decades the majority of schools in Kent have adopted a similar music curriculum model in which pupils explore a broad range of topics in units of work that each last no longer than about six weeks. It is interesting to unpack whether this is the most effective music curriculum model to support progression.

Firstly, it is obviously impossible to cover all styles, genres and traditions of music within a KS3 curriculum and it would be questionable as to why any teacher would want to try to do so. Music teachers are already making important decisions about the music that their pupils engage with. An alternative curriculum model might allow pupils to gain depth of understanding about fewer styles, genres and traditions.

In the report *Music in schools: wider still, and wider* (2012) Ofsted have been very clear that it is not good practice to have a curriculum that is built up of short, unrelated units:

'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.'
(Ofsted, 2012)

Making links between genres within the KS3 curriculum is a key point in this statement.

Ofsted (2012) also stated 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.'

Ofsted found that the situation was the same and that these statements still hold true in the report *Music in schools: what hubs must do* (Ofsted, 2013).

TASK 1

Make a simple table of the units of work in your current KS3 curriculum and the length of time that you devote to each.

Unit of work	Time devoted to unit of work
e.g. Rhythms and polyrhythms	6 x 1 hour lessons

Reflect on your current units. Are there obvious units that you would like your pupils to explore in more depth? If you did this, which units might you choose to omit?

Martin Fautley suggests that, 'Progression is akin to making a journey, and what assessment in music education is not yet proficient at is making evaluative judgements concerning the process of journeying.' (Fautley, 2010)

He expands this by describing the odometer in his car which records how far he has driven but not where he has driven to. He could have made a journey in a more-or-less straight line or could have driven around and around his own locality. He suggests that, 'The National Curriculum would seem to value the former, in that distance has been covered, whereas getting to know the immediate locality can be rewarding and important knowledge too...What this means in music is that teachers feel a disparate range of significant musical landmarks have to be covered, and curricula are constructed which read like a 'Grand Tour' of world heritage sites, racing from Gamelan, to Samba, to Waltzes, to film music, and ending up at the Blues. Breathless from this exertion, it is small wonder that progression is hard to define, let alone to measure!' (Fautley, 2010)

As well as considering whether your current KS3 curriculum both promotes the 'good musical progress' that Ofsted are looking for within this key stage and develops the depth of understanding that Fautley recommends, a typical KS3 music curriculum consisting of short, unrelated units does not prepare pupils well for progression into KS4. For instance, in GCSE courses pupils have to devise extended compositions, often over several months, and in BTEC courses pupils will spend a long period of time providing evidence for units such as *The Music Industry*. Pupils need enculturation in engaging in learning over these longer periods of time. (We will revisit progression from KS3 to 4 in Module 5.)

How can teachers devise a music curriculum that is not 'a shallow musical odyssey' or a 'Grand Tour' of musical landmarks? Some sensible advice about structuring a KS3 Music curriculum was set out in 2006 in the Secondary National Strategies *KS3 Music: a professional development programme*. Unit 1 is called *Structuring learning for musical understanding* (DfES, 2006):

http://www3.hants.gov.uk/ks3music_unit_1.pdf

The document proposes (page 8) some ideas about 'Planning for breadth of musical understanding'. It states that, 'It is important...that pupils learn about a range of culturally diverse musical styles, genres and traditions, developing over time an understanding of how each works.'

The document goes on to state that, 'Typically, an effective scheme of work for Key Stage 3 will therefore include units of work that produce balanced learning about musical **styles** (across time and place), musical **genres** (music for a given purpose) and musical **traditions** (ways of working and producing).

It is made clear that many types of music may 'display multiple characteristics'. The example is given of Bhangra: 'Bhangra is a style with very clear melodic and rhythmic characteristics; but it is also a genre (a medium for mass entertainment) and a tradition (a form of popular music).'

The document goes on to propose a particular approach:

'When introducing such music, it will be important to explore this richness of function with pupils. When moving into detailed learning, however, it is crucial to focus on just one of the music's characteristics – approaching it as either a style, a genre or a tradition provides a clarity of purpose that allows pupils to explore and develop a particular form of musical thinking.'

The following task is proposed.

TASK 2

	Styles	Genres	Traditions
Year 7			
Year 8			
Year 9			

Is there a balance in each year? Is there a balance across the whole key stage?

What areas might be over- or under-represented?

What styles, genres or traditions could you include to improve the range of experiences for pupils, or how could you adapt existing units to re-focus on a different form of musical thinking?

A result of this model of curriculum mapping could be that your pupils might revisit the same music, approaching it in different ways at different points in the key stage. For instance, gospel singing might be explored in Year 7 as a style which uses parallel vocal harmonisations. Gospel singing might be revisited as a tradition in Year 9 as part of an extended unit of work focusing on black history and music. This sort of curriculum mapping is intended to develop pupil understanding and to overcome some common issues in music in the KS3 curriculum that were suggested in the secondary National Strategy Music resources:

'Sometimes pupils:

- do not know why they are studying a particular type of music, or how that music is similar to or different from music studied in prior learning
- are not clear why they are undertaking practical tasks within units of work. They focus their attention on completion of teacher-defined tasks, and do not develop broader understanding of the conventions, processes and procedures of a range of culturally diverse musical styles, genres and tradition
- do not develop a musical vocabulary they can use to articulate their understanding of music
- do not understand with sufficient clarity the details of musical elements, and cannot apply knowledge in practical work effectively
- are unclear about the expectations of skill development and do not know how to improve specific skills.'

Throughout the resources it is emphasised that the fundamental aim of music at Key Stage 3 is developing pupils' musical understanding. This can be described as the outcome of combining two areas of learning:

- (a) knowing about musical conventions, processes and procedures;
- (b) exploring a range of diverse musical styles, genres and traditions through practical music making.'

This advice was prepared in 2006 and we have had two National Curriculum Orders since then. The 2007 KS3 Programme of Study for Music included a whole section entitled 'Breadth of study' and this has been replaced in the current Music programme of study by an aim which states that, 'The national curriculum for music aims to ensure that all pupils perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of the great composers and musicians.' The loss of the term 'breadth of study' might allow music teachers more freedom to construct a curriculum that avoids the 'shallow musical odyssey' condemned by Ofsted.

This is not a new idea. For example, Musical Futures suggested the possibility of a whole curriculum approach in 2004.

<https://www.musicalfutures.org/resource/27236/title/nonformalteachingwholecurriculumapproach>

In the introduction to musical futures it is stated that:

'We chose to work with year 8 students as this is traditionally the time where the Key Stage 3 'dip' – the loss of interest between starting secondary school and the incentive of end of Key Stage 3 assessment – can be at its most prominent.

Our aims in devising a Whole Curriculum Approach for year 8 are to:

- break down the barriers between school music and students' own musical experiences
- provide real, valuable and sustained musical activity
- move the students' musical experiences beyond the classroom situation
- provide genuine musical activity envisioned in the National Curriculum and allow music to be taught 'musically'
- give opportunities to make sustained progress in key areas, to develop new musical skills and reinforce existing skills
- involve external community musicians in ongoing musical activities that move beyond the all too common 'taster session'

This curriculum mapping approach focuses quite wholeheartedly on skill development gained through 'genuine musical activity'.

TASK 3

Look at 'The Whole Curriculum Approach' – at a glance (link provided on page 4).

Where in your Key Stage 3 curriculum can you identify a 'dip' in your pupils' engagement and progress?

Sketch out a unit of work for this point in your KS3 curriculum that could extend over a much longer period than the common six week unit and which could address all, or most, of the bullet points listed on page 4.

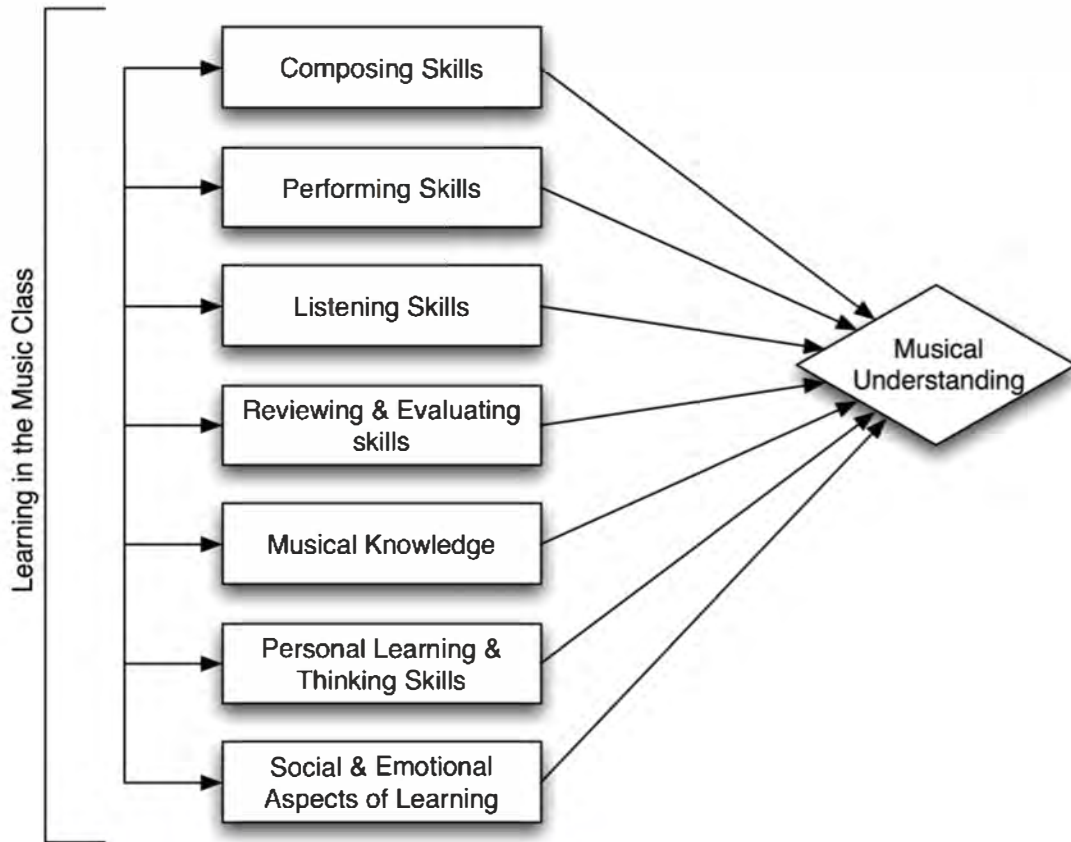
'The Whole Curriculum Approach' promotes the possibility that pupils' musical learning and progression can be greatly enhanced by devoting an extended period of time to exploring a particular type of music. 'The Whole Curriculum Approach' also promotes the possibility of pupils co-constructing a curriculum with their teachers in order to gain ownership of their musical learning and progression and we will revisit this in Module 3.

Some schools have mapped out a very different curriculum model which, like 'The Whole Curriculum Approach', extends pupils' musical learning and progression beyond the classroom.

CASE STUDY

School B is a co-educational wide ability school in a disadvantaged area. Over the last decade there has been a steady decline in pupils in the school being able to afford the lessons offered by visiting instrumental teachers. An innovative music curriculum model has been established over the last three years. Pupils have a one hour curriculum music lesson a week and additionally attend a whole class instrumental lesson for one hour once a fortnight. The instruments being offered are big band instruments in order to be able to develop ensembles within and beyond the curriculum. Pupils use the sets of instruments owned by the school for their whole class learning, which allows several classes to use the same instruments throughout the week, but some pupils are now buying their own instruments on a 'hire purchase' scheme. The whole class instrumental lessons are taught in mixed age groups across KS3 which allows pupils to progress at different speeds. The whole class instrumental lessons are taught by the class music teachers in the school. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 they can choose whether or not they continue to learn an instrument that they have already learnt at KS2 in MusicPlus whole class instrumental lessons.

It could be suggested that these different models of curriculum mapping each has a different focus. However, each of these effective curriculum models has the development of pupils' musical understanding at its heart. Musical understanding is complex and multi-faceted. Martin Fautley proposes a model of the differing modes of musical learning that contribute to the development of pupils' musical understanding in the music class:



TASK 4

Choose what you consider to be your most effective current KS3 unit of work.

Suggest which of Martin Fautley's modes of pupils' musical learning are developed within this unit and how:

Unit of work	How are these skills developed?
Composing skills	
Performing skills	
Listening skills	
Reviewing and evaluating skills	
Musical knowledge	
Personal Learning and Thinking Skills	
Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning	

(Not all modes of musical learning will necessarily be encompassed within each unit.)

If you broadly agree with Martin Fautley's designations of these different modes of musical understanding you will need to consider how to construct a KS3 curriculum that allows your pupils to develop all seven of these modes of learning throughout Key Stage 3, although you still have autonomy to decide what weighting to give to each mode of musical learning.

How you choose to construct your KS3 curriculum will clearly impact hugely on your pupils' progression and the assessment of your pupils' musical learning.

Bibliography

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Notes
