

The Ofsted logo, featuring the word 'Ofsted' in a white, handwritten-style font on a black rectangular background.

# An evaluation of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Musical Futures Project

---

**Better  
education  
and care**

The Musical Futures Project, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, is exploring different approaches to music provision in Key Stage 3. Ofsted was asked by the project to evaluate its work. This report summarises visits to a small sample of schools in Hertfordshire and Nottingham. The findings are presented in relation to the areas of focus agreed with the director of the project.

**Of particular interest to:**

Department for Education and Skills, local authorities, schools, teachers of music, parents

---

**Age group**  
Secondary

**Published**  
October 2006

**Reference no.**  
HMI 2682

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Document reference number: HMI 2682

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

## Contents

---

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Executive summary</b>                         | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Key findings</b>                              | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Recommendations</b>                           | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Pupils' progress in the music projects</b>    | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Pupils' motivation towards music</b>          | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Relationships and role models</b>             | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Personalising the learning experience</b>     | <b>6</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management of the projects</b> | <b>6</b> |
| <b>Notes</b>                                     | <b>7</b> |
| <b>Further information</b>                       | <b>7</b> |

---

## Executive summary

The Musical Futures Project is working with a small number of schools in three local authorities. The findings presented in this evaluation need to be seen within the context of this small sample of schools.

The two models being evaluated in the Musical Futures Project involve pupils in making music together and develop their musical skills, knowledge and understanding through performance-based work.

Schools warmly welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the project. Teachers were invigorated by the opportunity to think again about teaching music and enjoyed exploring different models of provision.

Each school was supported heavily during the beginning of the project: with experience, heads of department gained confidence, to the extent that they were able not only to take the work forward in their own school but also to support other schools. Several schools were extending the work across other classes.

The schools visited benefited from a high level of support from senior managers, who wanted music to be more inclusive. They recognised the positive impact good quality music provision could have on every child and on the school as a whole. One said, 'This work has been transformational; it is making the young people proud. They really want to do their best'.

Pupils' motivation for music increased significantly and they made good progress. However, lessons have been learned from the project about the need for better measures of progress. There is also a need to ensure high levels of challenge are sustained for all pupils.

## Key findings

- ❑ The project challenged many assumptions about musical learning and offered effective alternatives to established teaching approaches. Teachers were invigorated by the opportunity to think again about teaching music.
- ❑ While intensive guidance was needed at the beginning of the project, with experience teachers were able to take the work forward on their own and provide support to other schools.
- ❑ Pupils' motivation increased significantly, which was having a marked positive impact on the whole school. A particular feature was how inclusive the project was: pupils responded positively to being treated equally as musicians.
- ❑ Pupils made good progress in both models. However, on occasions, they did not know what they had achieved or what to do to improve their work further. The focus of the learning was sometimes unclear and lacked sufficient challenge. There was insufficient intervention when some pupils were unable to benefit fully from the learning experiences.
- ❑ The increased emphasis on personalised learning in some of the projects led to innovative planning and the development of new working relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and teachers.
- ❑ The project provided an effective way to build on the increased emphasis on instrumental learning in Key Stage 2.
- ❑ The support from senior managers, based on their desire to make music more inclusive, was a critical factor in the overall effectiveness of the project.
- ❑ There were signs of increased take-up of music at GCSE level, although the number of schools involved in this sample was very small.

## Recommendations

The project identified some effective alternative approaches to music teaching, but the number of schools involved so far was very small. The teaching aims and methods used in the project could present a significant challenge to many teachers and it is important that considerable care is given to the way these ideas are shared more widely.

### **We recommend that those responsible for any planned roll-out should:**

- help headteachers and senior staff understand the potential impact of this type of music provision on pupils and the school as a whole
- help teachers, music services and freelance musicians understand the aims, strategies and intended outcomes of these different approaches

- give clear guidance about the accommodation and resources required for the work to be effective
- provide resource materials that help teachers to plan, teach and monitor pupils' progress
- develop networks to provide ongoing support.

The project focused on different year groups in Key Stage 3. While the alternative approaches provided the means to build on the increased emphasis on instrumental learning in Key Stage 2, consideration has yet to be given to how these approaches could be used effectively across all stages of pupils' learning.

**We, therefore, recommend that those responsible for any planned roll-out should:**

- identify ways in which the different approaches could contribute effectively to progressive and coherent music provision from Key Stage 2 to beyond Key Stage 4
- take account of, and work closely with, other developments such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy for music.

While there were clear signs of increased motivation amongst the pupils involved, there was only limited evidence, as yet, of the continued impact of the project.

**We, therefore, recommend that those responsible for any planned roll-out should:**

- collect information about the extent to which pupils continue their active involvement in music beyond the project, for example through creating their own bands, continuing study and extending their skills through instrumental lessons.

## **Pupils' progress in the music projects**

1. Pupils were making good progress in both the Hertfordshire and Nottingham models. The characteristic of the models was the involvement of pupils in making music together and the development of musical skills, knowledge and understanding through performance-based work.

2. Pupils involved in the Hertfordshire model were developing very acute aural discrimination skills and using these to develop their performance skills. Some pupils were making excellent progress and demonstrated impressive musical understanding through group-led performance. While some pupils were frustrated when they could not achieve what they wanted, they sensibly sought help from peers or from the teacher. Those that did not get help accepted that they would be able to improve their work in the next lesson. Teachers in the

Hertfordshire model noted that pupils made quicker progress than their peers when they returned to the school's established units of work.

3. Pupils involved in the Nottingham model were developing an excellent range of instrumental skills and ICT skills. Some pupils demonstrated high levels of performance skills.

4. The models being developed provided an excellent means of building on the skills developed through the increased opportunity for pupils to learn musical instruments in Key Stage 2. However, there is insufficient information at present about sustaining progression beyond the programmed learning experiences, although emerging signs are positive: for example the increased take up of music at GCSE level (in one case from 22% to 33%) and the increased involvement in music-making out of school by other pupils.

5. Despite these positive features, pupils did not always know what they had achieved and what they needed to do to improve their work further. For example, although pupils' work was, increasingly, being recorded so that they could see and hear how they had improved, they were not clear about how their attainment related to the National Curriculum levels. This is important because pupils have this knowledge in other subjects and they needed to appreciate the progress they make in music in the same way. Pupils were also unsure about what they needed to do to improve the quality of their work. They knew what tasks they needed to complete but not what would have made a better or more appropriate response.

6. The work was not always sufficiently challenging. For example, the progress of pupils in a Nottingham school might have been greater with higher expectations of what the pupils could achieve. It was also not clear whether the self-determined challenge provided by the Hertfordshire model gave the push needed for all pupils to work beyond their comfort zone. Less time spent on setting up the instruments in the Hertfordshire model might have enabled pupils to make more progress, although pupils were benefiting from being given complete responsibility, which included managing their time and organising their own resources.

7. Pupils' progress in both models might have benefited from a clearer focus for the learning. For example, pupils involved in the Hertfordshire model might have benefited from knowing why they were copying particular musical examples so they could see how these developed specific skills used within the music industry. Pupils involved in the Nottingham model might have made even greater progress if the work had focused more closely on specific aspects of knowledge, skills and understanding.

8. Although there were many benefits in the project's approach, which requires pupils to take responsibility for their learning, situations arose when individual pupils did not know what to do to make further progress. This was usually because they had been absent from a previous session; they needed

song lyrics, but did not know how to construct them; or they could not overcome a technical difficulty. In these cases, intervention was needed, but it did not need to be from a teacher – peer support would have worked just as well.

9. In a small number of sessions, girls - and particularly vocalists - were on the margins of the activity and were quiet non-participants. While they observed their peer group very carefully, they were insufficiently clear or confident in finding a role.

## **Pupils' motivation towards music**

10. The project was increasing pupils' motivation significantly. Pupils really enjoyed the work: 'It's brilliant, it's not like a lesson; you have to work really hard but you do it because you want to'. The project was developing personal as well as musical outcomes, for example independent learning. Pupils were quick to identify areas of personal development as major outcomes from the work.

11. More broadly, the senior members of staff in schools believed that the project was having a marked impact on the school. 'Pupils now rush to the lessons and are more mature in the way they work together.'

12. The Hertfordshire model increased pupils' engagement in music learning significantly. The programme was skilfully enabling pupils to build on their success with familiar music to begin to accommodate other music and other learning experiences. Pupils recalled classical music as being the most difficult as 'it had so many layers' but all said that they had enjoyed learning about it in the same way as they had for popular music. The Nottingham model successfully engaged pupils through a broad range of musical experiences, including the well integrated use of effective ICT and music technologies.

13. Some of the pupils taking GCSE were very clear that they would not have taken it without the new experiences in Key Stage 3. They also recognised that not all work at GCSE level would be as much fun but that it needed to be included.

## **Relationships and role models**

14. All pupils responded positively to being treated equally as musicians and to working in different ways with teachers, other adults and visiting musicians.

15. The involvement of young male music specialists in Nottingham had a marked impact on the boys, who related enthusiastically to these role models. The head of department learned alongside the pupils and this developed more mature interactions between staff and pupils.

16. The emphasis on independent learning in the Hertfordshire model changed the role of the teacher to that of a professional adviser who monitored the work and provided support when needed, either from his observations, or from pupils' requests. Most pupils used their peers, seeking out other members of the class who had the skills they needed to help them make progress and complete their work.

## **Personalising the learning experience**

17. Both models enabled every pupil to develop musical skills, knowledge and understanding through well selected practical activities. There was considerable opportunity for pupils to personalise their learning in the Hertfordshire model where pupils worked freely within their own friendship groups. The impressive use of self-selected differentiated tasks, where pupils followed their own programmes, unconstrained by the need for the whole class to work within the same timeframe, was innovative. Pupils recorded the end point of each task when they completed the work.

18. While it is easy to see how the project is helping pupils personalise the learning experience, the notion of 'informalising' is not so clear. The emphasis on independent learning in the Hertfordshire model creates a more 'informal' learning environment where pupils direct their own learning, but the experiences are still held as part of the formal timetable with time boundaries. From the evidence of the survey, it would appear that, provided pupils are able to personalise the learning, it is immaterial whether this is through more 'formal' or 'informal' experiences.

## **Leadership and management of the projects**

19. The project is led nationally with energy, insight and professional commitment. Documentation and supporting materials were much appreciated by the teachers involved in new ways of working. They felt part of an innovative team which would move forward together for the benefit of the young people in their schools.

20. The support from senior managers cannot be underestimated. For the models developed in this project to work effectively, there has to be considerable support from the schools: they have to be able to take on trust that a very different approach will have significant benefits for the pupils and the school.

21. The teachers in the schools visited were already starting to consider how both approaches could be integrated into a whole programme from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Further thought could usefully be given to the development of longer programmes that would enable greater continuity of pupils' musical experiences.

22. Good support materials were being developed. The materials for the Hertfordshire schools provided well judged aural examples within well conceived stages of development. The materials for Nottingham provided a thorough and balanced programme of activities across the year.

## Notes

This summary report is based on visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors to a sample of five schools in Hertfordshire and Nottingham. These were two of the three pathfinder local authority music services involved in the project.

## Further information

Musical Futures is a special project of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, run in association with Youth Music and the Department for Education and Skills' Innovation Unit. This three-year action research project aims to devise new and imaginative ways of engaging young people, aged 11-19, in music activities.

Further information is available at:

[www.musicalfutures.org.uk/about.html](http://www.musicalfutures.org.uk/about.html)