

Music Curriculum Guidance for Schools

Ofsted Inspection Framework and Handbook

This document is intended for Headteachers, Senior Leadership Teams, Governors, and Music Leaders.

Ofsted Framework and Handbook for inspection

The Education Inspection Framework ([EIF](#)) and Ofsted School Inspection handbook (link [HERE](#)) are referenced below. We highlight areas which all schools should be mindful regarding ensuring that they provide a broad, balanced and relevant music education for all learners.

All quotes below are taken from the Ofsted School Inspection handbook, followed by suggested questions to ask yourself in reference to a quality music education provision. These are but a handful within the entire handbook.

1. Paragraph 69 – Risk Assessment: School workforce data

“In a risk assessment, we analyse: school workforce census data”

This will contain each school’s report on the number of hours of teaching provided in each school year for each subject. Schools that are not offering any music may be flagged up in this process.

Questions to consider:

- *Who is delivering your music curriculum lessons?*
 - *Are they appropriately qualified?*
 - *How are they supported in accessing appropriate music-specific professional development?*
- *How are these lessons structured?*
 - *Are music curriculum lessons timetabled to allow progressive development of learning skills and knowledge through weekly teaching?*
 - *If adopting a carousel approach, how is this developing skills and knowledge on a progressive basis?*
- *Would the TBMH School Music Policy (see p.7) and TBMH Self-evaluation tool (see p.9) help identify how music is being delivered, and areas to develop?*

2. Paragraph 57 – qualifying complaints, curriculum/subject breadth/balance

Blog Link [HERE](#)

“We may decide that we should inspect a school earlier than its next scheduled inspection if:

- *a subject or thematic survey inspection raises general concerns*
- *we have received a qualifying complaint about the school that, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to do so*
- *concerns are identified about the breadth and balance of the curriculum (including if the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met)”*

Ofsted inspectors will receive information about qualifying complaints. It is not clear if lack of access to a curriculum subject is considered to be a qualifying complaint. Other complaints may be noted by the team as well as those pertaining to safeguarding.

“In key stages 2 and 3, schools need to provide a broad, rich curriculum. Our research into the curriculum shows that these stages are particularly susceptible to a narrow curriculum, and that this has a disproportionately negative effect on disadvantaged pupils (including those with SEND).” (para 235)

Ofsted inspectors will look for evidence that the school has made provision to ensure that pupils still have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects, commensurate with the national curriculum, in Years 7 to 9.

Questions to consider:

- *Is the school curriculum genuinely broad and balanced to reflect the needs of all learners, including pupils with SEND (i.e. in accessing a range of arts subjects)? Is music on the school website? Is it clearly identified as part of the school offer?*
- *A key question here is about quality of the curriculum. It is breadth, but also depth. How assured are leaders that the curriculum is at least as ambitious as the NC. How do they know? How is it*

building from EYFS to the end of Yr 6 and feeding into Yr 7 for primary. Then building that ambition in KS3 to then look at opportunities / numbers at KS4.

- *Would the TBMH School Music Policy (see p.7) and TBMH Self-evaluation tool (see p.7-9) help identify how music is being delivered, and areas to develop?*

3. Deep Dives and School Music Provision

Deep Dives continue within Graded Inspections. However, with the changes in ungraded inspections announced in May 2024, there will no longer be subject-related deep dives for ungraded inspections (40% of school inspections). Music could be seen within a cluster of subjects and may be observed to monitor breadth of curriculum in ungraded inspections. This could include lesson visits, speaking to groups of pupils, speaking to groups of leaders or teachers potentially.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deep-dives-removed-from-ungraded-inspections>

Questions to consider:

- *If pressed by an inspector, are you able to talk about how your curriculum is sequenced to allow progressive development of learning skills and knowledge through weekly teaching? Is knowledge clearly identified and built over time. What does this look like? How is this shared with teachers? How is this checked? What about provision for SEND pupils? PPG support - what does that look like in music (e.g. access to enrichment / peri lessons etc).*
- *Can you provide pupil information for music/arts subjects to demonstrate impact?*
- *Do your Schemes of Work appropriately reflect learning needs of your pupils, to allow engaged learning to take place?*
- *Does your school assessment process allow flexibility for arts subjects to reflect assessment/progress in different ways?*

4. Paragraph 344 - Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development

“Before making the final judgements, inspectors will always consider the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school, and evaluate the extent to which the school’s education provision meets different pupils’ needs, including pupils with SEND.”

Attention to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the previous framework for inspection has often led to mention of good practice in relation to Music and the Arts in inspection reports.

Para 344 “Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the school’s provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a broad concept that can be seen across the school’s activities, but draws together many of the areas covered by the personal development judgement.”

The April 2024 framework specifically mentions the following: sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them (para 345) use of imagination and creativity in their learning (para 345)

willingness to reflect on their experiences (para 345)

use of a range of social skills in different contexts, for example working and socialising with other pupils, including those from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds (para 347) interest in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity. This is shown by their respect and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities (paragraph 348)

willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical, sporting and cultural opportunities (para 348)

Questions to consider:

- *Are pupils able to express themselves through arts/music both in the curriculum, and through programmed extra-curricular activities?*
- *Is there a weekly singing opportunity for all pupils (e.g. through collective worship/assembly)?*
- *Are your pupils allowed to leave curriculum lessons to attend instrumental/vocal lessons, or to attend school ensemble rehearsals?*
- *Are pupils taken to a range of external interactive live artistic activities/performances to broaden their exposure to a range of opportunities?*
- *Are your music teachers given opportunities to attend external CPD events that will result in a broad range of benefits for pupils? This would mean there is a strong uptake of musical opportunities provided by the school by disadvantaged pupils including those with SEND.*

5. Paragraph 230 – National Curriculum, British Values, Collective Worship

“All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the basic curriculum, which includes national curriculum, religious education and age-appropriate relationship and sex education. 232: Academies are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum that should be similar in breath and ambition.” Although not specified in this paragraph there is also a duty on schools regarding fundamental British values (para 334 & 335) and collective worship (para 146). Music is part of the national curriculum and should be taught to all pupils until the end of KS3.

Questions to consider:

- *Is there a weekly singing opportunity for all pupils (e.g. through collective worship/assembly)?*
- *How is your school proactively using music/arts subjects to promote fundamental British values, and to engage all learners?*
- *How is your school using music/arts subjects to engage parents/carers and the wider community?*

6. Paragraph 252 – Curriculum Approaches

“We will judge schools taking radically different approaches to the curriculum fairly. We recognise the importance of schools’ autonomy to choose their own curriculum approaches. If leaders are able to show that they have thought carefully, that they have built a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing, and that it has been implemented effectively, then inspectors will assess a school’s curriculum favourably.”

Some have expressed concern about this paragraph because they believe it might provide a means of explaining away the lack of a rigorous and comprehensive Arts curriculum. It is difficult to see however, how a curriculum could be said to have ‘appropriate coverage and content’ if a subject which is so unequivocally a requirement for cultural capital (para 229 and 249) were missing.

Questions to consider:

- *Do your Schemes of Work appropriately reflect learning needs of your pupils, to allow engaged learning to take place?*
- *Is your school able to talk about how your curriculum is sequenced to allow progressive development of learning skills and knowledge through weekly teaching?*
- *Does your school assessment process allow flexibility for arts subjects to reflect assessment/progress in different ways?*
- *Has your school music teacher(s) been supported in accessing peer development with music teachers in other schools to help support and quality assure a secure curriculum?*
- *Are your music teachers given opportunities to attend external CPD events that will result in a broad range of benefits for pupils?*

7. Paragraph 255 – Cultural Capital

“As part of making the judgement about the quality of education, inspectors will consider the extent to which schools are equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. Our understanding of ‘knowledge and cultural capital’ is derived from the following wording in the national curriculum:

‘It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.’

Questions to consider:

- *Are pupils able to positively articulate their experiences of music/arts subjects that they are exposed to through their school life?*
- *Are pupils actively encouraged to engage with music/arts subjects as part of healthy balanced approach to learning?*
- *Are pupils able to express themselves through arts/music both in the curriculum, and through programmed extra-curricular activities?*
- *Are pupils taken to a range of external interactive live artistic activities/performances to broaden their exposure to a range of opportunities?*
- *What is the offer for the most vulnerable? How is this a planned provision - is it accessible to all pupils?*

8. Paragraph 240 – Quality of Education and Evaluation

“Implementation:

244. In evaluating the quality of education, inspectors will form a top-level view of the curriculum through conversations with senior leaders and through data

338. This judgement focuses on the factors that research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to pupils’ personal development.

470. “GOOD” - Leaders adopt or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all pupils...the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. This is either the national curriculum or a curriculum of comparable breadth and ambition.

453. Pupils study the full curriculum; it is not narrowed.

453. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach. Leaders provide effective support for those teaching outside their main areas of expertise.

Inspection reports frequently mention the detrimental impact of teachers’ poor subject knowledge on the quality of certain subjects. This is more frequently mentioned in reports on primary schools. The text in this paragraph of the handbook is much clearer about expectations on schools. It also highlights the need to employ teachers with proper knowledge of the curriculum, carefully planned schemes or sufficient CPD in subject areas.

Questions to consider:

- *Who is delivering your music curriculum lessons?*
 - *Are they appropriately qualified?*
 - *How are they supported in accessing appropriate music-specific professional development?*
- *Are your music teachers given opportunities to attend external CPD events that will result in improved learning?*
- *Do your Schemes of Work appropriately reflect learning needs of your pupils, to allow engaged learning to take place?*
- *Does your school assessment process allow flexibility for arts subjects to reflect assessment/progress in different ways?*
- *Has your school music teacher been supported in accessing peer development with music teachers in other schools to help support and quality assure a secure curriculum?*
- *Where the curriculum is delivered by an external provider, does your school own the curriculum and the quality of its delivery?*

9. Personal development

Paragraph 150: “Inspectors may gather evidence from anywhere relevant (including RE lessons and assemblies) to evaluate pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, personal development and/or behaviour and attitudes.”

Paragraph 338: “...ensures that curriculum subjects such as citizenship, RE and other areas such as personal, social, health and economic education, and relationships and sex education, contribute to pupils’ personal development – including by considering the provision, quality and take-up of extra-curricular activities offered by the school”

Questions to consider:

- *Are pupils able to positively articulate their experiences of music/arts subjects that they are exposed to through their school life?*
- *What does the offer look like for all pupils including the most vulnerable - how is additional support / access provided?*
- *Are pupils actively encouraged to engage with music/arts subjects as part of healthy balanced approach to learning and their personal development?*
- *Are pupils able to express themselves through arts/music both in the curriculum, and through programmed extra-curricular activities?*
- *Are pupils taken to a range of external interactive live artistic activities/performances to broaden their exposure to a range of opportunities?*

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Appendix: Music programmes of study: key stages 1, 2, and 3, National curriculum in England**Purpose of study**

Music is a universal language that embodies one of the highest forms of creativity. A high-quality music education should engage and inspire pupils to develop a love of music and their talent as musicians, and so increase their self-confidence, creativity and sense of achievement. As pupils progress, they should develop a critical engagement with music, allowing them to compose, and to listen with discrimination to the best in the musical canon.

Aims

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
- learn to sing and to use their voices, to create and compose music on their own and with others, have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, use technology appropriately and have the opportunity to progress to the next level of musical excellence
- understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations.

Attainment targets

- By the end of key stage 1 and 2, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.
- By the end of key stage 3, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the programme of study.

Subject content**Key stage 1**

Pupils should be taught to:

- use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes
- play tuned and untuned instruments musically
- listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music
- experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music.

Key stage 2

Pupils should be taught to sing and play musically with increasing confidence and control. They should develop an understanding of musical composition, organising and manipulating ideas within musical structures and reproducing sounds from aural memory. Pupils should be taught to:

- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
- use and understand staff and other musical notations
- appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
- develop an understanding of the history of music.

Key stage 3

Pupils should build on their previous knowledge and skills through performing, composing and listening. They should develop their vocal and/or instrumental fluency, accuracy and expressiveness; and understand musical structures, styles, genres and traditions, identifying the expressive use of musical dimensions. They should listen with increasing discrimination and awareness to inform their practice as musicians. They should use technologies appropriately and appreciate and understand a wide range of musical contexts and styles.

Pupils should be taught to:

- play and perform confidently in a range of solo and ensemble contexts using their voice, playing instruments musically, fluently and with accuracy and expression
- improvise and compose; and extend and develop musical ideas by drawing on a range of musical structures, styles, genres and traditions
- use staff and other relevant notations appropriately and accurately in a range of musical styles, genres and traditions
- identify and use the inter-related dimensions of music expressively and with increasing sophistication, including use of tonalities, different types of scales and other musical devices
- listen with increasing discrimination to a wide range of music from great composers and musicians
- develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history.