

Music in the Curriculum

Katie Butler

Published September 28, 2015

To discuss this case study, please contact us via email customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk



Key Points

- A whole school term-long project with song at its heart
- Each year-group's song is the starting-point for the term's curriculum - culminating in performance

Purpose

What were your reasons for doing this development work?

To see how far music could penetrate into other parts of school, and how curriculum topics could be brought into the music room. We used a school-led approach to integrate music into the whole curriculum, provide CPD for staff and involve everyone fully in music-making. Every child, Reception to Year Six, was involved.

Who were the identified target learners?

Every child, but especially children who find language difficult. Singing can provide another route to expression and understanding.

What were your success criteria?

- That music would be integrated into the curriculum of every year group
- That class teachers would build on their confidence in teaching music, not only the perceived 'skill of music-making' but the sense of rhyme, rhythm, and tune.
- That children would engage with, enjoy and develop their song, reinforcing learning across the curriculum as well as their musical skills and appreciation

What did you do? (What success criteria did you use?)

The starting point was The Full English – a project of the English Folk Song and Dance Society, based at Cecil Sharpe House. We were a pilot primary school. They provide an online resource of folk songs, searchable by key word, region/area, etc, with words and music or words only.

Each year-group of two classes was taught a song that was then embedded into their curriculum through developing the lyrics to express their learning. The original songs were:

Reception – Skip to my Lou

Y1 – Herring's Head

Y2 – How many miles to London Town
Y3 – We are the Romans
Y4 – Fie Man Fie!
Y5 – Shenandoah
Y6 – Away Santianna! sea shanty

It was a whole term project, and involved all the staff teaching and non-teaching. I provided INSET for class teachers on relating curriculum themes to songs. Each year group had a song and tried to draw as many topic based questions from it. (eg Reception had *Scarborough Fair*, and thought of herb-growing, measuring, cooking, where is Scarborough?, how different to here? etc)

We had professional local musicians in for a day. They spent 45 minutes with each year group, singing the song to them, dancing and playing, and enthusing the children with their song. After two weeks each class had learnt their song in music lessons, learning the rhythm, beat and tune. Country dancing gave a kinaesthetic dimension to learning. The musicians then came back to lead the idea of changing the lyrics of the songs. They worked with groups of 5 pupils (6 groups in each class) which led to 12 new verses. Each song changed through the term as the children added more – the song was a constant in their thinking about their learning in class. New verses were composed, the ideas coming from the children, during their half-hour music lessons. They practised their songs and each year group made recordings of them during November.

Because it was a whole-school project, it became a talking point with everyone – ‘What is your song? How does it go?’ Children were using music terminology as a matter of course. Year One children visited Morrisons and bought a herring, which they later dissected, and also hunted down the various items that had been incorporated into their lyrics (eg herring’s belly – plasma telly). The Year Six children who developed a rap in their song became celebrities. Year Six developed their sea shanty song through the topic of Coastal Erosion – incorporating the specific vocabulary and language of the processes into their lyrics. Taking part in a raft-building venture, they used the rhythm of the sea shanty to coordinate their movements.

Everything came together at the end of term in a performance. We hired a big hall and each year group performed their song. It was good to have an end goal to work towards and parents valued the experience.

The following summer, the choir went to Birmingham Town Hall and performed at the EFSS Full English Festival.

(See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ff1lsZulxYs>)

What specific teaching resources did you use?

The Full English – English Folk Song and Dance Society.
<https://www.efdss.org/efdss-the-full-english>

Outcomes and Impact

What has been the impact on pupil learning and teaching?

Our success criterion, that class teachers would build on their confidence in teaching music, has happened – teachers come to borrow drums to use in their teaching, for example. In a school working as a music specialist, it has been effective for me to work with class teachers and their wider curriculum, rather than my music lessons being discrete sessions. I keep a very open dialogue with teachers about what is going on in class and how the children are doing.

We noticed the children retained their learning more. Their parents said their children kept singing the song at home, adding to it as they learnt more the weeks went by. Children would come to me and say, 'We've been singing the song, now we want to put this into the next verse.'

That music would be integrated into the curriculum of every year group

That children would engage with, enjoy and develop their song, reinforcing learning across the curriculum as well as their musical skills and appreciation

Evidence of impact on pupil learning and teaching/leadership