



## The value of music, and the relationship of curriculum music to other aspects of a full and rounded music education.

### Background context

The value of an effective music education has been recognised by all societies over the centuries, and at the highest level of philosophical and educational debate. Rather than crudely try to summarise the value of music education, this introduction will focus on **how curriculum music relates to other aspects of an effective music education**. Nevertheless, it might be useful to frame this thinking with a reminder of some of the quotes about music and arts education that have been published in various recent national documents, including the National Plan for Music Education, the Cultural Review, and the National Curriculum for 2014.

*Music has a power of forming the character and should therefore be introduced into the education of the young.* (Aristotle)

*Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, and life to everything... Without music, life would be an error.* (Plato)

[Both quoted in the [National Plan for Music Education](#)]

*The arts are the highest form of human achievement. Through art we not only make sense of ourselves and the world, we also make our lives enchanted. Art allows us to celebrate our common humanity and communicate across boundaries. Artistic endeavour marks us out from the rest of nature as creators and celebrators of beauty. That is why no education can be complete, indeed no programme of education can even begin, without making the arts and creativity central to a child's life.*

[Opening statement of the government's '[Cultural Education](#)', 2013]

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.

[Purpose of Study, [national curriculum music](#), 2014]

While these are noble sentiments, they do not give us a framework to make sure that our provision properly gives students the full range of appropriate experiences in what is a multi-faceted subject.

### The three-part of model of music education

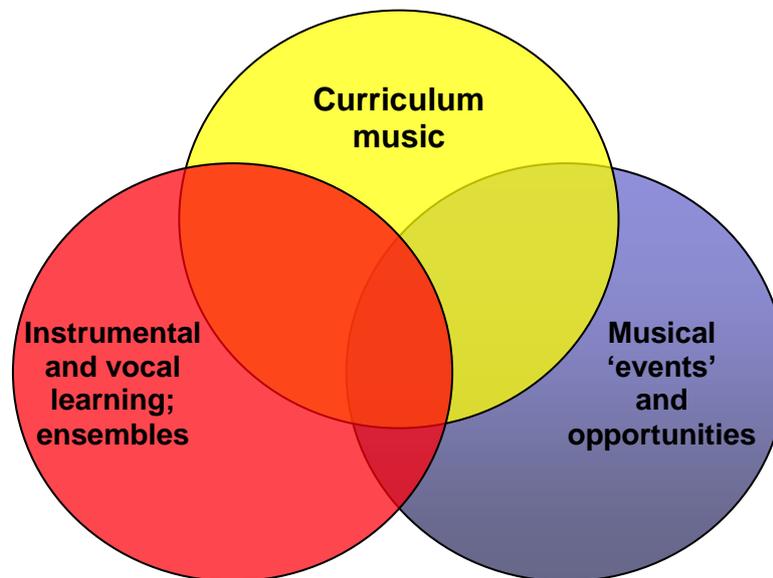
The National Plan for Music Education is helpful in this regard. In the introductory section, it makes it clear that there are three, interlocking parts in full and effective music provision. It states, for instance, that as a consequence of the Plan, more children will 'experience a combination of classroom teaching, instrumental and vocal tuition and input from professional musicians'.

In the 'Benchmarks' section, it expands on the component parts of this tri-partite model through the following statements (drawn from KS2, though other Key Stages are quite similar):

1. The school music curriculum will provide all pupils with opportunities for increasing their knowledge and understanding and developing their skills, confidence and expression in music through singing and playing simple melodic instruments, tuned and un-tuned percussion; exploring sounds; and active and passive listening.
2. Hubs provide opportunities for all pupils to learn instruments . . . as part of a whole-class ensemble in and/or out of school. Hubs ensure that enhanced experiences are available through ensembles including, for example, wind and brass or other instruments . . . while providing opportunities, for those who so wish, to continue with instruments learned in KS1.

3. Performance/sharing opportunities available within individual schools (ideally at least once per term) and jointly for clusters of schools for all pupils (ideally at least once per year). Inspirational input from professional musicians will be available at Key Stage 1 and/or Key Stage 2 for all pupils.

This breadth of provision, with each area having its own distinctive qualities and character, might be summarised by this model:



### **The significance of curriculum music**

While the very best music education enables students to engage with all three aspects, and with all three aspects interlocking and inter-related, it is clear that curriculum music has a special and unique place in music education. Ofsted has made it clear that the lower circles are about **'augmenting and supporting core music curriculum provision'** [see [Music in schools: sound partnerships](#), 2012]. We are also reminded by Ofsted that 'The National Plan for Music Education, and the Wider Opportunities initiative before it, set out clear expectations that partnership work in music education should enhance, augment and support core classroom provision, rather than replace it.'

We should therefore remember that curriculum music is at the very heart of effective music education. It is for all students, across all Key Stages. It provides all students with the tools, knowledge and understanding to be musical and enjoy music, whether they play an instrument or not. Its fundamental aim is musical learning (rather than musical performance), and through this it links directly to learning across the whole curriculum. More than any other aspect of music education, it explicitly requires creativity, and the development of analytical and evaluative skills. It also requires a breadth of musical and cultural learning, and through this links directly to wider learning on social and historical awareness.

We should therefore aim to be clear about curriculum music: it has a specific role and purpose within an overarching music education provision. It is not just about playing an instrument or singing, important though these activities are: it is about developing the innate capacity of every student to be musical, and to acquire a deep sense of musical understanding.