

Hampshire KS3 music benchmarks Supplementary notes

General principle

The benchmarks are not designed to prescribe a particular way of teaching, nor to dictate what should be taught in any given Year group. Instead, they are designed to help teachers recognise the milestones of musical learning that students should be reaching as they journey through KS3.

They therefore provide markers of achievement. Teachers can use them to check whether, as a consequence of planned learning, students are able to demonstrate that they have successfully reached these standards.

Essential areas of learning and progression markers

The areas of learning mapped out in the first four rows of page one relate explicitly to the framework's model of learning: musical understanding is the ultimate focus, supported by and through 'music making and thinking in context'.

It is essential to recognise that the first row (musical understanding) is the heart of musical progression: this is why it is set out in its own box. Students will inevitably have mixed profiles of achievement across various aspects of 'music making and thinking in context'; but it is their 'musical understanding' which determines their overall standard in music.

It is also important to recognise that musical understanding is not an 'average' of outcomes in other areas: it exists in its own right, and the musical skills and knowledge that define the processes of musical learning should be reflection of this overarching understanding if the planned learning is effective.

Note too that the 'music making and thinking' statements:

- relate back to the overarching understanding (eg 'compose music . . . making use of appropriate musical devices' critically indicates that it is the use of devices that is key, as this reflects the term devices in the overarching understanding for this stage of learning);
- are designed as summary statements, capturing evidence from a number of occasions when students have shown this type of musical learning (ie one example of a student 'making critical judgements' does not mean that they are secure in that aspect of musical learning: they need to show a number of instances before teachers can be sure that the learning is secure).

The columns are deliberately not set out in Year groups, but instead indicate benchmarks for broader progression. Some may like to consider the columns as being for Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 respectively. This would probably work in a department where teaching is strong and students make good progress; but it is not a fixed expectation.

Contexts are absolutely essential and should inform all other learning – they are not a 'bolt-on' to be covered quickly in the first lesson of a unit and then ignored while the students 'get on with the practical'. The range of contexts explored will be for individual schools to determine; but their impact on how students make and think about music should be all-pervading.

The references to styles, genres and traditions relate directly to the Secondary Strategy's guidance on breadth of musical learning. More details on this can be found [here](#); the bold type indicates that while a balance is appropriate within each milestone, the progression from open learning, on to guided learning, and finally to closed learning, is one that fits well with students' developing musical, social and personal maturity.

Composing as the bedrock of creativity and the musical learning process

Ideas for teaching students 'how to compose' are deliberately placed on page 1 of the benchmarks, to indicate their significance and importance. While all music departments regularly provide students with opportunities to compose, they are usually within the constraint of 'composing to learn about a type of music'. Students will therefore explore a style, genre or tradition, and as part of that process will be expected to compose a piece reflecting that music. It is rarer for students to be taught how to compose, as a unique skill in its own right – and this set of expectations, collectively describing the development of a 'composer's toolkit', tries to indicate the range of skills required.

The recent Sound and Music project '[Listen, Imagine, Compose](#)' was informed by strong input from several professional composers. One of the clear messages they gave was that there is no definitive and *linear* sequence of composing skills which need to be developed. Rather, there is a *patchwork* of composing skills that needs to be developed over time, and joined together by students in their own, individual way. This is why the skills and challenges are set across the key stage, rather than being set out in a linear form.

Details for different areas of learning

Page 2 of the benchmarks outline:

- What the musical understanding for each stage of the benchmark might typically look and sound like. For more details on this, please refer to the 'Progression in musical learning' document, and / or explore the Exemplification of standards materials (see the 'Exemplification of national standards in music' file in the 'Related national documentation' section).
- Music making and thinking expectations. These have again been set out for the whole of the key stage, rather than by Year group, so that teachers can design their own curriculum without feeling constrained that they must teach minor chords in Year 8, etc.

Please note that the music making and thinking statements build explicitly on the 'Pathways to musical independence' documentation established by the HMS Primary team, so that progression across Year 6 and into Year 7 is securely mapped.