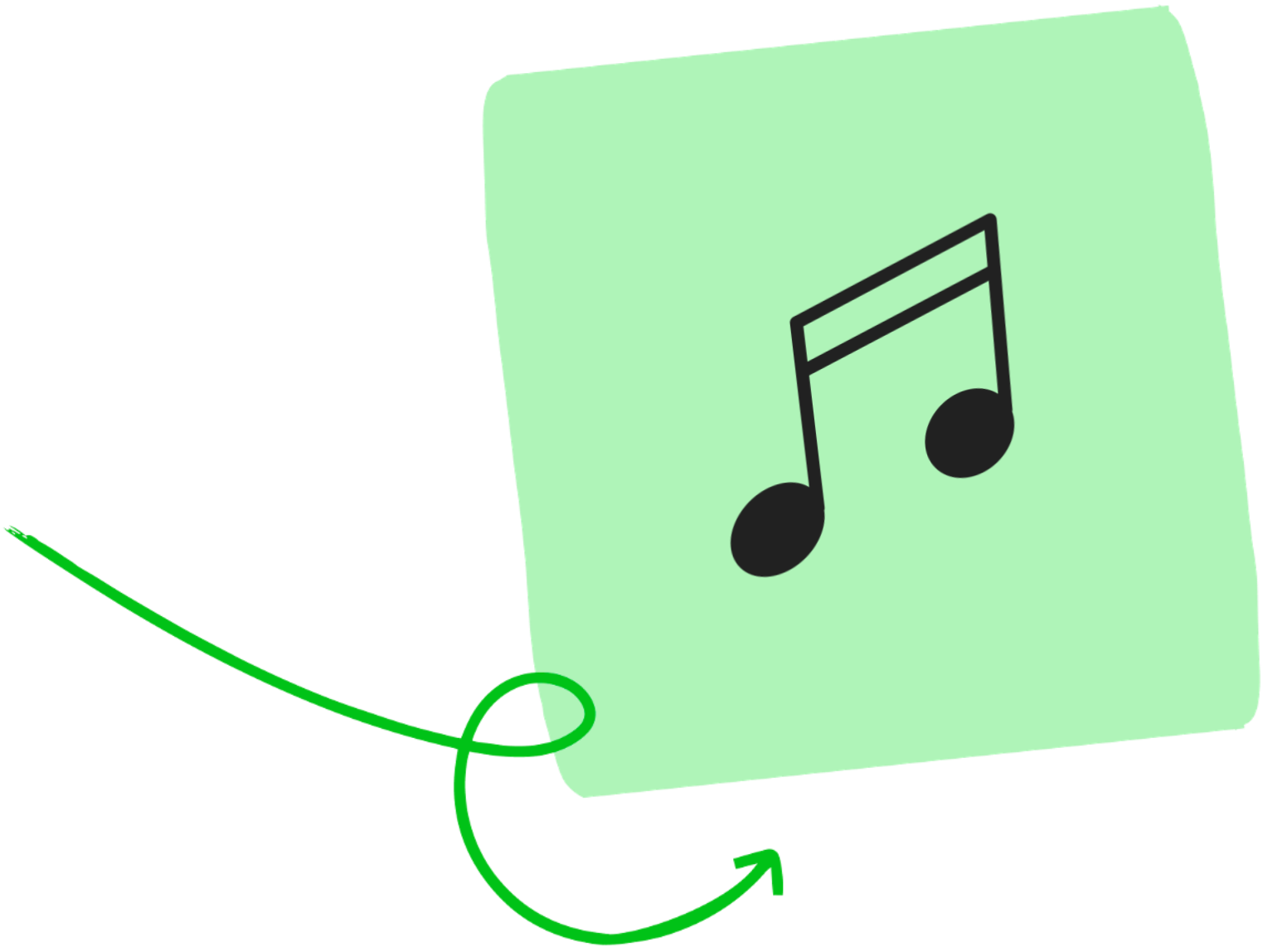
Oak National Academy

KS1 & KS2 Music curriculum plan and explainer



Contents

Our curriculum

Threads

Music curriculum explainer

Year 1 units

Year 2 units

Year 3 units

Year 4 units

Year 5 units

Year 6 units

Threads in music

Our curriculum

All of our curricula share the same set of principles that guide our curriculum design to ensure our curricula are high-quality. They are:

Knowledge and vocabulary rich

Lessons and units are knowledge and vocabulary rich. Pupils will build on what they already know to develop deep knowledge and apply this knowledge in the form of skills.

Sequenced and coherent

Careful sequencing and attention to building coherence via vertical threads so that pupils build on prior knowledge and make meaningful connections.

Flexible

Our flexible curriculum enables schools to tailor our content to their curriculum and context.

Accessible

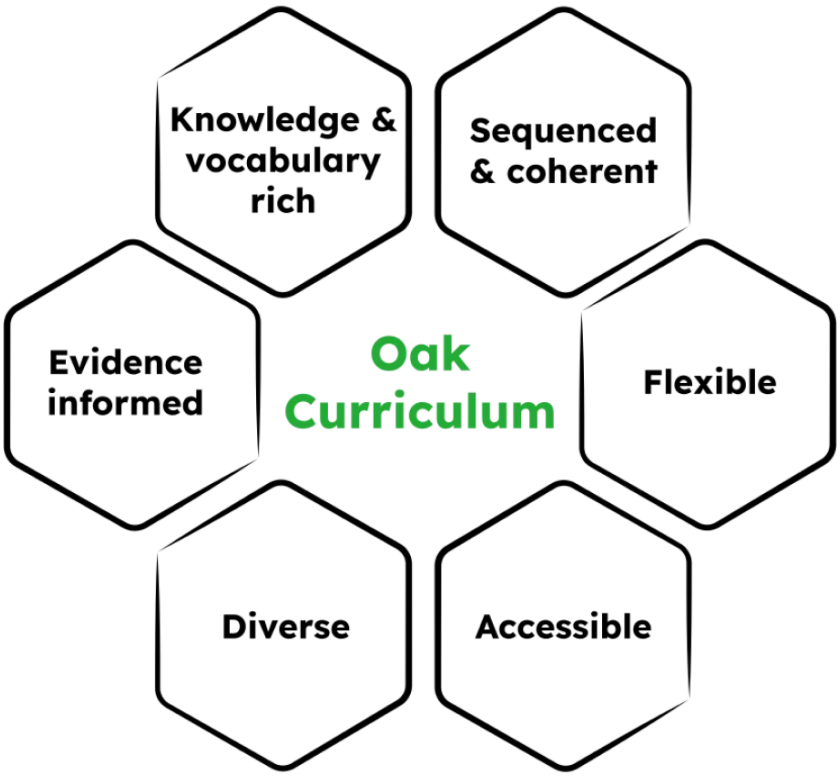
Creating an accessible curriculum that addresses the needs of all pupils and meets accessibility guidelines and requirements.

Diverse

We prioritise creating a diverse curriculum by committing to diversity in teaching and teachers, and the language, texts and media we use, so all pupils feel positively represented.

Evidence-informed

We take an evidence-informed approach applying the science of learning and subject-specific research.



Threads

What are threads?

We use threads to signpost groups of units that link to one another, that together build a common body of knowledge over time. We use the term thread, rather than vertical concepts, themes or big ideas, because it helps us bring to mind the visual concept of a thread weaving through the curriculum.

How to use threads

1. Familiarise yourself with all of the threads relating to the subject
2. Identify the unit you will be delivering
3. Review the threads associated with the unit
4. Audit where pupils have and will learn about these threads in your existing curriculum sequence.
5. Ensure you understand how the thread relating to your new unit has been framed in prior and future units
6. Review how the thread works within the unit you will be delivering
7. Teach and iterate your framing of the thread within the unit and across your curriculum sequence

Threads in subject

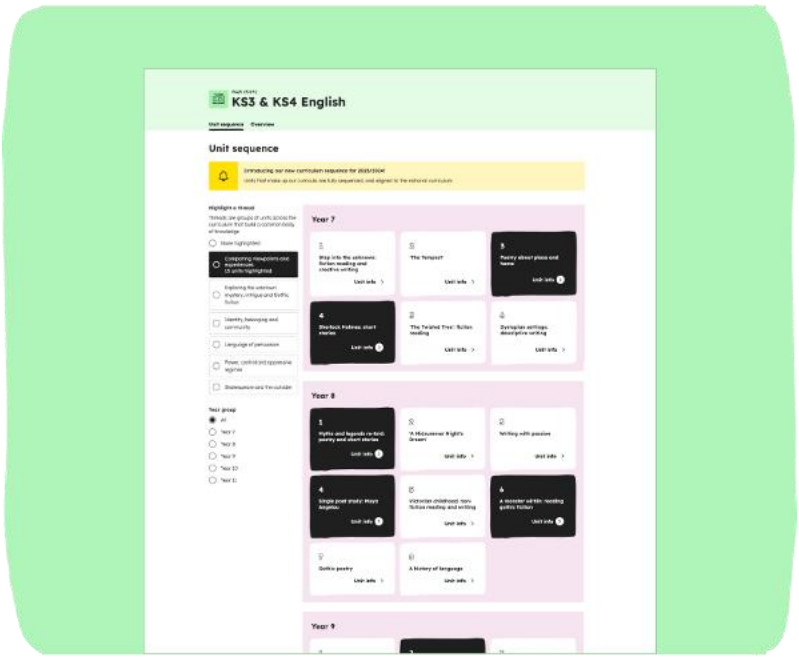
- Creating, composing and improvising
- Developing our singing voice
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

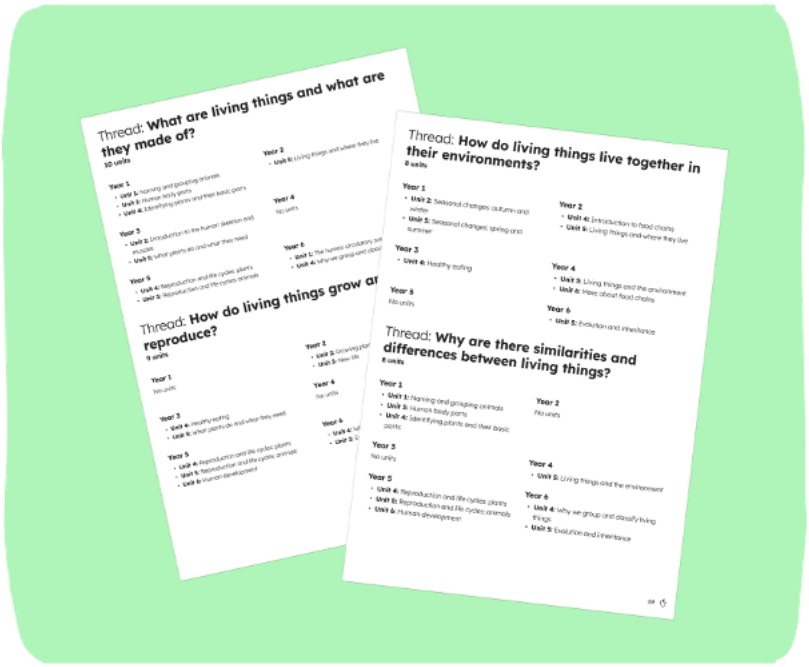
Tools for using threads

Online curriculum

Our interactive tool enables you to visualise how threads are sequenced across our curriculum plans.

Go to online curriculum





Threads in this document

The appendix displays the threads and their related units.

Go to threads appendix

Music curriculum explainer

Aims and purpose

What are the aims and purpose of our curriculum?

This curriculum develops pupils as musicians, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject as a platform for a lifelong connection with music. Through performance, composition and engaged listening, pupils develop their musicianship and experience a diverse range of musicians and styles, enabling them to embrace creativity and expression and build their understanding of and confidence in making music both individually and with others.

Oak curriculum principles

What overarching curriculum principles inform the design of our curriculum?

Knowledge and vocabulary rich

This principle recognises the important role that knowledge, and vocabulary as a particularly important type of knowledge, play in learning. Our curriculum acknowledges the complexities of musical understanding and that knowledge of music needs teaching through interaction with musical sound. As such, there is a focus on practical music-making and engaged listening tasks that develop aural skills. We identify and map vocabulary across the curriculum, both in terms of the introduction of new vocabulary and the necessary repetition of vocabulary that has gone before. New vocabulary, called keywords, are signalled in bold in our lesson materials to indicate their importance.

Sequenced and coherent

A careful and purposeful sequencing of our curriculum content underpins the design of our curriculum, ensuring that pupils are able to build on and make links with existing knowledge. At its simplest this means ensuring, for example, that pupils explore rhythm patterns by clapping before being introduced to musical notation. Attention is paid to vertical coherence via threads, which map the developments of concepts over time. For example, the thread ‘Creating, composing and improvising’ includes units that are focused on building up the composites in composing successfully. At key stage 1, pupils will explore simple starting points such as unpitched patterns and small note cells, through to using the pentachord and 5-note raags in key stage 2 and the blues scale and major and minor scales in key stage 3.

Evidence-informed

Our evidence-informed approach enables the rigorous application of research outcomes, science of learning and impactful best practice both in education in general and at a subject specific level. For example, the design of our resources reflects findings from Sweller’s cognitive load theory and Mayer’s principles of multimedia learning whilst our lesson design draws on Rosenshine’s principles of instruction. We also draw on findings from research organisations such as the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). At the subject level the curriculum focuses on the development of musical understanding through a focus on practical and creative

music making and exploration of sound. Creative tasks are supported by pupils achieving the required domain specific knowledge needed to make appropriate musical choices. Performance tasks allow for the time needed for pupils to develop both their technical ability and expressive qualities. Resources consider how to make varied abstract musical knowledge accessible to pupils as concrete information. The curriculum aims to develop pupils as musicians, taking into account the complexity of knowledge of music, how pupils learn in music and the importance of appropriate sequencing in encouraging pupils to make connections across styles and develop a meaningful understanding of music.

Flexible

Our flexible approach enables schools to use our resources in a way that fits their context and meets the varying needs of teachers and their pupils. Our curriculum can be used in its entirety or units can be selected to complement existing curricula. Our resources are adaptable so that, for example, teachers can easily change the styles or repertoire, can edit or add checks for understanding, or adapt practice tasks to better reflect the prior knowledge of their pupils or to use different instruments. At key stage 4 teachers and pupils can select pathways aligned to the most frequently used exam board specifications for GCSE Music: AQA, Eduqas, Edexcel or OCR..

Diverse

Our commitment to breadth and diversity in content, language, texts and media can be seen throughout the curriculum, for example in the group of diverse school age characters that feature in our resources. This is particularly noticeable through the choices of repertoire, genres and styles in the curriculum. Breadth and depth are balanced to ensure that pupils have a strong understanding of both the differences and similarities of music and musical heritage around the world, and the curriculum embraces and celebrates a wide variety of musicians.

We aim to teach music from different cultures and traditions authentically, ensuring that the characteristics of the music drive the learning and the history and context of the styles are acknowledged. For example, in our year 8 unit ‘Reggaeton: from Puerto Rico to global phenomenon’, pupils learn about the fusion and importance of the different styles of hip-hop, reggae, dancehall and other Caribbean styles in defining the sound and character of the music. Pupils learn about the dembow beat and its relationship to the tresillo and the effect it has on the music. They make connections to electronic dance music (EDM) and other related styles to place the music in context, learning about its impact on music across the world as it developed from Puerto Rico to a global phenomenon.

Accessible

Our curriculum is intentionally designed to facilitate high-quality teaching as a powerful lever to support pupils with SEND. Aligned with EEF guidance, our resources have a focus on clear explanations, modelling and frequent checks for understanding, with guided and independent practice. Lessons are chunked into learning cycles, practical tasks are scaffolded through use of success criteria and redundant images and information are minimised to manage cognitive load. We have removed reference to year groups in our resources so that they can be used when pupils are ready, regardless of their age. Our resources are purposefully created to be accessible, for example by using accessible fonts, colours with good contrast, and captions in our videos. Our music curriculum embraces singing, acknowledging the importance of the voice as our principal instrument and a learning tool for the development of musical literacy. At key stages 3-4, keyboard proficiency also becomes important as a tool for accessing the curriculum.

Oak subject principles

What subject specific principles inform the design of our curriculum?

Develops pupils as musicians through performing, engaged listening, composing and improvising

We focus on knowledge and skills that develop pupils' musicianship through practical music-making and engaged listening tasks. Content centres around developing knowledge of music (rather than about music) to ensure pupils develop a worthwhile understanding of the music they are learning about. Performance tasks consider expression, instrumental fluency, ensemble skills and accessibility. At key stage 2 the nuances of how to practise effectively and how to work as an ensemble are taught explicitly. Composition tasks promote development of creativity through a balance of artistic freedom and structured stylistic and theoretical guidance. Listening to, engaging with and understanding music is integral to the curriculum, as is developing an understanding of the musical elements.

Develops understanding of the elements of music and how these elements combine expressively through their application in sound

Understanding, recognising and the practical application of the musical elements in performance, composition and engaged listening is sequenced over time, and vocabulary and the application of the elements becomes more sophisticated as the units progress. For example, lessons introduce musical elements in turn, teaching how they can be altered to affect outcomes. This lays the foundation for more sophisticated application of the elements overtime.

Sequences learning over time which:

- **Builds musical knowledge, techniques and specialist language;**
- **Promotes the understanding of a diverse range of genres, traditions and styles;**
- **Develops pupils analytical skills in responding to different types of music.**

Units are carefully sequenced over time to ensure knowledge of music is developed incrementally and with the time needed to embed practical skills, nurture creative skills and secure understanding of key musical terminology. The curriculum develops aural skills and promotes understanding of the musical elements and how to use them. Pupils are given the tools to articulate their understanding of and respond to and appreciate a diverse range of music from different genres and cultures.

Promotes co-curricular learning for all pupils through signposting to opportunities beyond the classroom.

Practical music-making is at the heart of this curriculum. This is shown through a major focus on singing during key stages 1 and 2, the explicit teaching of practice and ensemble skills, and a range of approaches to composing creatively and joyful examples of making music together. It is through this active musical curriculum that we hope to inspire young musicians to continue their learning beyond the classroom, and set them up to take advantage of wider music opportunities in line with the National Plan for Music Education.

National curriculum

How does our curriculum reflect the aims & purpose of the national curriculum?

Our curriculum has been designed to reflect the aims and purpose of the national curriculum by supporting pupils to develop their knowledge of music and skills in music-making, instilling a love of music and musical learning as well as fostering creativity, expression and confidence.

The national curriculum has the aim that ‘pupils 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’. In our curriculum, early key stages develop the voice as the principal instrument, embracing the joy of singing together and the confidence this can develop. Concepts are taught and embedded through song. Pupils learn how and why they sing, and rehearsal and ensemble skills. Later key stages further develop musical skills and understanding, encouraging instrumental proficiency, confidence in composing and embedding musical literacy skills to allow pupils to engage with music beyond the curriculum.

The national curriculum has the aim the ‘pupils 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.’ Our curriculum focuses on performance, composition and engaged listening, through which pupils develop an understanding of the musical elements and how they can be used creatively and expressively. They will engage with and listen discriminatively to a diverse range of music from different times and places, ensuring they also meet the national curriculum aim that 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’.

Curriculum delivery

What teaching time does our curriculum require?

Our curricula for key stages 1-3 are designed for 36 weeks of curriculum time across the school year, leaving time for other activities both within and beyond the curriculum such as assessments or school trips. At key stage 4, year 10 also has 36 weeks of curriculum time, but year 11 has only 24 weeks (approximately 2 terms) to recognise that schools will not be teaching new content in the run up to the GCSE exams.

At key stages 1-3, our curriculum has been designed to teach one weekly lesson of approximately 1 hour to align with the recommendations of the National Plan for Music Education. At key stage 4 we have provided approximately 2 lessons per week. In order to maximise flexibility and choice across exam boards there are more lessons provided in the sequence also including non-examination assessment units to support flexible, independent study (but without providing any guidance or support for coursework elements).

We understand that exact time dedicated to music can vary greatly between schools due to differences in curriculum planning, resource allocation and school-specific priorities. Therefore we fully expect and encourage teachers to adapt our curriculum and resources to best suit their needs and available curriculum time.

Curriculum coherence

What are 'threads'?

We use threads to signpost groups of units that link to one another, that together build a common body of knowledge over time. We use the term thread, rather than vertical concepts, themes or big ideas, because it helps us to bring to mind the visual concept of a thread weaving through the curriculum.

Our threads in music are:

- Developing our singing voice
- Playing together in an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance
- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music
- Music over time and in different places

Threads in music refer to the recurring themes or concepts that are woven throughout the curriculum to provide continuity and depth. Most units explore the main practical musical elements of performance and composition, however some of the threads are designed to direct to a unit where skills, concepts or understanding are a particular focus. For example the thread ‘Music over time and in different places’, where pupils put the music they have learned into context by learning where music comes from, and learn about the social significance and what other styles were popular around the world at that time. Listening to, engaging with and understanding music is integral to all units and is therefore not assigned a thread.

Recommendations from subject specific reports

How does our curriculum address and enact recommendations from subject specific reports (e.g. EEF guidance reports & Ofsted Research Review)?

Our music curriculum implements several recommendations from the recent Ofsted subject report. The report highlights the time needed to develop musical knowledge and skills incrementally: our content is suitably challenging with opportunity to develop quality of ideas and responses. The use of learning cycles in our curriculum resources suitably chunks content within lessons. The report also highlights the importance of providing high-quality musical responses and ensuring that feedback develops both technical and expressive aspects of musicianship. In our curriculum, modelling is used to share a clear picture of practical, expressive and creative outcomes to support both student understanding and teacher assessment. For example the year 7 unit ‘Keyboard fundamentals’ the lesson teaches both the technical competencies required to play the melody of Ode to Joy as well as introducing expressive considerations like dynamics and phrasing. As recommended in the Model Music Curriculum, singing, listening, composing and performing are key elements of our curriculum.

Subject-specific needs

How does our curriculum deal with elements that arise from the specific needs of the subject?

What instruments feature in our curriculum?

Our primary curriculum harnesses our voice as the musical instrument whilst our key stage 3 curriculum uses the keyboard to encourage the development of instrumental proficiency. Where the keyboard is used, the curriculum can be adapted to use other instruments to match school and pupil needs.

Why does our curriculum focus predominantly on the keyboard at key stage 3?

We have made a choice to focus on the keyboard due to its accessibility and versatility. This choice will allow for development of instrumental proficiency in the curriculum time available and it can be used as a compositional tool and when using a digital audio workstation (DAW). Practical units can also be adapted to utilise other instruments should that be more suitable for schools and pupils.

What is our approach to teaching notation through the curriculum?

The curriculum uses a variety of notation types including graphic scores, rhythms grids and stave notation. The overall approach is to teach sound before symbol to ensure pupils experience musical learning before notating and repertoire has been carefully chosen to sequence the understanding of notation and promote musical literacy. Western notation is carefully scaffolded and is taught through performance and with relevant styles with a focus on its application.

Our curriculum partners

Bristol Beacon is a music charity and award-winning music education hub. For the past eight years, they have designed and curated the primary music curriculum for schools across Bristol. With a commitment to inclusive music education, the team supports specialist and non-specialist music educators, creating impactful musical opportunities for everyone.

The curriculum is produced in partnership with Cathedral Schools Trust, a multi-academy trust with a music specialism and a deep commitment to music and the creative arts.



Year 1 units

View interactive sequence online

1 **Start with singing: finding my singing voice**	**2** **Singing together: how singing makes me feel**	**3** **Compose and Create: exploring and performing rhythm patterns**
4 **Music and movement: feeling the pulse and changing the tempo**	**5** **Compose and create: high and low melodic responses**	**6** **Singing for performance: Changing tempo and dynamics in our songs**

1. Start with singing: finding my singing voice

Year 1

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice

Unit description

This unit helps pupils to discover the difference between their speaking, or chanting, and singing voice. Through a diverse range of echo and call and response songs pupils will begin to pitch match songs that use an age appropriate small range of notes.

Why this, why now?

This is the first unit of the primary music curriculum and pupils will have very different musical starting points. In this unit, attention is drawn to the difference in our voices when we speak and sing. The chosen songs and chants are short and can be learnt quickly. With a narrow range of notes, pupils can listen carefully and begin to pitch match songs more accurately. The echo and call and response structures studied will be built upon in later 'Compose and Create' units.

Lessons in unit

1. My singing voice
2. Singing echo songs
3. Singing call and response songs
4. Call and response singing games
5. Singing and identifying echo and call and response
6. Feeling the pulse and playing the beat

2. Singing together: how singing makes me feel

Year 1

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit demonstrates how singing quietly and loudly can change the feel of the song. Pupils listen to music with changing dynamics and think about how it makes them feel. Lullabies and upbeat songs are sung in contrast to each other to identify when calmer or livelier singing is most effective.

Why this, why now?

This unit continues to explore how our voices can be used in different ways. Pupils are introduced to the keyword 'dynamics' and, through singing strongly and softly, develop an understanding of how changing dynamics affects our performance and how the listener might feel. This is a building block for creating an authentic performance, which they continue to develop in later singing units. Pupils continue to develop their ability to start and stop together and follow instructions from a conductor or leader, including signs and movements to represent changing dynamics.

Lessons in unit

1. Strong and soft singing
2. How singing softly makes me feel
3. Singing stronger and feeling energised
4. Controlling dynamic changes within a song
5. Following a leader to change dynamics
6. Changing dynamics to perform with feeling

3. Compose and Create: exploring and performing rhythm patterns

Year 1

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble

Unit description

In this unit, pupils use minibeast names to rehearse and compose simple four beat rhythms by clapping, chanting and performing on untuned percussion. They use minibeast images to order and repeat these rhythms. Backing tracks are used to aid rehearsal and performance of their rhythmic compositions.

Why this, why now?

This unit introduces rhythm to the pupils. We introduce the keywords ‘composer’ and ‘composition’ and pupils participate in their first composition task: ordering and repeating rhythmic patterns using picture flash cards. By chanting and playing their compositions on untuned percussion, the pupils experience their first success in composition. This clear and simple scaffold for composition provides the foundations for future composition units. Pupils follow classroom routines for using percussion instruments safely and in a positive and purposeful way.

Lessons in unit

1. Singing, moving and playing to a steady pulse
2. Identifying the timbre of classroom percussion
3. Echoing simple rhythm patterns
4. Reading rhythms from pictures
5. Composing a rhythm sequence using pictures
6. Playing rhythm patterns to a steady pulse

4. Music and movement: feeling the pulse and changing the tempo

Year 1

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble

Unit description

This unit develops pupil's sense of pulse across a range of different tempi. Pupils internalise phrasing through music and movement games and understand when it is their turn to sing, move or play. They are challenged to notice and respond appropriately to tempo changes.

Why this, why now?

This unit continues to develop pupils' internal sense of pulse by introducing the concept of tempo and changing tempi. Pupils embed their knowledge and understanding of the call and response structure, using this to respond and play in time. Investing purposeful time to develop an understanding of pulse, beat, and tempo now will support future singing and instrumental ensemble units.

Lessons in unit

1. Feeling the pulse in songs and chants
2. Keeping a steady beat as we move, sing and play
3. Feeling the pulse in music with a fast or slow tempo
4. Choosing a fast or slow tempo for songs, chants and games
5. Responding to tempo changes within a song or piece of music
6. Using tempo to tell a musical story

5. Compose and create: high and low melodic responses

Year 1

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit uses a simple call and response song and a theming around fruit to inspire short compositions. Pupils learn two rhythms (Ta and Ta-di) and two notes (so and mi) and combine these to create fruit-inspired compositions which they perform as part of the call and response song.

Why this, why now?

This unit introduces the pupils to the concept of pitch (high and low, so and mi) through the call and response structure they know well. Building on earlier rhythmic composition work, pupils use their understanding of syllables and known fruit names to build four beat rhythms. Stick notation is introduced to represent the rhythms Ta and Ta-di which the pupils experienced in earlier compositions. This is a precursor for understanding staff notation. The two pitches (so, mi) are shown as higher and lower which is a building block for understanding how pitch can be notated.

Lessons in unit

1. Chants and songs with a call and response structure
2. Reading simple rhythms
3. Identifying high and low notes
4. Composing a four beat rhythm
5. Composing a simple high and low melody
6. Performing a simple melody as part of a call and response song

6. Singing for performance: Changing tempo and dynamics in our songs

Year 1

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit teaches performance skills as well as how to change the tempo and dynamics of our singing to reflect different moods. Pupils will learn to warm up their voices, sing songs with different feelings and moods, and prepare and deliver effective vocal performances.

Why this, why now?

This unit builds on the singing techniques developed so far, extending the range of the pieces and introducing more complex songs to sing from memory. Pupils will develop their expression, considering the mood of a song and reflecting this in their singing considering dynamics, tempo and timbre. Pupils are introduced to what a performance is, and the unit builds a foundation for how to rehearse to improve, a thread that will be significant in future singing and instrumental units.

Lessons in unit

1. Responding to different musical moods
2. Singing with character and feeling
3. Changing dynamics to change the mood
4. Changing the tempo to build excitement
5. Following a conductor to create a musical mood
6. Creating a convincing singing performance

Year 2 units

View interactive sequence online

1
Start with singing: learning through singing games

2
Singing together: how singing helps us work together

3
Compose and create: recording our musical ideas using a graphic score

4
Music and movement: using symbols to represent pitch

5
Compose and create: improvising with four notes

6
Singing for performance: adding a simple vocal accompaniment

7
Compose and create: soundscapes of the sea

1. Start with singing: learning through singing games

Year 2

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble

Unit description

In this unit, pupils develop their understanding of pitch, pulse, beat, and rhythm by participating in a variety of singing games. Through playful and interactive songs and movements, pupils will naturally develop their understanding of these musical elements.

Why this, why now?

This unit builds on pupils' understanding of high and low pitch as they learn to identify high and low sounds in the songs they sing. Their sense of pulse will continue to be practised and developed through movement activities and singing games and they will begin to distinguish between long and short durations of sound, recognising different rhythmic patterns and laying the foundation for more advanced musical skills.

Lessons in unit

1. Singing and moving together
2. Learning about beat
3. Learning about rhythm
4. Recognising pitch changes in our singing games
5. Singing with pitch accuracy
6. Bringing it together

2. Singing together: how singing helps us work together

Year 2

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Developing our singing voice
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music

Unit description

In this unit, pupils explore how songs are used for work, productivity, and collaboration. It focuses on working songs at sea. Pupils learn that call and response is a structure found in many sea-working songs and that a strong sense of pulse is essential for completing tasks together.

Why this, why now?

In this unit, pupils continue their journey of learning why and when we sing. Building on their understanding that songs can change our mood, pupils explore the role of songs in productivity and working together effectively. The call and response nature of many of the songs allows pupils to learn them quickly. Further challenge is provided with a wider range of notes and longer lyrical phrasing. Pupils can consolidate their understanding of pulse, further realising why this is important and how it can be of use. In future units, children will learn how songs are used in communities.

Lessons in unit

1. Singing to achieve a task
2. Singing to help us work in time together
3. Call and response singing in songs of the sea
4. Playing the pulse to keep in time
5. Rhythm and beat
6. Creating an ostinato to help us keep in time

3. Compose and create: recording our musical ideas using a graphic score

Year 2

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble

Unit description

In this unit, pupils consider how timbre and rhythm can be used to represent animals. Pupils listen to Wiseman's Carnival of the Endangered Animals and compare music that represents various animals. They create short pieces, recording these on graphic scores to represent a chosen animal.

Why this, why now?

This unit utilises known rhythmic patterns to structure pupils' composition work. Pupils' understanding of timbre is deepened and they begin to understand that timbre is just one of the musical elements that can help to build a picture and tell a story. Graphic score is introduced as another method for recording musical ideas, and pupils' combine this with known stick notation icons to read and play musical ideas. Ternary form (ABA structure) is introduced here and returned to later in the year.

Lessons in unit

1. Describing the timbre of instruments
2. Choosing appropriate percussive timbres to represent an animal
3. Reading graphic scores
4. Combining rhythm and timbre
5. Graphic score notation
6. Ensemble performance from a graphic score

4. Music and movement: using symbols to represent pitch

Year 2

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Notating and sharing music

Unit description

This unit uses singing games to introduce pupils to pitch on a three-line simplified stave. Pupils identify the shape of the melodies and, through guided instruction, take dictation of these on the simplified stave, focusing on pitch and syllables but not rhythm.

Why this, why now?

This unit progresses pupils' understanding from pitch as ‘high and low’ (so and mi) to include ‘higher’ (la) and ‘lower’ (do). The singing games sit comfortably in the pupils' range, and after singing many songs using this toneset, they are ready to explore visualising the shaping of these songs. By exploring the notation of the toneset do, mi, so, la, the children are being prepared for improvising, composing and performing on tuned percussion in the following 'Compose and Create' unit.

Lessons in unit

1. High and low notes
2. Notating high and low notes on a simplified musical stave
3. Placing our new higher note on a simplified musical stave
4. Notating three notes on a simplified musical stave
5. Placing our new lower note on a simplified musical stave
6. Notating four notes on a simplified musical stave

5. Compose and create: improvising with four notes

Year 2

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Developing our singing voice
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit, pupils use a baking theme to replicate and improvise four note melodies. Pupils read and reorder known rhythm patterns and use these to improvise on pitched percussion within their four note toneset. A final performance in ABA structure is created.

Why this, why now?

This unit builds on previous work on pitch and notation. Pupils embed their understanding of do, mi, so, la, using these tones to both play a known melody and improvise on pitched percussion. Pupils continue to study stick notation, using this to support their improvisations. Through the contrast of written notation and improvisation, pupils develop their understanding of the difference between composition and improvisation.

Lessons in unit

1. Performing four note tonesets on pitched percussion
2. Call and response improvisation within a four note toneset
3. Learning a four note melody on pitched percussion
4. Reading and playing using simplified notation
5. Playing within an ABA musical structure
6. Performing and improvising within an ABA structure

6. Singing for performance: adding a simple vocal accompaniment

Year 2

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit pupils add simple vocal accompaniments to songs. They learn chanted and sung ostinati, adding these to songs they have learnt. Pupils practise in order to improve and understand the importance of maintaining a steady pulse.

Why this, why now?

In this unit, pupils continue to develop their sense of pulse, ability to match pitches and sing with some control of dynamics when performing age-appropriate songs. Further challenge is added through the introduction of a simple vocal accompaniment, including simple chanted and vocal ostinati. Pupils are introduced to the concept of texture and part-singing without the difficulty of singing complex parts. In later units, pupils will sing with more complex melodic second parts and add multiple layers in their instrumental playing.

Lessons in unit

1. Developing pulse and moving in time to the music
2. Adding body percussion to a song
3. Building a thicker texture with a chanted ostinato
4. Building a thicker texture with a sung ostinato
5. Developing part singing
6. Performing songs with simple accompaniments

7. Compose and create: soundscapes of the sea

Year 2

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this optional unit, water and classical music examples inspire soundscape compositions as we journey from beach, to open water, rivers and stormy seas. Pupils use pitched and unpitched percussion, vocalisations and body percussion to create their soundscapes, recording these using graphic scores.

Why this, why now?

Pupils are given the opportunity to develop their creative music skills further, composing and improvising in a way that offers plenty of freedom of expression. Pupils can use their composition skills developed in other key stage one units alongside their working knowledge of the musical elements to create soundscapes as part of an ensemble with greater freedom than before. Due to the freedom of composition suggested in the soundscapes, this unit can be placed at any point across the key stage, with the compositional, performance and ensemble outcomes adjusted accordingly.

Lessons in unit

1. Seaside soundscapes
2. Ocean soundscapes
3. River soundscapes
4. Stormy seas soundscapes

Year 3 units

View interactive sequence online

1 **Start with playing: adding percussive layers to build texture in our songs**	**2** **Singing together: how songs are used in communities**	**3** **Compose and Create: notating and performing using rhythm grids**
4 **Playing together: building texture with melody, drone and ostinato**	**5** **Compose and Create: major pentatonic melodies**	**6** **Singing for performance: holding a second part in rounds and partner songs**

1. Start with playing: adding percussive layers to build texture in our songs

Year 3

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit, pupils explore texture by adding untuned percussion layers to songs and chants. Using repeated rhythms, pupils will develop their sense of pulse and accuracy of rhythm. They will identify rhythmic ostinati in listening examples and begin to describe texture.

Why this, why now?

In this unit, we continue to see the importance of developing and internalising a secure sense of pulse for successful music-making. Pupils combine their knowledge of pulse, beat, and rhythm to create rhythmic layers under songs. We build on pupils' previous experience of singing with a simple rhythmic ostinato as the second part, moving these additional layers onto untuned percussion. Pupils rehearse each layer of the piece separately, developing their understanding of how to practise and rehearse effectively for future ensemble units.

Lessons in unit

1. Chanting and singing in time
2. Adding simple instrumental parts to songs and chants
3. Building texture with a rhythmic ostinato
4. Playing and singing simultaneously
5. Rehearsing layers of unpitched accompaniments under a chant
6. Rehearsing layers of unpitched accompaniments under a song

2. Singing together: how songs are used in communities

Year 3

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

Pupils learn that singing often draws communities together to tell stories, comment on history, share happy or sad times and to worship. Through rehearsing and performing a range of songs, pupils explore how different songs capture different emotions.

Why this, why now?

This unit broadens the pupils' vocal repertoire by exploring different ways people sing together. This develops the pupils' understanding of how and why we sing, moving on from how singing makes us feel and how singing can help us achieve a task. Through this unit, we continue to teach the importance of warming up the voice and body, and we introduce songs and games that will develop the pupils' vocal technique, focusing on a wider vocal range, clearer articulation and more authentic expression.

Lessons in unit

1. Singing together to build a community
2. Songs that bring people together
3. Singing together bonds us together
4. Singing together to celebrate
5. Singing together as a school community
6. Performing together as a school community

3. Compose and Create: notating and performing using rhythm grids

Year 3

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit explores composing rhythmic patterns through the use of rhythm grids. Pupils are inspired by exciting percussive performances and work in groups to create and perform their own challenging rhythmic patterns.

Why this, why now?

This unit continues our exploration of different types of notation, moving from the use of images and manipulatives through graphic scores, the introduction of pitch on the musical stave, and now rhythm grids to represent percussive rhythms. In this composition unit, pupils will build on their ability to play rhythmic ostinati and be part of an ensemble. Rehearsing in groups will improve their ability to keep in time with each other. Practising and playing in this way will develop their musical skills in preparation for their next Playing Together unit.

Lessons in unit

1. Rhythm grids as a form of notation
2. Rhythm and beat on rhythm grids
3. Rhythm grids and the subdivision of the beat
4. Decoding more complex rhythm grids
5. Reading stick notation on rhythm grids
6. Composing and notating on rhythm grids

4. Playing together: building texture with melody, drone and ostinato

Year 3

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit, we build the texture in our songs by adding a drone and melodic ostinato. Our focus is on how we rehearse and play together as an ensemble. The songs and instrumental accompaniments are taught through listening, practising and memorising.

Why this, why now?

This unit develops pupils' ability to feel the pulse while playing and singing. Pupils have experience of accompanying a song using untuned percussion. This is developed, with pupils accompanying using simple repeated melodic phrases while singing at the same time. The toneset for our accompaniments consolidates earlier learning of do, mi, so, and la. Throughout this unit, pupils continue to develop their understanding of how to practise and rehearse effectively.

Lessons in unit

1. Identifying different layers of accompaniment within a piece of music
2. Drone accompaniments to songs
3. Layering simple accompaniments to create a thicker texture
4. Melodic ostinato accompaniments to songs
5. Playing a melodic ostinato and singing simultaneously
6. Rehearsing songs with layers of instrumental accompaniments

5. Compose and Create: major pentatonic melodies

Year 3

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music

Unit description

Pupils discover the power and versatility of the pentatonic scale. Pupils learn that pentatonic music is found around the world and sing pentatonic songs from every continent. A three-line simplified stave is used for notation. Pupils play and compose pentatonic melodies on tuned percussion.

Why this, why now?

This unit expands the studied toneset with the introduction of ‘re’ to ‘do, re, mi, so, la’ - one example of a pentatonic scale. The pupils, comfortable with finding do, mi, so, la on tuned percussion and on the simplified stave are able to add ‘re’ into their repertoire and compose and perform using this new pitch. Later in 'Compose and Create' units, pupils will expand their toneset further to the major pentachord (first five notes in the major scale) followed by the minor pentachord (first five notes in the minor scale).

Lessons in unit

1. Singing major pentatonic folk songs
2. Singing and identifying the major pentatonic scale
3. Playing a dotted rhythm major pentatonic melody
4. Notating a dotted rhythm major pentatonic melody
5. Improvising a major pentatonic melody
6. Composing a major pentatonic melody

6. Singing for performance: holding a second part in rounds and partner songs

Year 3

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit brings together a diverse range of songs chosen to enable successful singing in two simple parts. Through listening and singing, pupils learn how canon, specifically rounds and partner songs, are used to build layers of sound in songs.

Why this, why now?

Pupils have previously learnt how to add a second layer to their music through rhythmic ostinato. Now, they are introduced to a melodic second line through the form of rounds and partner songs. Using a mixture of familiar and new songs, pupils gain another understanding of how texture can be built in a song. Pupils are embedding the skill of feeling the pulse by hearing how their vocal line fits into the structure of a round or partner song. Understanding how lines of a song can be layered provides an initial experience of singing in harmony.

Lessons in unit

1. Rounds as a singing structure
2. Partner songs as a singing structure
3. Following a conductor when singing rounds
4. Singing partner songs
5. Rehearsing rounds and partner songs
6. Performing rounds and partner songs

Year 4 units

View interactive sequence online

1
Start with playing: adding layers to major and minor songs

2
Singing together: how stories are shared through song

3
Compose and Create: improvising within Hindustani classical music

4
Playing together: effective rehearsing as part of an ensemble

5
Compose and Create: composing a major melody on a stave

6
Singing for performance: discovering different ways to sing in harmony

7
Compose and create: cosmic programme music

1. Start with playing: adding layers to major and minor songs

Year 4

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble

Unit description

This unit explores the different sounds and feelings associated with major and minor tonality explicitly. The pupils sing a variety of songs, some in a major key and some in a minor key. They use pitched percussion instruments to add different accompaniments to these.

Why this, why now?

In this unit, we explicitly name songs and listening examples that use the major or minor key. From their experience of hearing and singing previous major, minor and pentatonic music, pupils are able to identify the tonality. We build on prior skills of playing drone and ostinato alongside a song with more complex repeated patterns. Pupils will learn to move their ostinato from the major key to the minor key. The first five notes of the major and minor keys will be consolidated in later 'Compose and Create' units.

Lessons in unit

1. Major and minor tonality folk songs
2. Folk songs and the major pentachord
3. Folk songs and the minor pentachord
4. Building texture with a melodic ostinato
5. Building texture with a minor accompaniment
6. Layering accompaniments under major and minor folk songs

2. Singing together: how stories are shared through song

Year 4

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit develops the skill of storytelling through song. Pupils listen to a range of song styles that have a clear narrative or reveal how a character is feeling. Pupils explore how dynamics, tempo and pitch contribute to how meaning is conveyed using songs from theatre and opera.

Why this, why now?

By now, pupils have sung songs that help them to express themselves, that have been used as working songs and that bring communities together. We continue to develop our questioning of why we sing by introducing singing to tell a story. This unit allows pupils to make connections between the musical elements of dynamics, pitch and tempo and the emotion or story the song is conveying. This prepares pupils for later units in which we understand the power of song for unity and for protest. Singing in unison here is a stepping stone to combining storytelling and part singing together.

Lessons in unit

1. Storytelling through song
2. How songs tell stories in theatre
3. Using opera to tell a story
4. Building and staging a song to tell a story
5. Ensemble storytelling through song
6. Sharing stories through performance

3. Compose and Create: improvising within Hindustani classical music

Year 4

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit explores the three main components of Hindustani classical music. Pupils hear rhythmic patterns played on the tabla drums and learn how to recite a taal using the spoken mnemonic syllables (bols). They create texture by adding an improvised raag using five notes, and finally add a drone.

Why this, why now?

Pupils build on their ability to add layers of sound and their understanding of texture is deepened. The effective use of drones is revisited which supports their growing understanding of harmony. This unit incorporates more independent group work which offers an increased level of autonomy. Pupils improvise on tuned percussion using an expanding toneset. By using improvisation, pupils learn that music isn't always fixed or final. This freedom supports creative composition in later units. Pupils deepen their understanding that music can be notated in different ways.

Lessons in unit

1. Playing taals and speaking bols
2. Singing and playing raags
3. Singing and playing a melody in a five note raag
4. Improvising using a five note raag
5. Combining taals and raags
6. Bringing together taal, raag, and drone

4. Playing together: effective rehearsing as part of an ensemble

Year 4

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit, we explore effective ensemble rehearsal. Professional ensembles share their secrets for success when practising alone, in small groups and as a wider ensemble. Effective rehearsal strategies are then explicitly taught to the pupils and developed in our ensemble piece.

Why this, why now?

By this unit, pupils can perform successfully as a group, adding layers to an ensemble piece. They have explored how varying dynamics or tempo can enhance a performance and can read simple notation. In this unit, the focus is on how successful rehearsing can improve performance. By focusing on this, pupils can begin to identify what aspects of their performance they can improve, such as correcting rhythm, accuracy of intonation or maintaining a steady pulse as a part of an ensemble. This deepened study of rehearsal techniques will guide the pupils' practice in later units.

Lessons in unit

1. Practising effectively
2. Practising a rhythmic accompaniment
3. Practising a melodic accompaniment
4. Playing together as an ensemble
5. Rehearsing as an ensemble
6. Performing and reflecting on the rehearsal journey

5. Compose and Create: composing a major melody on a stave

Year 4

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music

Unit description

In this unit, pupils explore the tonality of a major melody through listening to a range of music. Pupils learn the major pentachord, the first five notes of the scale, on tuned percussion. They use this new scale to compose and notate short melodies.

Why this, why now?

By this unit pupils have developed their ability to read, sing, play, notate and compose melodies that use the pentatonic scale (do, re, mi, so, la). Now we introduce the note 'fa' in order to play and compose using the major pentachord (do, re, mi, fa, so). Previously pupils have sung and added melodic accompaniment to songs in the major key. In this unit, pupils understand the notes used for the melody. They deepen their ability to read and notate using simplified staff notation. In future units, pupils will sing, play and compose music using the minor pentachord and minor pentatonic.

Lessons in unit

1. Major tonalities
2. Major melodies and the major pentachord
3. Reading the five note major pentachord scale
4. Reading and playing major melodies
5. Composing and notating a major melody
6. Reading and performing major melodies

6. Singing for performance: discovering different ways to sing in harmony

Year 4

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Notating and sharing music
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit celebrates the many ways of singing in harmony, utilising rounds, partner songs, melodic and rhythmic ostinato and counter melody to create layers of sound. Through short examples, pupils discover how pitches can be combined to make pleasing harmonies.

Why this, why now?

By this unit, pupils have had plentiful opportunities to sing in parts, beginning with echo and call and response and moving on to rhythmic ostinato, partner songs, and rounds. In this unit, we add melodic ostinato and countermelody to their repertoire of accompaniment types. They are also skilled at holding an instrumental accompaniment whilst singing. By this point, the pupils are ready to hold various parts in a song and are able to begin some early analysis of how different pitches fit together.

Lessons in unit

1. Preparing for part work: staying in time and following melodic shape
2. Preparing for part work: practising songs in rhythm names and solfège
3. Partner songs and rounds
4. Rhythmic ostinato and practising rounds
5. Perform a melodic ostinato
6. Harmony writing and singing in 2 or 3 parts

7. Compose and create: cosmic programme music

Year 4

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble

Unit description

In this optional unit, pupils are introduced to the term, programme music. They study the programme music symphonic work, Deep Field, by Eric Whitacre and use this as inspiration for composing, considering structuring around the golden ratio and the use of small music ideas called golden bricks.

Why this, why now?

Pupils are given the opportunity to develop their creative music skills further, composing and improvising in a way that offers plenty of freedom of expression. Pupils can use their composition skills developed in other lower key stage two units alongside their working knowledge of the musical elements to create programme music as part of an ensemble with greater freedom than before. Due to the freedom of composition suggested in the lessons, this unit can be placed at any point across the key stage, with the compositional, performance and ensemble outcomes adjusted accordingly.

Lessons in unit

1. Introducing programme music
2. Composing programme music with a 'golden brick'
3. The golden ratio and music
4. Inspired by Earth Choir

Year 5 units

View interactive sequence online

1 **Sing, play, perform: adding tuned accompaniment to part-singing**	**2** **Singing together: how songs unite us**	**3** **Compose and rehearse: creating and combining minimalist cells**
4 **Playing together: discovering different vocal timbres**	**5** **Compose and Create: composing a minor melody on a stave**	**6** **Singing for performance: syncopation in songs**

1. Sing, play, perform: adding tuned accompaniment to part-singing

Year 5

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit focuses on adding vocal and instrumental layers to songs. Pupils rehearse contrasting songs in parts and become confident holding the pitch and pulse of a line before layering this into four and five part textures with added tuned percussion accompaniments.

Why this, why now?

By this unit, pupils have sung a range of songs with second parts and are able to hold a melodic ostinato and a second melodic line. In this unit we develop this further by singing songs in two parts whilst also performing simple accompaniments on tuned percussion. Pupils will apply previously taught effective rehearsal strategies when practising and performing songs in this unit. This will support pupils' future ensemble work in which they will begin to layer repetitive cells and contrasting and syncopated rhythms.

Lessons in unit

1. Part singing: rounds and partner songs
2. Two-part singing: rounds and partner songs
3. Singing and playing simultaneously: three note melodies
4. Part singing: adding a rhythmic ostinato accompaniment
5. Layering part-singing: adding a three note melody
6. Rehearsing and evaluating an ensemble piece with a thick texture

2. Singing together: how songs unite us

Year 5

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Developing our singing voice
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit investigates the power of music to unite people. Pupils explore how song is used in sacred spaces, sports arenas and live concerts. Pupils study songs with unity as their common theme and use the lyrics to guide an effective, emotive performance.

Why this, why now?

Prior to this unit, pupils have studied songs sung for a range of purposes, including songs that evoke a feeling, work songs, community songs, and songs that tell a story. Pupils now start to explore the concept of being united through songs. Building on their knowledge of songs changing over time, there is an increased focus on conveying meaning and mood through song, which is explored further in later units.

Lessons in unit

1. Singing in unison
2. Three pitches - do, mi, so
3. Adding harmony and balancing sound
4. Vocal improvisation using do, mi, so
5. Composing together using do, mi, so
6. Composing a countermelody

3. Compose and rehearse: creating and combining minimalist cells

Year 5

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit introduces minimalism with its repetitive, hypnotic, short musical cells. Pupils will use Terry Riley's In C to inspire their compositions. Working in groups, pupils will create short musical cells and decide how to use these to create and rehearse a larger minimalist piece.

Why this, why now?

At this point in the pupils' musical journey, they have composed using a variety of toneset and rhythm patterns. They have layered sounds using drones and rhythmic and melodic ostinati and have learnt effective strategies for rehearsing as part of an ensemble. In this unit, the pupils build on these skills, using their knowledge of pitch, texture, rhythm, ostinato and their rehearsing skills to create a minimalist structure. The pupils will continue to develop this in later units when exploring polyrhythms and syncopation in ensemble playing and singing.

Lessons in unit

1. The key features of minimalism
2. Creating and notating a repeating minimalist cell
3. Adding more minimalist cells to create a thicker texture
4. Building a minimalist piece
5. Notating a minimalist piece
6. Rehearsing, performing and appraising a minimalist performance

4. Playing together: discovering different vocal timbres

Year 5

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit introduces beatboxing as a vocal art form. The sounds of the drum machine are recreated using vocal percussion alongside other beatboxing influences including the sounds of nature. Working in groups, pupils build texture with multilayered vocal sounds.

Why this, why now?

This unit brings together an understanding of pulse, rhythm, texture and vocal timbre. Through the addition of beatboxing, pupils further develop their ability to keep in time when performing in parts through this new style. By this stage, the pupils have an awareness of their vocal health, the need to warm up effectively, and how to stand for effective singing. The plosives used in beatboxing require abdominal support and this helps pupils find their lower support required for singing in performance, further enhancing their understanding of their voice as an instrument.

Lessons in unit

1. Introducing beatboxing vocal percussion
2. Layering beatboxing vocal percussion sounds
3. Rehearsing a texture of two or more parts
4. Improvising using beatboxing techniques and vocal sounds inspired by nature
5. Improvising a beatboxing film score
6. Evaluating and performing a beatboxing film score

5. Compose and Create: composing a minor melody on a stave

Year 5

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music

Unit description

In this unit, pupils learn songs and listen to music that has a minor tonality. Pupils learn the toneset for the minor pentachord (la, ti, do, re, mi) and use this to compose a minor melody. An analysis of Benjamin Britten's Old Abram Brown inspires the shaping of the pupils' compositions.

Why this, why now?

Prior to this unit, pupils have sung songs, heard music and composed using the major key, an Indian raag and a pentatonic scale. Pupils have also sung songs and heard music in the minor key. They are now in a position to play and compose using a third five-note scale, the minor pentachord. The pupils will use their knowledge of these different scales and tonalities when improvising in later units and composing variations on a theme.

Lessons in unit

1. Identifying major and minor tonalities
2. Minor melodies and the minor pentachord
3. Reading the five note minor pentachord scale
4. Reading and playing minor melodies
5. Composing and notating a minor melody
6. Reading and performing minor melodies

6. Singing for performance: syncopation in songs

Year 5

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit introduces pupils to the term syncopation through adding syncopated rhythms to songs. Pupils learn how to feel the offbeats through movement and experience how straight rhythms and syncopated rhythms feel different. Syncopated rhythm patterns form an accompaniment to a range of songs.

Why this, why now?

This unit builds on pupils' experience of adding accompanying layers to songs by introducing syncopation. By focusing on the offbeats and learning the fundamentals of syncopated rhythm, pupils develop their capacity for creating and playing more complex rhythm patterns in later units.

Lessons in unit

1. What is syncopation?
2. Singing and playing syncopated rhythms
3. Layering syncopated rhythms to accompany a song
4. Syncopated rhythms in jazz
5. Creating and rehearsing a syncopated performance - building a tight ensemble
6. Syncopation performance and reflection

Year 6 units

View interactive sequence online

1
Sing, play, perform: accompanying songs with polyrhythms

2
Singing together: music that comments on social change

3
Compose and rehearse: improvising with the minor pentatonic scale

4
Playing together: arranging and rehearsing a fusion performance

5
Compose and Create: creating melodic variations based on a theme

6
Singing for performance: conveying emotion and character through performance

7
Compose and create: nature documentary inspired film scores

1. Sing, play, perform: accompanying songs with polyrhythms

Year 6

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit explores different rhythm patterns from around the world. Through body percussion pupils play contrasting styles of rhythms and transfer these onto untuned percussion. They play one rhythm against another, building up layers of sound whilst maintaining a secure sense of pulse.

Why this, why now?

In this unit, pupils will develop their ability to layer multiple rhythms, building on previous units in which they layered different parts in songs, instrumental accompaniments and composed ostinati. The pupils utilise previously studied rehearsal skills and reflect on previous learning around effective ensemble practice, building on these rehearsal skills for a more effective performance. Pupils are introduced to the term polyrhythms.

Lessons in unit

1. Syncopation in songs
2. Syncopated rhythms
3. Introducing polyrhythm
4. Layering rhythms
5. Creating polyrhythms
6. Polyrhythmic accompaniments

2. Singing together: music that comments on social change

Year 6

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Developing our singing voice
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

This unit explores how music can communicate powerful messages, express ideas and bring people together. Pupils learn how composers manipulate musical elements to communicate meaning and emotion, then draw on these ideas to compose their own song about a cause they feel strongly about.

Why this, why now?

Building on their vocal performance skills, in this unit pupils are encouraged to consider the intention of the lyricist in order to convey meaning. Pupils utilise prior learning of varying dynamics and vocal timbre for effect as well as deepening their learning of what makes an effective vocal ensemble. We build pupils' understanding of texture and structure and develop their proficiency for part singing. Pupils continue to reflect on our question of why we sing, considering the purpose of song in this context and previous units in which we have explored the meaning of song.

Lessons in unit

1. Civil rights songs and the power of repetition
2. Sharing emotion through song
3. Sharing important issues through music and song
4. The importance and power of songs from the past
5. The differences of rap and beat poetry
6. Singing for the change we want to see in the world

3. Compose and rehearse: improvising with the minor pentatonic scale

Year 6

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit, pupils listen to improvisation in jazz ensembles. Using the minor pentatonic scale on pitched percussion, they learn a minor pentatonic melody and practise tools to guide successful improvisation including repetition and sequencing.

Why this, why now?

In this unit, we introduce a fourth five-note scale, with the pupils now having learnt the major pentatonic, major and minor pentachords and now the minor pentatonic. Having a sound study of tuned percussion behind them, they are now in a position to improvise effectively and fluently over a chord sequence. Improvising whilst considering repetition, balance and sequencing will give pupils the foundations they need in the later notated composition unit.

Lessons in unit

1. Improvisation and the minor pentatonic scale
2. Playing the D minor pentatonic scale
3. Playing a minor pentatonic jazz melody
4. Improvising a phrase using the D minor pentatonic scale
5. Improvising longer phrases using the D minor pentatonic scale
6. Creating and performing an improvised jazz piece

4. Playing together: arranging and rehearsing a fusion performance

Year 6

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Music over time and in different places
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit, pupils listen to music in which two or more styles have been fused together to create something new. They also learn short musical ideas that represent different musical genres and combine these as part of an ensemble.

Why this, why now?

Pupils now have ample experience being part of an instrumental and vocal ensemble, playing tuned and untuned accompaniments, using syncopation and polyrhythms, and playing within various styles of music. They have also learnt strategies for effective ensemble practice. Now, they are ready to combine all of this learning, creating a fusion ensemble piece and further developing their strategies for effective practice. Pupils can take this learning of combining musical styles into their theme and variation composition unit.

Lessons in unit

1. Fusion and the evolution of musical styles
2. Fusing and layering rhythmic patterns
3. Melody in fusion music
4. Practising repetitive cells for a fusion performance
5. Fusing together and arranging musical ideas
6. Performing, listening and responding to each other

5. Compose and Create: creating melodic variations based on a theme

Year 6

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit, pupils will compose short variations on a given simple theme using glockenspiels or online keyboards on tablets or laptops. Exploring examples of theme and variations such as 'The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra' will create an understanding of how this structure is formed.

Why this, why now?

This unit is a culmination of all compositing skills learnt during key stages 1 and 2. The pupils bring to this their knowledge of tonality, including major, minor, pentatonic and a set raag. They understand music can be structured and have used structures including call and response and ternary for example. They understand various ways to notate music including rhythm grids and simplified staves. They are now able to explore the creation of variations using all their musical knowledge and skills to date.

Lessons in unit

1. Theme and variation as a musical structure
2. Learning a musical theme
3. Composing a rhythmic variation to a theme
4. Composing a melodic variation to a theme
5. Composing a further variation to a theme
6. Practising and performing composed variations on a theme

6. Singing for performance: conveying emotion and character through performance

Year 6

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Developing our singing voice
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Unit description

In this unit, pupils develop their vocal technique and perform songs with a harmony line. They learn to rehearse songs to a performance standard and evaluate their singing, ensuring that they are able to convey the style of each song through an accurate, confident and responsive performance.

Why this, why now?

Building on performance skills from prior units, pupils are encouraged to draw together their singing skills of accurate intonation, their ability to hold a second part and their understanding of how the lyrics should be delivered to achieve an effective performance. They have also learnt vocal techniques that allow them to look after and warm up their voice effectively. Pupils will utilise this and prior learning of the use of musical elements such as tempo and dynamics to create an effective performance.

Lessons in unit

1. Controlling our voice to convey the feeling of a song
2. Balancing harmony lines in songs
3. Characterful singing
4. Articulation and vocal quality when singing
5. Effective rehearsal for a singing performance
6. Reflecting on a successful performance

7. Compose and create: nature documentary inspired film scores

Year 6

Go to unit resources

Threads

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Notating and sharing music

Unit description

In this optional unit, pupils are introduced to the term, film music. They study many examples of film music composed for the BBC nature documentaries Planet Earth II and Planet Earth III and use these as their inspiration for composing their own film scores.

Why this, why now?

Pupils are given the opportunity to develop their creative music skills further, composing and improvising in a way that offers plenty of freedom of expression and the chance to explore technology in music. Pupils can use their composition skills developed in other upper key stage two units, alongside their working knowledge of the musical elements to create film music with greater freedom than before. Due to the freedom of composition suggested in the lessons, this unit can be placed at any point across the key stage, with the compositional outcomes adjusted accordingly.

Lessons in unit

1. Film music: habitats
2. Film music: characters
3. Film music: atmosphere
4. Film music: drama

Threads in music

See how to use threads ↑

- Creating, composing and improvising
- Developing our singing voice
- Music over time and in different places
- Notating and sharing music
- Performing as an ensemble
- Practising and preparing for a performance

Thread, **'Creating, composing and improvising'**

Year 1

- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: exploring and performing rhythm patterns'
- **Unit 4,** 'Music and movement: feeling the pulse and changing the tempo'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: high and low melodic responses'

Year 2

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how singing helps us work together'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and create: recording our musical ideas using a graphic score'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: improvising with four notes'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: soundscapes of the sea'

Year 3

- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: notating and performing using rhythm grids'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: major pentatonic melodies'

Year 4

- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: improvising within Hindustani classical music'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: composing a major melody on a stave'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: cosmic programme music'

Year 5

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs unite us'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: creating and combining minimalist cells'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: discovering different vocal timbres'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: composing a minor melody on a stave'

Year 6

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: music that comments on social change'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: improvising with the minor pentatonic scale'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: arranging and rehearsing a fusion performance'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: creating melodic variations based on a theme'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: nature documentary inspired film scores'

Thread, **'Developing our singing voice'**

Year 1

- **Unit 1,** 'Start with singing: finding my singing voice'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how singing makes me feel'
- **Unit 4,** 'Music and movement: feeling the pulse and changing the tempo'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: Changing tempo and dynamics in our songs'

Year 2

- **Unit 1,** 'Start with singing: learning through singing games'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how singing helps us work together'
- **Unit 4,** 'Music and movement: using symbols to represent pitch'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: improvising with four notes'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: adding a simple vocal accompaniment'

Year 3

- **Unit 1,** 'Start with playing: adding percussive layers to build texture in our songs'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs are used in communities'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: holding a second part in rounds and partner songs'

Year 4

- **Unit 1,** 'Start with playing: adding layers to major and minor songs'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how stories are shared through song'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: discovering different ways to sing in harmony'

Year 5

- **Unit 1,** 'Sing, play, perform: adding tuned accompaniment to part-singing'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs unite us'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: syncopation in songs'

Year 6

- **Unit 1,** 'Sing, play, perform: accompanying songs with polyrhythms'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: music that comments on social change'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: conveying emotion and character through performance'

Thread, **'Music over time and in different places'**

Year 2

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how singing helps us work together'

Year 3

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs are used in communities'

Year 4

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how stories are shared through song'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: improvising within Hindustani classical music'

Year 5

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs unite us'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: creating and combining minimalist cells'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: discovering different vocal timbres'

Year 6

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: music that comments on social change'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: improvising with the minor pentatonic scale'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: arranging and rehearsing a fusion performance'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: creating melodic variations based on a theme'

Thread, **'Notating and sharing music'**

Year 1

- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: exploring and performing rhythm patterns'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: high and low melodic responses'

Year 2

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how singing helps us work together'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and create: recording our musical ideas using a graphic score'
- **Unit 4,** 'Music and movement: using symbols to represent pitch'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: improvising with four notes'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: soundscapes of the sea'

Year 3

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs are used in communities'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: notating and performing using rhythm grids'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: building texture with melody, drone and ostinato'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: major pentatonic melodies'

Year 4

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how stories are shared through song'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: improvising within Hindustani classical music'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: effective rehearsing as part of an ensemble'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: composing a major melody on a stave'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: discovering different ways to sing in harmony'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: cosmic programme music'

Year 5

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs unite us'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: creating and combining minimalist cells'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: discovering different vocal timbres'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: composing a minor melody on a stave'

Year 6

- **Unit 1,** 'Sing, play, perform: accompanying songs with polyrhythms'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: music that comments on social change'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: improvising with the minor pentatonic scale'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: creating melodic variations based on a theme'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: nature documentary inspired film scores'

Thread, **'Performing as an ensemble'**

Year 1

- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: exploring and performing rhythm patterns'
- **Unit 4,** 'Music and movement: feeling the pulse and changing the tempo'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: high and low melodic responses'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: Changing tempo and dynamics in our songs'

Year 2

- **Unit 1,** 'Start with singing: learning through singing games'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and create: recording our musical ideas using a graphic score'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: improvising with four notes'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: adding a simple vocal accompaniment'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: soundscapes of the sea'

Year 3

- **Unit 1,** 'Start with playing: adding percussive layers to build texture in our songs'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: notating and performing using rhythm grids'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: building texture with melody, drone and ostinato'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: holding a second part in rounds and partner songs'

Year 4

- **Unit 1,** 'Start with playing: adding layers to major and minor songs'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how stories are shared through song'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: improvising within Hindustani classical music'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: effective rehearsing as part of an ensemble'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: cosmic programme music'

Year 5

- **Unit 1,** 'Sing, play, perform: adding tuned accompaniment to part-singing'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs unite us'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: creating and combining minimalist cells'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: discovering different vocal timbres'

Year 6

- **Unit 1,** 'Sing, play, perform: accompanying songs with polyrhythms'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: improvising with the minor pentatonic scale'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: arranging and rehearsing a fusion performance'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: conveying emotion and character through performance'

Thread, **'Practising and preparing for a performance'**

Year 1

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how singing makes me feel'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: high and low melodic responses'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: Changing tempo and dynamics in our songs'

Year 2

- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and create: improvising with four notes'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: adding a simple vocal accompaniment'
- **Unit 7,** 'Compose and create: soundscapes of the sea'

Year 3

- **Unit 1,** 'Start with playing: adding percussive layers to build texture in our songs'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs are used in communities'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: notating and performing using rhythm grids'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: building texture with melody, drone and ostinato'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: holding a second part in rounds and partner songs'

Year 4

- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how stories are shared through song'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and Create: improvising within Hindustani classical music'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: effective rehearsing as part of an ensemble'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: discovering different ways to sing in harmony'

Year 5

- **Unit 1,** 'Sing, play, perform: adding tuned accompaniment to part-singing'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: how songs unite us'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: creating and combining minimalist cells'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: discovering different vocal timbres'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: syncopation in songs'

Year 6

- **Unit 1,** 'Sing, play, perform: accompanying songs with polyrhythms'
- **Unit 2,** 'Singing together: music that comments on social change'
- **Unit 3,** 'Compose and rehearse: improvising with the minor pentatonic scale'
- **Unit 4,** 'Playing together: arranging and rehearsing a fusion performance'
- **Unit 5,** 'Compose and Create: creating melodic variations based on a theme'
- **Unit 6,** 'Singing for performance: conveying emotion and character through performance'



© Oak National Academy 2024.

Produced in partnership with Bristol Beacon and Cathedral Schools Trust.

Licensed on the **Open Government Licence v3.0**, except where otherwise stated.
See **Oak terms and conditions**.