



Progression of Skills & Knowledge

Updated September 2026



	Year 1/2	National Curriculum – end of KS1
Listening and evaluating	Skills Listening and responding to music - Listening with concentration to short pieces of music or excerpts from longer pieces of music. - Engaging with and responding to longer pieces of music. - Coordinating the speed of their movements to match the speed of the music (not the beat). - Confidently moving in time with the beat of the music when modelled. - Beginning to keep movements to the beat of different speeds of music. - Beginning to articulate how a piece of music affects them (e.g. 'It makes me feel sleepy', 'It makes me want to dance', 'It makes me feel happy'). - Beginning to explain why the music has a certain effect on them, which could be related to the music or a personal experience. Appraising music - Identifying some common instruments when listening to music. - Relating sounds in music to real-world experiences (e.g. 'It sounds like squelching mud'). - Recognising simple patterns and repetition in rhythm (e.g. where a rhythm is repeated). - Recognising simple patterns in pitch (e.g. do re mi). - Discussing the tempo of music using the vocabulary of fast and slow. - Discussing the dynamics of the music using the vocabulary of 'loud', 'quiet' and 'silent'. - Talking about the pitch of music, using the vocabulary of 'high' and 'low'. - Sharing their opinion on the music they hear. Musical context - Appreciating music from a wide variety of cultures and historical periods. Knowledge Appraising music - To recognise and name at least three different instruments. - To know that sections of music can be described as fast or slow and the meaning of these terms. - To know that sections of music can be described as loud, quiet or silent and the meaning of these terms. - To know that sounds within music can be described as high or low sounds and the meaning of these terms. - To know that pitch is the term used to refer to high and low sounds within music. - To know rhythm is a pattern of sounds made up of long and short notes. Musical context - To know that music from different places and times can sound different.	use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes

	Year 3/4	Year 5/6	National Curriculum – end of KS2
	Skills Responding to music - Listening with attention to detail, focusing on a specific feature of the music (e.g. 'What do you notice about the pitch?'). - Beginning to explain their responses to music using musical features to support their ideas (e.g. 'This music makes me feel tense because it is low and slow'). Appraising music - Beginning to identify a wider range of instruments and their role within a piece of music (e.g. a flute playing the melody). - Identifying instruments heard in music from a given selection (e.g. identifying an instrument from a selection of pictures). - Recognising simple patterns that combine rhythm and pitch. - Recognising and discussing how pitch changes (e.g. getting higher, getting lower, stays the same). - Recognising and discussing how speed (tempo) changes (e.g. getting faster or getting slower). - Recognising and discussing how volume (dynamics) change (e.g. getting louder or getting quieter). - Sharing their opinion based on a specific part of the music (e.g. 'I liked how the music got quieter at the end'). - Using some musical vocabulary when describing music (e.g. 'The bass line is playing on beat one'). Musical context - Developing understanding of the history of a diverse range of music (e.g. reggae, blues, the music of China and India). - Noticing similarities and differences between music from different time periods or cultures. Knowledge Appraising music - To know that music can be described using musical elements such as pitch, rhythm, tempo and dynamics.	Skills Responding to music - Listening and noticing relevant details with increasing independence and focusing on a range of musical features. - Explaining their responses to music, using a range of musical features and personal experiences (e.g. 'The fast tempo and loud dynamics make it feel exciting. It reminds me of a football match because it feels energetic'). Appraising music - Identifying an increasing range of instruments and sounds and their function within a piece of music (e.g. the strings creating a tip-toe effect). - Describing unknown instruments by relating them to known instruments or using adjectives (e.g. 'It sounds like a flute because it is floaty'). - Considering how the composer uses rhythm and pitch to create a mood. - Beginning to understand how the inter-related dimensions of music work together to create contrast and mood (e.g. 'There's a crescendo and the music is getting faster to build tension'). - Give increasingly critical appraisals of music using appropriate musical vocabulary and referring to specific elements and sections of a piece (e.g. 'I liked how the trumpets played a crescendo in the middle of the piece - it made the music feel more intense'). - Using musical vocabulary when describing music and its effect on the listener (e.g. The crescendo and building rhythm in the pre-chorus create energy and excitement for the listener.) Musical context - Developing an understanding of the history and social context of a diverse range of music, (e.g. samba, rap, the music of some African countries). - Using knowledge of genre and style when talking about music they hear.	- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression - improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music - listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory - use and understand staff and other musical notations - appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians

- To know that rhythm is created by combining sounds of different durations (e.g. crotchet = 1 beat, minim = 2 beats; long/longer, short/shorter).
- To know that contrast in music means using differences (e.g. loud/quiet or fast/slow) to make it more interesting.

Musical context

- To know that music can be classified or 'sorted' in different ways (e.g. genre, culture, historical period, instrument/technique, purpose and mood).
- To know that the way music is produced and shared has changed over time (e.g. music technology).
- To know that music from different cultures and time periods sound different because of their musical features (e.g. improvised or composed, types of instruments used).
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Knowledge

Appraising music

- To know that composers choose musical elements (e.g. tempo, dynamics and instrumentation) to create particular effects or moods.
- To know a range of instruments and understand the roles they play within a piece of music.
- To know that different styles of music follow different structure (e.g. pop music often follows a verse-chorus structure, Western Classical may use a theme and variation structure).
- To know that contrast is created by changing elements, such as dynamics, tempo or instruments.

Musical context

- To know that new musical styles are always developing, often inspired by existing styles (e.g. blues influencing popular music).
- To know that advancements in musical technology can lead to new genres of music (e.g. EDM).
- To know that music is shaped by historical and social influence (e.g. rap, samba).

- develop an understanding of the history of music.

	Year 1/2	National Curriculum – end of KS1
Creating sound	Skills Singing repertoire • Singing simple songs, chants and rhymes from memory. • Practising singing songs with a wider pitch range (e.g. pentatonic melodies) which is gradually getting higher or lower. • Competently singing songs or short phrases with a small pitch range (up to five notes that are different but close together). Singing technique • Breathing at appropriate times when singing. • Exploring changing their singing voice in different ways (e.g. whispering voice, shouting voice). • Singing a range of call and response chants, attempting to match the pitch and tempo the children hear. • Singing part of a given song in their head (using the children's 'thinking voice'). Instruments • Developing an awareness of how sound is affected by the way an instrument is held. • Developing an awareness of how volume is affected by the force with which an instrument is played. • Learning to use instruments to follow the beat by first observing and then mimicking the teacher's modelling. • Using instruments imaginatively to create soundscapes which convey a sense of place. • Using bilateral and hand-eye coordination to hold and play instruments using both hands. • Starting to understand how to produce different sounds on pitched instruments. • Exploring how different classroom instruments create different sounds for a purpose.	• use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes

	Year 3/4	Year 5/6	National Curriculum – end of KS2
	Skills Singing repertoire - Competently singing songs with a range of five notes. - Beginning to maintain a singing part within a group (e.g. singing alongside instruments). - Singing songs where the melody moves up and down in small steps. - Singing simple melodies built on repetition and call-and-response. - Singing in a round, maintaining an independent part with a group. Singing technique - Considering their own volume (dynamics) when singing in a group. - Actively trying to match the correct pitch when singing. - Beginning to recognise how posture improves the singing voice (e.g. stand tall, feet shoulder-width apart, shoulders back, etc). - Beginning to sing clearly, pronouncing words accurately. - Using simple breathing techniques to help support their voice (e.g. standing tall, filling the lungs). Instruments - Using correct technique to hold instruments and accessories (e.g. beaters) comfortably and with control (e.g. relaxed grip, thumb on top, curved fingers). - Exploring different techniques for playing the same instrument to create different sounds (e.g. using the handle of the beater instead of the head, body percussion). - Maintaining a steady beat using an instrument. - Adapting their playing to be loud or quiet at the direction of a leader. - Beginning to play simple two-note chords. - Beginning to play simple melodies on their instrument.	Skills Singing repertoire - Competently singing songs with an octave pitch range. - Maintaining an independent singing part within an ensemble. - Singing songs that include leaps (e.g. jumping between notes rather than moving by step). - Singing melodies following a verse-chorus structure. - Singing in harmony, maintaining an independent part with accuracy. Singing technique - Developing technique to project their voice clearly and confidently (e.g. open mouth, tall posture, facing the audience). - Accurately pitching their voice to sing a broad range of songs with varied pitch ranges. - Demonstrating the correct posture when singing. - Singing with consistent clarity and control, articulating words accurately. - Controlling breath to sustain phrases and support tone quality. Instruments - Recognising how different playing actions change the way an instrument sounds (e.g. bouncing the beater on the glockenspiel creates a longer sound). - Selecting and justifying the use of different classroom instruments for a purpose (e.g. 'We chose the djembe for a strong pulse and the tambourine to make the chorus brighter and more energetic'). - Maintaining the beat on their instrument whilst being aware of other musicians. - Adapting their playing to be loud or quiet to create contrast and add to the mood of a piece. - Beginning to play a simple pattern of chords. - Playing melodies with fluency on their instrument.	- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression - improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music - listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory - use and understand staff and other musical notations - appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians - develop an understanding of the history of music.

	Year 1/2	National Curriculum – end of KS1
Notation	Skills Understanding notation - Following simple notation from left to right, recognising that it shows what happens in the music. Representing pitch - Recognising pitch patterns using dots. - Using a simplified version of a staff to notate known musical phrases (of two pitches). Representing rhythm - Using pictorial representations to stay in time with the pulse when singing or playing. - Confidently reading simple rhythmic patterns comprising of one beat sounds (crotchets) and one beat rests (crotchet rests). - Beginning to read simple rhythmic patterns which include two half beats (quavers). Knowledge Understanding notation - To know that notation is read from left to right. Representing pitch - To know that in all pictorial representations of music, representations further up the page are higher sounds and those further down are lower sounds. Representing rhythm - To know that pictorial representations of rhythm show sounds and rests.	use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes

	Year 3/4	Year 5/6	National Curriculum – end of KS2
	Skills Understanding notation • Reading and creating simple staff notation to represent either pitch or rhythm in music. Representing pitch • Working out the pitch of notes by counting up or down from a labelled starting note. • Reading and playing simple melodies by following how notes move up and down the stave. • Beginning to recognise and notate notes C to G on a stave, with support. Representing rhythm • Recognising common note values such as crotchet, paired quavers, minims and crotchet rests. • Clapping, playing or reading simple rhythmic patterns using these note values. • Using simple notation to record rhythmic patterns (e.g. crotchet, paired quavers, minims and crotchet rests). • Using words or syllables to create and represent rhythmic patterns (e.g. sunshine to represent quavers). Knowledge Understanding notation • To know that notation can be used to write down music that has been created. • To know that notation can help musicians play music created by someone else. • To know that musical ideas can be written down in a variety of ways (e.g. using the stave, graphic score or technology). • To know that staff notation is a commonly used system for writing music. Representing pitch • To know that each position on the stave represents a different note name. • To know that when notes move step by step up or down the stave the pitch becomes higher or lower. • To know that there are different ways to represent getting higher, getting lower or staying the same (e.g. drawing a mountain shape to represent pitch). Representing rhythm • To know that the shape of a note shows how long a sound should last. • To know that a crotchet is a note that lasts for one beat. • To know that a minim is a note that lasts for two beats. • To know that a quaver is a note that lasts for half a beat (a pair of quavers = one beat). • To know that a crotchet rest lasts for one beat. • To know that a minim rest lasts for two beats.	Skills Understanding notation • Reading and creating different forms of notation, recognising how they represent musical elements such as pitch and rhythm. • Placing notes on the stave to record simple musical ideas. Representing pitch • Recognising some common notes on the stave by sight (e.g. middle C and nearby notes). • Reading and playing simple melodies using staff notation within a limited pitch range (e.g. C to C). • Beginning to place notes accurately on the stave to record musical ideas. Representing rhythm • Recognising further common note values such as crotchet, paired quavers, minims, semibreves and their corresponding rests. • Playing or clapping simple rhythmic patterns using these note values. • Using notation to record simple rhythmic patterns using crotchets, paired quavers, minims, semibreves and rests. • Recognising 3/4 and 4/4 time signatures in notation. Knowledge Understanding notation • To know that musicians use different types of notation for different purposes. • To know that in staff notation a note shows both the pitch of a sound and its duration. • To know that symbols and markings can give performers information about how music should be played, such as tempo or dynamics. Representing pitch • To know that middle C sits on a small line just below the stave and can help musicians work out nearby notes. Representing rhythm • To know that a semibreve lasts for four beats. • To know that a quaver rest represents a silence lasting for half a beat.	• play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression • improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music • listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory • use and understand staff and other musical notations • appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians • develop an understanding of the history of music.

Year 1/2

National Curriculum – end of KS1

Improvising and composing

Skills

Stimulus and purpose

- Creating simple sound sequences in response to stimuli such as stories, artwork or nature.

Improvising

- Improvising simple question and answer phrases, using untuned percussion or voices.

Composing

- Experimenting with creating different sounds using a single instrument.
- Experimenting with creating loud, quiet, high and low sounds.
- Selecting objects and/or instruments to create sounds to represent a given idea or character.
- Choosing words to match a simple pitch pattern.
- Creating simple sound sequences in response to stimuli such as stories, artwork or nature.
- Improvising simple question and answer phrases, using untuned percussion or voices.
- Experimenting with adapting rhythmic patterns by changing either the dynamics, tempo or instrument.
- Selecting and creating short sequences of sound with voices or instruments to represent a given idea or character.

Structure

- Playing and combining sounds under the direction of a leader (the teacher).
- Working collaboratively to combine different sounds by either turn-taking or by playing sounds at the same time.

- use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes

	Year 3/4	Year 5/6	National Curriculum – end of KS2
	Skills Stimulus and purpose - Improvising or composing short pieces that represent a stimulus, choosing sounds or instruments to match an idea or character. Improvising - Beginning to improvise using up to five pitches. - Improvising melodies over an accompaniment or drone. - Exploring a different idea before selecting one. - Beginning to consider the inter-related dimensions of music when improvising (e.g. speed, getting higher, volume). Composing - Creating short sequences of sound within certain parameters (e.g. using given notes or rhythms, such as the pentatonic scale). - Exploring how the inter-related dimensions of music can be used to improve a piece or create contrast (e.g. changing speed or volume). - Beginning to choose words that match a melody or rhythm, considering the syllables (e.g. 'hap-py' using paired quavers). - Beginning to develop a repeated melody within given parameters (e.g. adding suggested notes). Structure - Composing to a simple given structure (e.g. beginning, middle and end).	Skills Stimulus and purpose - Improvising or composing music to represent a stimulus and create a specific mood, atmosphere or message (e.g. tense music to represent stormy clouds). Improvising - Improvising short phrases with increasing confidence and control. - Improvising melodies over an accompaniment or drone, keeping in time. - Exploring a range of ideas before selecting one. - Confidently applying the inter-related dimensions of music and explaining their choices (e.g. 'I sped up in the middle section to add excitement'). Composing - Creating musical ideas whilst carefully considering rhythm, pitch and notation. - Making musical decisions to create different moods, such as choosing appropriate notes, tempo (speed) or dynamics (volume). - Writing lyrics to fit a melody, carefully matching syllables to the rhythm. - Confidently developing melodic ideas, exploring different pitches and rhythms. Structure - Considering the structure of a composition to reflect a style of music.	- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression - improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music - listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory - use and understand staff and other musical notations - appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians - develop an understanding of the history of music.

Year 1/2

National Curriculum – end of KS1

Skills

Evaluating performance

- Offering positive feedback on others' performances and beginning to notice areas for improvement in their own.
- Giving positive feedback relating to the tempo of practices and performances using the vocabulary of 'fast' and 'slow'.
- Giving positive feedback related to the dynamics of practices and performances, using the vocabulary of 'loud', 'quiet' and 'silent'.

Timing

- Starting to maintain a steady beat throughout short singing performances.

Performance awareness

- Keeping the head raised while singing.
- Keeping instruments still until their part in a performance.
- Standing or sitting appropriately when performing or waiting to perform.
- Continuing playing or singing with a group, even if a mistake is made.

Ensemble skills

- Performing actively as part of a group; keeping in time with the beat.
- Showing an awareness of the leader, particularly when starting or ending a piece.

- use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes

Performing

	Year 3/4	Year 5/6	National Curriculum – end of KS2
	Skills Evaluating performance - Beginning to offer constructive thoughts and opinions on peer performances. - Reflecting on their own performance and expressing what went well. - Beginning to offer simple, constructive feedback relating to specific elements of the performance. Timing - Performing simple parts and keeping a steady beat with support from a backing track. Performance awareness - Beginning to have an awareness of the difference between practice and performance. - Beginning to use body language and facial expressions to support a performance. - Beginning to recognise suitable points to rejoin a performance if they lose their place. Ensemble skills - Beginning to maintain an individual part (e.g. bass, chords or melody) within a group. - Following cues from a leader or backing track to start or stop performing. - Beginning to use simple non-verbal cues, such as eye contact or nodding, to help coordinate group performances.	Skills Evaluating performance - Offering constructive thoughts and opinions of peer performances, using musical vocabulary and reasoning. - Evaluating their performance by identifying strengths and suggesting next steps for improvement. - Giving balanced feedback relating to specific elements of the performance (e.g. 'I liked how you used a crescendo to build excitement but next time you could get faster too'). Timing - Performing confidently and independently in time with a backing track or ensemble. Performance awareness - Applying simple techniques to improve rehearsal and performance (e.g. making eye contact during a rehearsal; looking at the audience during a performance). - Performing with stage awareness, showing confidence, focus and engagement with the audience. - Recovering smoothly from mistakes while maintaining the flow of the performance. Ensemble skills - Maintaining an individual part (e.g. bass, chords, melody) within a group. - Recognising and responding to cues within a performance to enter, stop or change sections. - Using non-verbal communication confidently to coordinate ensemble performance, such as signalling entries, endings or changes.	- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression - improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music - listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory - use and understand staff and other musical notations - appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians - develop an understanding of the history of music.

Year 1/2

National Curriculum – end of KS1

Inter-related dimensions of music

Knowledge

Dynamics

- To know that 'loud' and 'quiet' describe the volume of music.

Rhythm

- To know that rhythm is a pattern of sounds made up of long and short notes.

Structure

- To know that some parts of music can repeat.

Melody (including pitch)

- To know that pitch describes how high or low a sound is.

Instrumentation

- To know that instruments can be recognised by their sound and appearance.

Tempo

- To know that tempo describes the speed of music.

Harmony

- N/A

- use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes

	Year 3/4	Year 5/6	National Curriculum – end of KS2
	Knowledge Dynamics - To know that dynamics describe the volume of music and can change within a piece. Rhythm - To know that rhythms can repeat or change to create patterns in music. Structure - To know that music can be organised into sections such as 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end'. Melody (including pitch) - To know that melodies are made from a sequence of pitches that move higher, lower or stay the same. Instrumentation - To know that instruments belong to families and can have different roles in a piece of music. Tempo - To know that tempo can change within a piece of music, becoming faster or slower. Harmony - To know that harmony is created when two or more different notes are played together.	Knowledge Dynamics - To know that changes in dynamics (e.g. crescendo and decrescendo) can create contrast or mood. Rhythm - To know that rhythms can be organised into bars and different time signatures. Structure - To know that musical styles often follow particular structures (e.g. verse-chorus, theme and variation). Melody (including pitch) - To know that melodic ideas can be repeated, developed or varied. Instrumentation - To know that composers choose different instruments to create particular musical effects. Tempo - To know that composers use changes in tempo to create contrast, tension or excitement in music. Harmony - To know that chords and harmony support melody and add depth to music.	- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression - improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music - listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory - use and understand staff and other musical notations - appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians - develop an understanding of the history of music.