

# Music

## *2004/5 annual report on curriculum and assessment*

This report is based on the activities to investigate curriculum, assessment and qualifications issues in music December 2005

QCA/05/2173

*Detailed quantitative evidence is provided by the QCA Monitoring Curriculum and Assessment (MCA) project. This yields statistical data through questionnaire responses from representative samples of schools and foundation stage settings. Evidence also comes from specific enquiries undertaken by QCA and other national agencies, including the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). QCA phase and subject teams also undertake desk research into published research and reports, including international work.*

### **Transfer and transition**

A lack of understanding about level descriptions can mean that when records are passed between phases there may be little detail about musical attainment. Teacher focus groups again highlighted the fact that at all points of transfer, insufficient information is passed on. Some teachers at key stage 1 and key stage 2 felt that the secondary schools pay little or no attention to their assessment information.

**Some secondary schools do have a close involvement with year 6 work, and there are examples of curriculum projects in year 6 that involve staff from the secondary school. Such projects have a positive impact on pupils' experience of transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3.**

To ensure effective transition and opportunities for progression, there is a need for:

- consistent approaches to the transfer of pupils' assessment data
- specific information about individual pupils' strengths, weaknesses and instrumental skills.

### **Key stage 3**

#### **Curriculum**

The majority of schools in the MCA project report that they meet the requirements of the key stage 3 programme of study, but have some difficulties in doing so. Just under a third of schools report having no difficulty in meeting the requirements of the programme of study, and a minority (7.3 per cent) report having significant difficulties.

**Shortage of ICT equipment and lack of facilities were the highest-scoring reasons for difficulties in meeting the requirements of key stage 3. The use of ICT in music at key stage 3 is considered by the majority of teachers to have a positive impact on teaching and learning.**

The MCA survey shows that music departments have the lowest reported use of whiteboards. Some of the schools have good facilities, with purpose-built music rooms and ICT facilities; some have specialist music software but no technical support to install it. In general, improved or increased technical support is needed. The recent requirements

and developments in ICT and music technologies have been a matter of particular difficulty for some small departments. To address this, some staff have invested large amounts of their own time, as well as using school support, to acquire new skills and investigate a range of facilities and software applications. In some schools and local authorities there is good advice and support for music teachers who wish to develop their expertise in music technologies. Even so, there remain schools with little successful experience in this area – teachers in these schools need training and development.

**In addition to appropriate classroom facilities, pupils need access to practice facilities outside normal lesson time, if they are to develop their musical skills. Ofsted evidence agrees that access to, and the effective use of, resources is improving, but accommodation is still unsatisfactory in a quarter of schools, and there is a lack of flexible workshop accommodation.**

**The majority of teachers in focus groups adopt a predominantly practical, music making approach to the key stage 3 programme of study, and use a wide range of musical styles indicated in the programme of study. Teachers exploit a range of musical traditions in teaching particular musical elements, devices, tonalities and structures, but need to draw on a range of music practitioners, performers and teachers, including community links, to effectively provide a range of styles and traditions as part of the curriculum at key stage 3.**

Music departments are among the smallest in secondary schools, typically with two teachers, although many have high numbers of peripatetic staff. The range and depth of the curriculum requirements for key stage 3, and for examination courses, present a challenge in terms of subject knowledge and pedagogy for such small teams of staff. Links with the local community can also provide useful input from musicians and performers as well as performance opportunities for pupils, and 74 per cent of music departments surveyed reported some use of such local community links. In providing pupils with a range of musical experiences and styles, teachers are making use of visiting musicians and composers.

In the MCA survey:

- 60 per cent of schools consulted used visiting musicians at key stage 3; this rises to 64 per cent at key stage 4
- some 35 per cent of schools did not use visiting musicians at either stage
- 60 per cent of schools reported pupils being involved in musical visits (including concerts) outside school
- in over 39 per cent of schools, no time at all is spent on musical visits outside school
- almost all schools reported extracurricular activities at both key stage 3 and key stage 4 of, on average, one or two hours of pupils' time per week.

**The use of music homework, or the opportunity for pupils to undertake further study individually or in groups at school, is a neglected area. Yet, individually, many pupils are keen and knowledgeable listeners and consumers, making increasingly distinctive and discriminating choices. They commit considerable amounts of their private time to listening to music, and, increasingly, experiment with software and explore a range of sources. Too often, activities in the classroom are repetitive or**

**limited, so that pupils perceive music in school to be unrelated to the enthusiasm and commitment that derives from their experience of music in their private time.**

Teacher focus groups report concerns over time allocation for music at key stage 3.

According to the 2004/5 MCA survey:

- 9 per cent of schools have reduced the time spent on music at key stage 3
- 87 per cent have stayed the same
- 4 per cent have increased their time allocation at key stage 3.

The average time spent on music at key stage 3 is one hour a week. Examples of variations include: one school which has one hour a week of music in year 8 but 1.5 hours a week in years 7 and 9; and other schools which spend one hour a week on music and one hour a week on creative arts. The creative arts course permits some flexibility, since there is time for more creative elements, such as composition and musical exploration. The discrete music lessons can be used for developing skills. Reducing the time for music lessons affects pupils' confidence, since they have less time for practical music-making.

### **Impact of national initiatives and other developments at key stage 3**

The National Secondary Strategy has still had relatively little impact on the music teachers in the MCA survey, with the majority indicating 'partial participation'. It is hoped that a music pilot strand being run by the national strategies, and operating in 40 schools during 2005, might produce materials for use at key stage 3 from 2006. There was a higher rate of participation in Assessment for Learning activities than in other strands of the National Secondary Strategy. Where teachers have been involved in the national strategies, there was broad agreement that involvement has improved learning and teaching, and that the national curriculum programme of study and the strategy approaches work well together. However, teachers need to adopt a flexible approach to lesson structure when planning extended practical projects.

### **Impact of developments in assessment**

The majority of teachers consulted do not have problems using the level descriptions and feel that there is a flow of progression through the levels. However, the use of the level descriptions varies, and there is a need for further training in assessment.

Issues raised include:

- **pupils and parents finding levels difficult to understand**
- **levels not forming a basis for options at key stage 4.**

Teachers felt that the language of the level descriptions is appropriate for teachers, but too complicated for pupils to access directly. Some teachers provide pupils with a user-friendly version of the level descriptions and explain to pupils exactly how they are being assessed.

Although level descriptions are intended to help teachers make judgements about pupils' performance at the end of the key stage, many schools are making judgements at the end of year 7 and 8. Some teachers attempt to award levels for individual units or pieces of work. Where this is the case, this seems to be overwhelmingly by departmental choice, and not as a school requirement. In most cases there is poor, or no, transfer of data

specific to music attainment or progression between key stage 2 and key stage 3. In some cases, music coordinators at key stage 2 provide teachers at key stage 3 with information about musical attainment and/or pupils' instrumental skills. Many teachers at key stage 3 assess pupils at the beginning of year 7. To ensure effective transition and opportunities for progression, there is a need for:

- consistent approaches to the transfer of pupils' assessment data specific information about individual pupils' strengths, weaknesses and instrumentalskills.

### **Transfer and transition**

Successful transfer and transition from earlier stages into key stage 3 is hampered by a lack of consistent approach in the transfer of data and information about pupils.

## **Key stage 4**

### **Curriculum**

In nearly 50 per cent of schools surveyed, the number of students opting for music in year 10 has increased, whereas in nearly 25 per cent of schools it has decreased. Among the reasons given for an increase in year 10 numbers for music were:

- expertise of music staff (37 per cent)
- more successful marketing of music courses (30 per cent)
- better resources (29 per cent).

Time allocation for music at key stage 4 remains unchanged since last year in the majority of schools surveyed in the MCA project. In schools where time allocation has changed, a slightly higher percentage of schools indicate that it has increased, than the percentage indicating that it has decreased. It was noted in the teacher focus groups that, in a school with a high take-up at key stage 4, pupils can follow their own passions and interests in GCSE (for example performing rock music). Some teachers, however, felt that pupils only choose music at key stage 4 if they plan to become musicians, and that some have negative perceptions about what the GCSE contains or don't want to perform as a soloist. Composition can be a problem with larger groups and is demanding for teachers in

terms of organising and collating coursework. The teacher focus groups identified areas that pupils enjoyed most at key stage 4:

- practical work
- self- or peer appraisal
- singing.

Pupils find listening and appraising and musical vocabulary most difficult. A view held at one teacher focus group meeting was that GCSE is not a good preparation for GCE, since the gap is too big. One teacher had decided to work on pupils' music literacy to make sure they are ready for GCE. One post-16 provider has an eight-week induction for new music students, to build up their skills before the GCE course starts.

Just over 4 per cent of schools reported significant difficulties in meeting GCSE requirements. The main reasons cited, as at key stage 3, were lack of ICT equipment and lack of facilities.

### **Impact of developments in assessment**

Various issues in assessment were raised by the teacher focus groups:

- some teachers feel that traditional or classical styles of performance and composition are a safer option for pupils
- teachers need further support and training in assessment, in the use of assessment criteria and in assessing contemporary or experimental styles of composition and performance
- assessment can be very time-consuming, especially in single-teacher departments
- schools need to provide support, in the form of time and training, for teachers assessing pupils' work at key stage 4.

### **Impact of developments in qualifications**

There is an increasing recognition that courses need to be more varied to match more closely the particular interests and aptitudes of pupils. However, schools' awareness of the range of qualifications available pre-16 at levels 1 and 2 is limited, with many teachers unaware of vocational qualifications available in music, or music technology, at levels 1 and 2.

## **Post-16**

### **Curriculum**

Music technology qualifications in many schools and colleges continue to prove popular, particularly among boys, in post-16 settings. Constraints of space and/or facilities are an issue for some centres.

In schools that responded to the MCA survey, time allocation for post-16 music provision has:

- remained constant in 71 per cent
- increased in 17 per cent
- decreased in 12 per cent.

Half the schools in the MCA sample indicate an increase in the numbers of students taking music post-16, with just 18 per cent indicating a decrease. Visiting musicians are used more in post-16 provision than in earlier key stages, with 79 per cent of schools involved in the MCA project using visiting musicians in post-16 provision. This compares with 64 per cent at key stage 4, and 60 per cent at key stage 3. Seventy-eight per cent of schools reported students being involved in musical visits (including concerts) outside school. Schools and colleges are increasingly offering a range of music qualifications post-16 at levels 1–3. There is a need for increased awareness among teachers of the range of qualifications available.

### **Inclusion in music**

In the teacher focus groups, many felt that music and arts in the curriculum lend themselves to inclusive approaches in ways not available to other subjects. Music can help engage pupils with learning difficulties by allowing them to express themselves. Music can be useful in encouraging involvement, and improving self confidence, for pupils for whom English is a second language. Teachers recognised that a whole-school approach to inclusion is important, and that within music, cultural awareness and the use of resources that reflect different cultures were essential. As reflected throughout this report, continuing professional development and guidance are needed for teachers in the

use of such resources. Music is seen to present opportunities for cultural diversity, and schools are able to prioritise visits from cross-cultural practitioners.

**Teachers differentiate work by allowing for the development of a wide variety of skills in ensemble work and by producing differentiated teaching materials. Teachers in the MCA survey indicate that approaches in music with non-statemented pupils with special needs included the use of differentiated activities and the targeted use of group work.**

There were mixed views in teacher focus groups on the effect of gender on performance. Many reported that girls' attainment levels are higher, particularly at key stage 3. One school had a 'boys alone' concert, consisting of boys' ensembles; another uses ICT to involve a wider range of pupils in musical activity.

### **Implications for further consideration in music**

#### **Areas of need Action by QCA**

- Extend access to instrumental tuition opportunities for all pupils and improve links between instrumental and classroom teachers
- Promote the concept of entitlement to instrumental tuition, including further support for the development of the Wider Opportunities model to more schools
- Increase 14–19 participation
- Support the development of new qualifications at key stage 4 that bring together vocational and academic perspectives, including the development of 14–19 Diploma pathways in the creative and media area
- Involve the learner in all musical developments
- Continue research into why pupils choose to study or not to study music post-14
- Increase understanding of musical progression
- **Provide advice on the extent to which the current level descriptions may need to be changed**
- Improve information at transition
- Explore and develop models that are easily used and provide the information needed for prior work to be recognised and built upon
- Improve continuing professional development for specialist and nonspecialist teachers
- Work with national organisations and associations to identify specific areas of need
- Improve links with, and use of, ICT in music
- Work with national agencies to develop models for effective use of ICT in music