Secondary
National Strategy
for school improvement

Foundation subjects: KS3 music

Unit 3: Creative teaching and learning in music

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Using this guide

This guide offers some practical strategies teachers use to develop creative teaching and learning. The techniques are tried and tested; they draw upon both academic research and the experience of practising teachers.

By working through this guide you can build your teaching repertoire step by step, starting with strategies that are easy to implement and moving on to those that will help pupils develop their understanding and skills still further. The guide contains practical tips and tasks to help you consider advice or try out strategies in your classroom. There are case studies to exemplify particular points. The 'Next steps' section asks you to reflect generally on the impact of this unit. There are practical suggestions for developing practice and you are invited to set targets for the future. The final section provides references to recent research and suggestions for further reading.

As you work through this guide, you will:

- read about the nature and purpose of creativity in teaching and learning;

- consider the current place of creativity in your units of work and lessons (Tasks 1 and 2);

- read about and try in the classroom various inventive teaching strategies (Tasks 3–7);

- identify and expand the range of musical challenges currently given to pupils (Tasks 8 and 9);

- consider the balance between freedoms and constraints in creative tasks (Task 10);

- investigate the sorts of questions to ask pupils in order to improve their understanding of creative quality (Task 11);

- consider and introduce strategies which enable pupils to develop creative musical thinking and creative talk in lessons (Tasks 12 and 13);

- reflect on the complete process before considering your next steps.

To assist with this process, make sure that you:

- are clear about where you are in this line of development, and why you are undertaking specific tasks – this will help to focus your time and energies on effective work;

- keep a log of the materials you create, the responses of the pupils and your own reflections on the impact of the work. There is space in this guide for you to write notes and responses to some questions, but you may find it helpful to keep a notebook handy, or to use the CPD log on the DVD.

When working through this unit, you will need access to:

Resources   3a, 3b, 1f

Video   3a, 3b

Creative teaching and learning in music

Contents

Recognising impact

This unit aims to help music teachers review and refine their practice in developing creative teaching and learning in music so that they can teach more creatively, provide varied musical challenges and enable pupils to use a wider variety of thinking skills.

The unit leads teachers to:

- use a variety of inventive teaching approaches to make musical learning more interesting, exciting and effective;

- establish a map of learning over the key stage which identifies a range of musical learning challenges;

- create progression in the range of creative challenges pupils are set;

- set musical challenges that focus on how to learn, as much as on what to do.

This will enable teachers to:

- draw upon a range of non-musical strategies and contexts to make clearer the musical conventions being studied;

- draw upon creative teaching strategies from across the curriculum;

- provide a variety of learning challenges created by working within different musical styles, genres and traditions, and by taking different roles in musical activities;

- make explicit to pupils the sorts of musical challenges they are facing, and the types of thinking they will need to employ;

- develop 'abstract musical thinking' by exploring the aesthetic possibilities of the musical materials themselves;

- plan learning that requires pupils to solve problems rather than simply complete activities;

- use existing research on developing pupils' thinking skills to improve musical learning.

As a result, pupils can:

- respond imaginatively to a range of starting points;

- draw upon previous learning from within and beyond their music lessons;

- expect the unexpected and make the most of it;

- respond effectively to different sorts of musical challenges;

- employ appropriate musical thinking to meet those challenges, evaluating work effectively in terms of its originality and value;

- ask open-ended questions (e.g. 'What if …?');

- develop a sense of enquiry and a willingness to speculate and take risks;

- use a range of thinking and learning skills to achieve their outcome.

Background

A range of inspection and research evidence identifies common issues for creative teaching and learning in music. It also describes how successful teaching finds solutions that enable positive musical learning. The main characteristics are outlined below.

Common issues

- Pupils do not always understand what they are learning, why they are learning it and how they can best make progress. They are therefore unclear about the sorts of musical challenges they face, and the thinking appropriate to meet those challenges. As a result, they fall back on ideas and methods remembered from previous tasks rather than developing new ones.

- They find it harder to engage with some starting points than others, especially when composing. At the initial stages of composing, pupils also need more time to develop the music so that it has style and structure.

- They find themselves under pressure to perform pieces before they are completed, and do not have sufficient time to invent and try out their ideas for composing.

- Pupils are sometimes given tasks that constrain rather than liberate their imagination. Their creative attempts to meet the needs of a task are not always recognised, and they do not move forwards. They are not given the opportunity to find their own solution to problems.

- They often do not know how to evaluate their own or others' creative work effectively.

Resolving the issues

Clear learning objectives make explicit what kind of musical challenge pupils are being presented with, and what types of thinking might be needed to meet the challenge. Setting objectives for both music and creativity helps pupils to understand how they might learn in order to address specific music challenges.

Pupils are engaged and challenged more effectively if a range of starting points is offered. Some pupils will respond more imaginatively to one type of stimulus than to another (e.g. a title or musical phrase when composing; samba or counting songs when performing). Different starting points can also offer different levels of challenge because one starting point may stimulate musical imagery more readily than another, e.g. 'Space journey' rather than 'Space'.

Providing sufficient time for pupils to explore, select, develop and refine ideas improves the development and consolidation of their musical understanding. Keeping preparation time for a performance separate helps them to focus on this creative process.

Pupils' imagination is stimulated and liberated when they are given the opportunity to fulfil a task by drawing both on prior learning and on problem-solving skills. When a task offers limited materials, resources and processes, it results in limited creativity and limited outcomes.

Regular opportunities to evaluate work enable pupils to recognise what they have learned, and appreciate how they can use that learning in the future. The evaluation process will be more useful if they can develop a range of strategies for sharing ideas constructively and a set of values or criteria against which to judge work.

Factors affecting creative teaching and learning

The creativity agenda

The 1999 report *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (www.dfes.gov.uk/naccce) produced by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) identified the need for a creative education system that would 'develop young people's capacities for original ideas and action' in order to unlock their potential.

In 2000, the revised National Curriculum Orders reflected this need for greater creativity in education. In particular, the generic key skills and thinking skills listed in the QCA *Teacher's Guide* indicate ways by which music teachers can promote creativity in lessons, through improving pupils' skills in solving problems and thinking creatively.

Recognising the characteristics of creativity

The QCA publication *Creativity: find it, promote it* (2004), available via the web site www.ncaction.org.uk/creativity, gives more detailed guidance on how schools can develop pupils' creativity. It draws upon NACCCE's definition of creativity, which identifies four essential characteristics.

- Creativity always involves **imaginative** thinking or behaviour.

- This imaginative activity is **purposeful**.

- These processes should generate something **original**.

- The outcome must be of **value** in relation to the objective.

It is possible to use these four characteristics as a checklist to identify whether pupils are truly working creatively in a lesson. In particular, one can quickly identify the difference between lessons that set pupils prescribed, closed tasks and those that offer pupils opportunities to make choices, solve problems and develop their musical thinking.

Focusing on types of activities   **15 minutes**

Select a Key Stage 3 lesson you have recently taught.

Think about the type of activity that was included in this lesson and consider its potential for promoting pupils' creative thinking.

- Did this activity present the pupils with a musical challenge that captured their **imagination**?

- Did it give them a clear **purpose** for their work (i.e. was it directed towards achieving an objective)?

- Did it offer them scope to produce something that was **original** for them (as a pupil or as a class)?

- Is their work leading to something of true **value** in meeting its purpose (i.e. will it do the job)?

Make a note of your thoughts, and plan and try developments in your next lesson. If there are longer-term implications for your planning, also note these and begin to find ways of making changes.

Connecting different aspects of the music curriculum

While these questions and criteria may be applied most directly to composition work, they should also be used in identifying the potential for creativity when performing or listening and appraising.

Performing skills require pupils to develop an understanding of how best to communicate by controlling musical sounds, and how to contribute most effectively to a performance. In order to be able to do this, they need to make choices (e.g. which piece, who with, who will lead, what speed?), solve problems (e.g. how to keep together, how to balance parts) and develop musical thinking (e.g. deciding upon the right singing style for a piece). These are all key elements of creativity.

Listening and appraising skills are intrinsically linked with the development of both performing and composing skills. However, even activities based around 'audience' listening (e.g. discussing or writing about a piece of recorded music) will require the higher-level thinking skills that are a prominent feature of creativity. For example: recognising and identifying a style of music because of similarities to music heard previously ('application'); identifying specific features within the music ('analysis'); using different pieces of information to come to a decision about the music ('synthesis'); and giving a considered and supported opinion about the music, particularly when recognising the value or success of a piece of work, relative to its intention ('evaluation'). See Resource 3a (a lesson exploring 'Night Train') as an example of how these categories can be used to encourage creative listening.
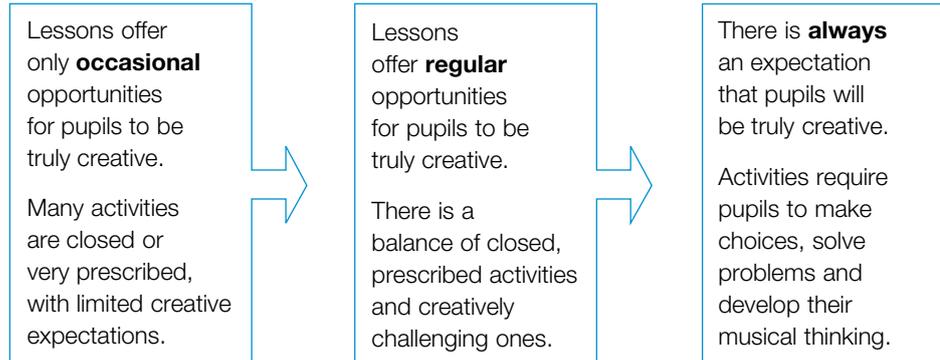
Creative opportunities: performing, listening and appraising skills

10 minutes

Consider the previous points relating to performing, listening and appraising skills.

Now consider your Key Stage 3 schemes of work overall. Where would you place your department against the criteria below in terms of creative opportunities for:

- performing?

- listening and appraising?

| Lessons offer only **occasional** opportunities for pupils to be truly creative. Many activities are closed or very prescribed, with limited creative expectations. | Lessons offer **regular** opportunities for pupils to be truly creative. There is a balance of closed, prescribed activities and creatively challenging ones. | There is **always** an expectation that pupils will be truly creative. Activities require pupils to make choices, solve problems and develop their musical thinking. |

Development: As you work through the unit, consider what short- and longer-term steps you could take to move your department further along the progress scale in respect of creative performing and creative listening and appraising, in addition to the area of composition.

Teaching creatively

Firing pupils' imagination

Pupils can be inspired by and learn from creative strategies that the teacher uses to introduce or develop points of learning. *Creativity: find it, promote it* (QCA, 2004) describes how inventive strategies can 'fire pupils' imagination through other learning and experiences'. These strategies can draw upon learning and experiences from beyond the environment of the music lesson and spark creative learning.

Some of the external experiences drawn upon may be of a specifically musical nature, such as:

- playing or singing in a pop group with friends;

- mixing and DJ-ing on PCs or decks;

- singing gospel in church;

- attending lessons and ensemble activities provided by the local music service.

When planning and teaching music lessons, teachers should recognise prior musical learning that particular pupils bring with them, enabling those pupils to make connections between their activity in and beyond the classroom.

Drawing upon pupils' prior experience — 15 minutes

Consider any Year 7 class that you teach.

How much do you know about the musical learning and experience of each of the pupils in that class, not just that obtained from primary school but from other areas of their lives?

Are there opportunities for them to talk about what they have done and what they have learned elsewhere?

What opportunities have your lessons offered them to draw upon this learning and experience when working on something 'new'?

Who else can you talk to, either in school or in the wider local community, to find out more about the community music-making activities that KS2 pupils may take part in?

You may find information about existing or potential music-making opportunities, nationally or in your local area, by visiting:

www.musicmanifesto.co.uk; www.musicalfutures.org.uk; www.youthmusic.org.uk

Other experiences may have no immediate connection with music but can be used to fire imagination and build on existing learning. For instance, some pupils may:

- be part of a dance group;

- spend time at home drawing or designing gadgets;

- play 'simulation' computer games that require long-term strategic planning.

These activities all help children to understand how the world works and to understand how they best think and learn. This apparently non-musical understanding can also be capitalised upon, and used to 'fire imagination'.

Inventive teaching strategies

Teachers can fire pupils' imagination through other learning and experiences by developing a variety of teaching strategies that will make musical learning more interesting, exciting and effective. When doing this, it is important to give pupils insight into how the creative process works. The teacher (and pupils) can model this by taking on the role of performer, composer or listener, sharing thoughts and queries with the class, and inviting their contributions

Using prior knowledge and experience

Activities like 'Odd one out' and 'Observation' (see case studies 1a and 1b) will draw out pupils' prior learning and experience in a particular area. These activities can be introduced at any point in a lesson, but work particularly well at the start.

Odd one out – using prior musical knowledge and experience

In a Year 7 lesson, in which the differences between waltz and march styles will be explored (especially the differences in their metres), the teacher wants to find out what the pupils already know.

At the very start of the lesson (before discussing learning objectives or revealing the context for the lesson) she draws their attention to three words on the board:

MARCH   GARAGE   WALTZ

She asks them to work in twos or threes and gives them 3 minutes to identify the odd one out.

The pupils start sharing what they think the words mean, making connections between them, contrasting and comparing them, suggesting and rejecting hypotheses. The teacher circulates and listens to the discussions, occasionally prompting and encouraging groups with comments and questions such as 'Good point. And what about …?', 'Is that the only …?', 'So you're saying …', 'Try thinking about …'.

Some pupils recognise that all three words can be musical styles. Others recognise that two words have double meanings (March: month or musical style; garage: building or contemporary dance music). Most realise that march and waltz are older musical styles than garage, and some that they are performed very differently. A few remember from primary school or instrument lessons that a march is in 2 or 4 time (L–R, L–R) while a waltz goes 1–2–3, 1–2–3. Some talk about waltzes that they have seen at wedding receptions and others about popular TV ballroom dancing competitions. One child realises that garage dance music has the same kind of metre as march, but not the same as waltz.

At the end of 3 minutes a huge amount of information has been shared and discussed, and the teacher asks for pupils' answers to the question: 'Which is the odd one out?'

Various groups and individuals propose answers. Some are more 'musical' than others but it soon becomes apparent that there is no right answer. At this point the teacher introduces the learning objectives, discusses them briefly with the class, and moves into the main part of the lesson on waltz and march.

Odd one out: using picutres

Watch Video 3a to see a section of a lesson on the process of creating a blues melody, which starts with an 'Odd one out' activity to refresh pupils' prior knowledge and thinking about the nature of blues music. Notice how it moves from open-ended questions to more focused questions about the relationship of the pictures to the pupils' prior knowledge about blues, and finally links all of this to the learning objectives for the lesson.

Observation – using prior, non-musical knowledge

A lesson introducing Indonesian gamelan starts by showing pupils a colour picture of a gamelan orchestra performing behind a costumed dancer. The pupils are asked to discuss in pairs what they can see in the picture, what they can infer from what they see, and what questions they would like to ask.

Their paired discussions draw out many aspects of prior knowledge from different areas of their experience, both musical and non-musical, and both directly and indirectly related to the subject of the picture. Their imagination is fired: they want to learn more. As they talk, pupils record their ideas to focus their thinking and to use when giving feedback later. The picture for this type of activity could be posted or projected on a board, or incorporated into a form as follows.

What I'd like to know

   What I can infer

      What I can see

         Picture
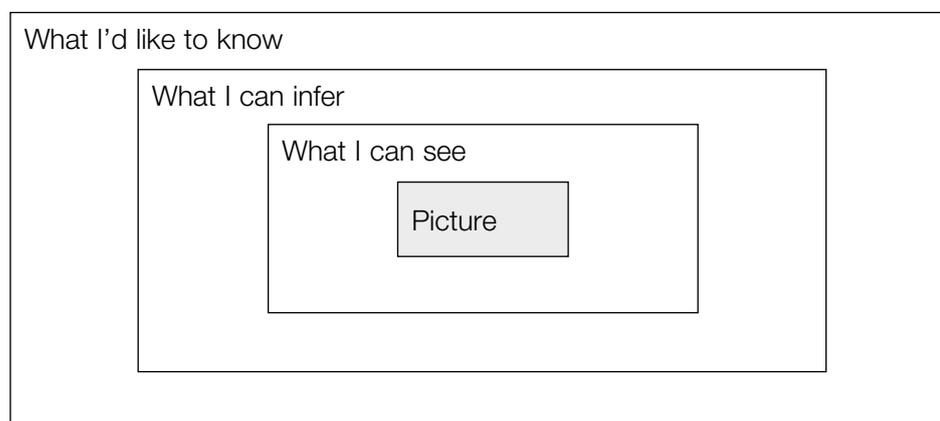
Task 4

Adapting a lesson plan   **20 minutes**

Select a lesson you are about to teach that introduces new ideas to the pupils.

Adapt the lesson plan to include:

- an alternative use of music that enables pupils to use prior musical knowledge and skills;

- an alternative use of non-musical stimuli to fire imagination;

- an example of you as teacher, or the pupils, modelling the creative process.

Development: You can find out more about effective starters in the training materials *Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools*, Unit 5: Starters and plenaries (DfES 0428-2004 G) with supporting video exemplification from a range of subjects on the DVD (DfES 0445-2004 GDVD).

You can also find out more about the processes of modelling in Unit 4: Modelling in music.

Group work

Collaborative or group-work strategies

Collaborative strategies require pupils to work and discuss effectively in groups. For music teachers to establish an environment in which creativity can thrive, it is important to adopt a range of methods for group work and group talk, as well as specific conventions (rules) that pupils will understand and follow.

The generic principles and strategies for effective group work can be found in Unit 10 of *Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools*: Group work (DfES 0433-2004 G). The unit also outlines the benefits and limitations of different grouping methods, suggests a range of strategies for structuring group work, and identifies specific strategies for developing social skills.

Given that in music, pupils regularly work in groups, creative music teaching should use the power of these strategies to generate effective independent learning. Providing pupils with set roles and responsibilities does not restrict them, but provides an impetus for creative learning. Specific strategies that are useful in music include:

- selecting groups to suit the task;

- identifying specific roles and responsibilities for each pupil (leader, creator, conductor, decision maker);

- giving pupils tasks that require them to work individually or in pairs first;

- structuring the tasks for the group by breaking the main challenge into smaller units (e.g. 'Select from these sounds first; now create an opening riff; now teach the riff to the other pair in your group.').

Creating a group piece

The teacher has set a Year 8 class an open-ended abstract musical challenge which involves working with a group of simple musical materials to create a short group piece of their own choice. He wants to ensure that the pupils work effectively in the group so that they can explore and share ideas in a productive way.

The musical materials consist of a fragment of melody, a couple of ostinato patterns, three different chords and a phrase of text. The class have been through these ideas and explored them extensively with the teacher beforehand.

Each pupil is given an A4 sheet of paper divided into two, with the musical materials represented centrally in words or notation in the form of a 'composer's notepad' (Resource 3b is an another example of a composer's notepad, created for a unit on Japanese music). In pairs, they are first asked to work **individually** for just 5 minutes on one or more of the given ideas in whatever way they choose. They can each use a keyboard or percussion instrument to explore and support their thinking. By the end of the 5 minutes, they must be able to describe what they did with their chosen ideas, and what effect it has had, by writing a couple of sentences in the top half of the paper.

At the end of 5 minutes they swop sheets with their partner, and demonstrate musically their new idea to the other person, who does the same in return.

For the next 5 minutes, each pupil takes **either** their partner's new idea **or** another of the source materials, and makes a further adaptation, improvement or refinement. Again, they must describe what they did with their chosen ideas, and what effect it has had, this time writing in the bottom half of the paper. And again they demonstrate to each other. (See example of sheet completed to this point.)

At the end of about 15 minutes, both pupils are ready to share ideas with another pair. The two pairs are going to continue the composition now as a group of four. They compare ideas, decide which ones work best and which ones need to be dropped or improved further, and begin to work on an agreed structure.

1st new idea/s:

I have combined the scale notes with the first ostinato, by playing the rhythm once on each note.

It makes it get more exciting as it goes higher. (Joe)

and my world changed at that moment

2nd new idea/s:

I changed Joe's idea a bit more, by doing the rhythm on the 1st, 3rd, 2nd, 4th, 3rd and 5th notes in that order.

It made it last longer, and it wasn't quite so obvious any more. (Helen)

Considering a strategy to increase creativity   30 minutes

Select one of the next units or activities that you are due to begin with a class.

Consider how you might promote a more creative approach from the pupils by using one of the strategies described above, or another that you have drawn from elsewhere.

Plan to include that strategy effectively in the appropriate lesson.

Development: When delivering the planned lesson, monitor pupils' responses relative to your previous expectations and reflect on the impact the changes have had on pupils' learning and achievement.

Group talk

Group discussion will be a necessary element of most music lessons, for example wherever pupils plan a composition or performance together and prepare a presentation for the class. Among the strategies for structuring group work identified in Unit 10 of *Pedagogy and practice: teaching and learning in secondary schools*: Group work (DfES 0433-2004 G) and module 7 of *Literacy across the curriculum* (DfES 0235/2001), the following will be useful in particular types of music lesson.

Listening triads: Pupils work in groups of three. Each pupil takes one role – talker, questioner or recorder. The talker explains something, or comments on an issue, or expresses opinions. The questioner prompts and seeks clarification. The recorder makes notes and gives a report at the end of the conversation. Next time, pupils change roles.

Example: The talker gives an appraisal of their most recent piece of work. The questioner supports the talker by prompting constructively and clarifying points. The recorder summarises the discussion for the group or for the class.

Envoys: Once groups have carried out a task, one person from each group is selected as an envoy. The envoys move to a new group to explain and summarise their group's work and to find out what the new group thought, decided or achieved. The envoys then return to their original groups and give feedback. This is an effective way of avoiding tedious and repetitive reporting-back sessions. It also encourages the envoys to think about their use of language and creates groups of active listeners.

Example: As part of a listening activity, groups hear and discuss the same piece of music. Envoys listen to another group's ideas or answers and return to their own groups for comparison. This encourages learning from one another.

Jigsaw: A topic is divided into sections. In home groups of four or five, pupils take a section each and then regroup into expert groups. The experts work together on their chosen areas, then return to their home groups to report on their area of expertise. The home group is then set a task that requires the pupils to use the different areas of expertise for a joint outcome. This strategy requires advance planning, but is a very effective speaking and listening strategy because it ensures the participation of all pupils.

Example: As part of a research session in the ICT suite, each expert group researches a different aspect of a topic, using the Internet and CD-ROMs. The experts return to their home groups to report back in turn. The home group now has within it knowledge of all the research carried out in this session.

| Task 6 | **Considering a strategy to improve the quality of talk** | **30 minutes** |

Select one of the next units or activities that you are due to begin with a class.

Consider how you might use one of the above strategies for structuring group work to improve the quality of talk, especially where pupils are listening to or evaluating music.

Plan to include that strategy effectively in the appropriate lesson.

Development: When delivering the planned lesson, monitor pupils' responses relative to your previous expectations and reflect on the impact the changes have had on pupils' learning and achievement.

Capitalising on unexpected learning opportunities

Creative people are prepared to take risks to achieve an outcome of originality and value. Teaching creatively means recognising that unexpected things often happen, and that these can be valuable for all concerned. Teachers and pupils should 'expect the unexpected', and aim to capitalise on the learning opportunities that result. This will enable pupils to seek alternative solutions, overcome fear of the unknown, and develop problem-solving skills and imaginative thinking.

For teachers, this means:

- creating an environment which encourages curiosity, enquiry, problem solving;

- identifying when risk taking could be incorporated into an activity;

- explaining and modelling these strategies for pupils;

- actively pursuing pupils' ideas and questions, even if they seem tangential at first;

- being prepared to divert from the original lesson plan or its timing;

- helping pupils to understand that some ideas may lead up a blind alley, but that this is an essential part of learning (i.e. 'failure' can be an option, if it leads to success by another route!).

For pupils, this means:

- drawing upon others' knowledge and experience;

- asking questions of themselves and the teacher that follow their curiosity and challenge musical conventions, such as 'What if ...?', 'Why ...?' and 'How ...?';

- following lines of thought that interest them;

- recognising that musical mistakes or accidents in their work may lead somewhere new and interesting;

- having confidence in their own thoughts and ideas and knowing that these will be listened to seriously by others, especially the teacher.

'What if …?'

A Year 7 class is working on QCA Unit 6: Shanty time. The teacher is discussing with pupils the chord structure of 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor?', and by using a modelling strategy is speculating on how the chords and bass could be arranged in different ways.

She asks herself (for the pupils' benefit) a 'What if …?' question: 'I wonder what it will sound like if I use fast repeated chords in the right hand?', and tries it out as she sings the tune. The pupils think it sounds more exciting, more energetic.

Now she challenges someone to ask her a 'What if …?' question. A pupil asks 'What if you play the tune low down while the fast chords go on at the top?'. The teacher demonstrates, and pupils comment on the effect that the change has had. The teacher encourages pupils to 'think outside the box', taking risks and challenging conventional solutions.

Before setting the class to work in groups on their own arrangements, the teacher says that she expects every pupil to ask a 'What if …?' question while they are exploring possibilities.

Later on, when pupils are working in groups, she notes that one group has picked up on the idea of playing the melody in the bass (resulting from the earlier 'What if …?' question), and that a number of other interesting effects are being developed through pupils asking their own questions and generally 'taking risks' with ideas.

Task 7 | **'What if …?' questions** | **30 minutes**

In any unit of work, look at a composing or performing activity that you have planned.

Identify where you can expect pupils to ask 'What if …?' questions so as to speculate, challenge conventions and take risks in this work. While learning objectives still need to be met, these questions should lead to new musical discoveries and learning: 'What if' questions are not designed to simply reinforce the primacy of existing conventions. Rather, they should encourage pupils to challenge conventions and seek alternative solutions.

Now identify (a) the time allowed for these; (b) the strategies you will use to ensure that their work allows them to be **imaginative** and **original**, yet remains **purposeful** and results in something of **value**; and (c) how you will enable pupils to recognise where their creative learning has taken them, and how to share this with others in the class.

Development: Adapt the unit to accommodate your ideas, then teach it and monitor the impact of the strategies used.

Mid-unit review

At this point in the unit, it is worth reflecting on how you have developed your understanding of the unit's principles, and the impact of this on your classroom practice.

Look back at the Recognising impact statements on page 2. Identify and consider how you can develop further:

a)   principles described in the first section which you now understand more securely and which are a more consistent focus for your teaching;

b)   detailed strategies from the second section which are used more frequently in your teaching and which deliver intended learning more effectively;

c)   positive changes you have noticed in pupils' learning or engagement, and how you can best build on them as you work through the remainder of the unit.

You may also wish to re-visit some of the unit to embed the new practice more securely before moving on to new ideas. Alternatively, if certain strategies have been particularly effective with one class, you may wish to use them with other classes, and to share the impact more widely across the department with colleagues.

Providing varied musical challenges

In order for pupils to develop their musical skills, knowledge and understanding effectively, teachers should ensure that a varied range of musical challenges is planned into schemes of work.

The types of challenge include:

• working across different musical styles, genres and traditions (e.g. African drumming, music for film, notated vocal music);

• taking different roles within musical activities (e.g. singing, leading an ensemble, performing a solo instrumental piece);

• developing distinctive musical skills (e.g. evaluating work through written commentaries, improvising a jazz break, using various forms of music technology).

Within the first of these, it is important for pupils' musical development that they are given opportunities to respond to challenges that involve abstract musical thinking (illustrated on page 11). This can produce greater creativity in pupils, since it is more open-ended in terms of outcome and requires a higher level of problem-solving skill. As an example of this way of working, you may find it useful to see Resource 1f which is a teacher's plan for a Year 9 unit that deliberately sets out to develop abstract musical thinking.

Consider the range of musical skills you require of your pupils in Key Stage 3, and identify the sorts of challenges that you are setting within your schemes of work.

Is there a range of challenges?

Are pupils aware of the challenges being set and do they understand the creative skills that they will need to meet them?

Setting a clear purpose for pupils' work

If a range of challenges is to be set, pupils need to understand what the specific challenge is for any given activity. This will require them to be given a clear purpose for their work by teachers, who should be:

- making explicit to pupils the sorts of musical challenges and thinking required;

- setting clear learning objectives for both music and creativity;

- providing pupils with a clear brief for tasks;

- sequencing learning within units and across the key stage to ensure progression in music, creativity and thinking.

At the same time, teachers need to encourage enquiry and risk taking in pupils' work, and to make provision for this in planning. In order to accommodate this approach, teachers should plan activities that are open-ended and challenging, not tasks that are over-prescriptive and have limited outcomes. Moreover, planned opportunities for developing creativity in pupils' work should be reflected in the learning objectives for the lesson.

Case study 5

'What if …?' (continued)

In the shanty song lesson example above, the lesson plan identified learning objectives for both music and creativity.

In this lesson, pupils will learn:

to identify how harmonic structures work in a song; (musical)

how rhythmic ideas can be used in accompaniments; (musical)

to explore and develop alternative solutions and ask 'What if …?', in relation to **texture**. (creative)

For the following lesson, the nature of the creative challenge changed to:

to explore and develop possibilities through taking risks and asking 'What if ...?', in relation to **structure**.

Pupils were now encouraged to ask questions about the structure of their shanty arrangements, such as 'What would it sound like if we put in an instrumental section after one of the verses?', or 'What would happen if we changed the number of call and response lines in one of the verses?'

This progression in creative challenge and purpose was made explicit to the pupils.

Task 9

Learning objectives   30 minutes

Take a unit of work that you are due to begin next, and look closely at the learning objectives for both the unit and individual lessons. Use the space below to note brief answers to the questions.

Do the objectives merely state what pupils will *do* (i.e. activities), or do they make explicit what pupils are intended to *learn*?

Are there objectives for creativity or thinking, as well as for music?

Are the objectives clear about the types of musical challenge involved?

Do they indicate what *kinds* of learning and thinking will be required to meet challenges?

Development: In the light of your responses, refine the unit and lesson objectives to address these issues. Plan to repeat the process with other units.

Freedoms and constraints

Creativity is sometimes equated with 'freedom of expression'. However, in reality creative people usually work within specific constraints (i.e. to a clear brief), leaving sufficient freedom for them to use their imagination to meet the brief in an original way. It is worth recalling here the characteristics of creativity from NACCCE: imagination, purpose, originality and value.

Task 10

Identifying freedoms and constraints in challenges   30 minutes

Watch Video 3b which identifies freedoms and constraints in a lesson on the conventions of blues music. Notice how the teacher is explicit about the language and how the issue will impact on the pupils' own work.

Look again at the unit of work you considered in Task 9.

Identify the specific freedoms and constraints that you have built into the challenges within the unit. These could relate to any of the following: time allowed, scale of outcome, choice of musical materials, resources, style or genre, starting points or tasks.

Now consider the following questions: Are freedoms and constraints clear in your planning? Are they clear to your pupils? Is the balance between them such that pupils can be focused and engaged, while allowing them to make choices about their methods and direction? Is the work likely to result in a range of outcomes that demonstrates pupils' imagination and originality?

Development: Adapt the unit as necessary to address the issues raised by these questions.

Establishing criteria for success

A key factor in effective creative learning is the recognition of success. If pupils are clear about the purpose of their work, they should be equally clear about the success of their outcome. In order to meet a challenge or fulfil a brief, they need to be able to ask themselves: 'How will I know when I've got there?' As in any assessment process, clear learning outcomes help them to do this, but the process depends upon the existance of a clear progression in the learning challenge. The progression should identify not only musical attributes but also creative and thinking ability.

Progression in musical learning is exemplified clearly in the National Curriculum (2000) attainment target, through the different levels. The development of creative and thinking skills is implicit within the levels. For example, here is the progression identified for improvisation skills:

Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
improvise repeated patterns	improvise melodic and rhythmic phrases as part of a group performance	improvise melodic and rhythmic material within given structures, use a variety of notations	improvise and compose in different genres and styles, using harmonic and non-harmonic devices where relevant, sustaining and developing musical ideas and achieving different intended effects	create coherent compositions drawing on internalised sounds and adapt, improvise, develop, extend and discard musical ideas within given and chosen musical structures, genres, styles and traditions

Teachers' planning for Key Stage 3 will need to identify not only the types of musical challenge that will allow pupils to make progress, but also the types of thinking they will need to employ in order to meet those challenges.

Case study 6

Year 7 challenge: Using acoustic and electronic sound sources, create a soundscape for an atmospheric storyline.

The musical challenge for pupils here is to apply their (new) knowledge and understanding of sound sources to a specific purpose within an implied structure. The musical thinking required is at a largely representational level, in response to a fairly straightforward problem: 'How can I use different acoustic and electronic sounds to fit well with this story?'

If you want to know more about using audio recording software, you can go to the Practical Support Pack module called Discovering processing effects.

Year 9 challenge: Use acoustic and electronic sound sources to create a short 'sound portrait' of one of the characters in this story (play, film, etc.).

The musical challenge for pupils here is to analyse the chosen character, analyse the types of sounds that might be used, and synthesise these into an effective piece of music. This will require them to draw upon all their musical learning experience from Key Stage 3 and beyond, and use those higher level thinking skills to solve the problem: 'How can I use different acoustic and electronic sounds, together with live sound processing techniques, to portray an abstract character?'
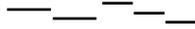
Sharing the purpose of these challenges with pupils will help them to gain ownership of the 'big picture' in their musical learning, and enable them to more easily make connections between areas of learning.

Equally, it is possible to identify progression in the challenge of abstract musical thinking, as shown in the next case study.
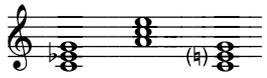
Case study 7

Year 7 challenge

The composer's notebook contains the following ideas:

- a short diatonic scale (D E F G A)
- a melodic idea in graphic notation
- a rhythmic ostinato
- 'something calm and something exciting'
- a piece of text: 'And my world changed at that moment'

Year 9 challenge

The composer's notebook contains the following ideas:

- two scales (Dorian and Raga Dhani)
- a melodic idea
- a rhythmic ostinato
- an arpeggio riff
- a more complicated bass riff
- three chords – Cm, Am and C
- 'something about growing or fading'
- a piece of text: 'Let earth grow warm and wake'

Learning outcomes for tasks based on this understanding of progression should not only identify whether pupils have achieved a task, but also with what quality it has been achieved. Setting clear learning objectives for both music and creativity or thinking provides the basis for establishing these success criteria. Meeting *creativity* objectives will help pupils to judge their work not only in terms of whether it fulfils its purpose, but particularly in relation to its *originality and value*. Thus pupils can develop their own criteria for judging success and effectiveness. You can read more in Unit 5: Challenge in music about how to plan for quality of musical outcomes and how to focus on imagination and creativity in order to facilitate progression in musical understanding.

Focusing on progression and quality — One lesson

During a lesson in which your pupils are involved in an individual or group activity, try asking questions based on the principles of progression and quality described above.

For example:

'So you're working on … but tell me what you think makes a *good* …?'

'How do you think you'll know when you've got it right?'

'What do you think makes your work original?'

Pupils' responses to these sorts of questions can be very revealing. If pupils were unclear in their answers, consider the possible reasons for this, and how you might amend your planning or teaching accordingly.

Enabling pupils to use a wider variety of thinking skills

Throughout this unit there has been an explicit link made between creativity and thinking. This is because both are largely concerned with aspects of problem solving. The range of problems that pupils are asked to solve (i.e. meeting challenges or fulfilling briefs) is very wide, and might include the following.

- How can we make this sound better?

- How can we sing this in time?

- How can I use this keyboard or software to do what I want?

- How do I work out what style that music is in?

- Why do I recognise this style?

- Why does this piece sound different to that one?

The 'How …?' and 'Why …?' questions are crucial to pupils' developing an understanding of how things work in music. The hierarchy of thinking most commonly alluded to is based upon Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom and Krathwohl, 1956), which identifies six levels of thinking and questioning, shown below from lower order to higher order. (See Unit 4: Modelling in music, pages 12–15, for further exploration of Bloom's taxonomy.)

Knowledge ⟶ **Comprehension** ⟶ **Application** ⟶ **Analysis** ⟶

Synthesis ⟶ **Evaluation**

Research has consistently shown that most questions asked by teachers (and therefore most of the thinking required of pupils to answer them) come from the first two categories, which relate to factual recall and comprehension. However, achievement at level 5 and above requires thinking in Bloom's higher order categories of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. For example, the underlined skills at levels 5 and 6 relate to higher-order thinking:

Level 5: ... <u>analyse</u> and <u>compare</u> musical features ... <u>evaluate</u> how venue, occasion and purpose affects the way music is created, performed and heard.

Level 6: ... <u>analyse</u>, <u>compare</u> and <u>evaluate</u> how music reflects the contexts in which it is created, performed and heard.

As with the questions that teachers ask, the nature of any musical challenge will determine the expectation of pupils' thinking and responding. It is important to set challenges that focus not only on what the pupils should do, but also on how they can learn in the process. The same basic task can therefore be presented in very different ways.

REGGAE BEAT: basic task (focusing on *what to do*)

a) Learn to play the following chord sequence:

```
Am    | G    | F    | G    |
Am    | G    | G    | G    :‖  Fill


Dm    | C    | Dm   | C    |
Dm    | C    | E    | E    :‖  Fill
```

b) Make up a melody to fit the chords.

REGGAE BEAT: enriched task (balancing what to do with *how to learn*)

a) Learn to play the following chord sequence, on fingered chords:

Section A:

Am | G | F | G |

Am | G | G | G   :‖   Fill

(both repeat and placement of fill are optional)

Section B:

Dm | C | Dm | C |

Dm | C | E | E   :‖   Fill

(both repeat and placement of fill are optional)

Thinking challenge 1

- What would be an appropriate speed at which to play this reggae sequence ?

- How many bars do you want each chord to be played for: 1, 2, 4 … ?

- Should the pattern of chords per bar be the same in both sections?

- Which fill do you want to use – and will it come on the chord or after it?

- Do you want to repeat either or both of the sections?

b) Now play the sequence using fully fingered chords instead of single fingered.

Thinking challenge 2

- What voice do you want to use for the chords now?

- Add a bass line (play the chord root in octaves), and make a rhythmic pattern between it and the chords: will you use 'standard' reggae (L RR L R) or something different?

- Can you vary or decorate the basic pattern within the style?

- Mix up the chords and play them in a random order. How does it sound?

- Go back to the original sequence **but** make the major chords minor, and the minor chords major. What difference does this make? Does it still sound like reggae? If not, why not? Does it sound good?

- Create your own sequence (but using the same chords) that you think maintains the reggae style.

Task 12	**Devising thinking challenges**	**30 minutes**

Take a performing activity similar to the 'REGGAE BEAT: basic task' above that you plan to use with a class in the near future.

Adapt it so that it is more like the enriched task by adding a series of thinking challenges.

Having used the new version with pupils, consider the impact on their motivation and learning.

Thinking together – exploratory talk

A vital strategy for improving the quality of pupils' talk in paired or group activity is to encourage the class to compile and agree a set of ground rules for talking together. These rules will ensure that everyone knows what is expected in discussions, and will support the kind of productive, exploratory discussion that both teachers and pupils will value. Typically, rules will expect pupils to:

- be actively encouraged to contribute;

- offer opinions and ideas;

- provide reasons for their opinions and ideas;

- share all relevant information;

- feel free to disagree if they have a good reason;

- ask other people for information and reasons;

- treat other people's ideas with respect;

- try to come to an agreement;

- change their mind if they are persuaded by good reasoning.

Research tells us that children appreciate the ability to engage with their peers in rational debate, particularly where they can apply the rules for talk in their group work. However, we also know that such talk rarely occurs naturally in classrooms; the teacher needs to set the expectations.

In exploratory talk:

- pupils and teachers engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas;

- contributions build on previous comments;

- relevant information is offered for joint consideration;

- there is speculation;

- pupils give reasons for their views and seek them from others;

- reasoning is apparent in the talk.

Lesson planning, observation and review   **30 minutes**

With a colleague, plan a lesson. Ask the colleague to observe your teaching with a specific brief to focus on the impact of opportunities within the lesson for pupils to engage in exploratory talk.

Ensure that you have time to review the outcomes with your colleague.

Development: You can read more about the use of talk in Section 1 (Speaking and Listening) of *'Literacy in Music'* (DfES 0054-2004G)

Next Steps

This unit has explored an aspect of teaching and learning. You may wish to develop your ideas further, to consolidate, to apply ideas in different contexts or to explore an aspect in more depth and innovate.

Reflection

Refer back to the 'Recognising impact' statements on page 2 and your planning sheet for this unit. Use these to evaluate:

• the impact of this unit on your teaching;

• its impact on pupils' learning.

Developing practice

Here are some suggestions for developing your practice further.

• Identify a task that you feel rarely results in the quality of outcomes you would hope for or expect. Review the key messages in this unit, and consider what particular changes to your planning or teaching strategies would have most impact on the quality of pupils' work. Implement the necessary changes and reflect on the impact on outcomes. For example you might:

  » Compose a piece for the class to play. Model the composing process by developing the piece collaboratively in the classroom, so that pupils work with you in adapting, refining, selecting and rejecting.

  » Create a composer's notepad from which pupils can develop a composition, working in groups from a set of abstract materials. Resource 3b is an example called 'Haiku'.

  » Design a performing task in which pupils are required to create their own expressive interpretations of material that they have chosen or that you have taught them by ear.

  » Plan a lesson focused on a creative approach to listening and appraising. Choose one piece of recorded music, or two short contrasting pieces. Use Bloom's Taxonomy (see page 21) to develop a series of questions at different levels, for discussion in groups or pairs. Use group talk strategies to support pupils in tackling the questions, for example Jigsaw, Envoy, or Listening Triad. Define the nature of the outcome – it might be a spoken presentation of findings, a written piece, or a poster. Resource 3a is an example created in order to listen to a piece of jazz: 'Night Train'. The example includes both the questions and the pupils' responses.

- Now look at other units in your scheme of work. Find further places where some or all of these strategies will be useful.

- Identify a lesson or unit of work that you feel does not currently offer pupils an effective balance between freedoms and constraints (e.g. in the time allowed for a task, the scale of its outcome, the choice of musical materials, resources, style or genre, starting points or tasks). Adapt the lesson or unit to address the following points.
  - » Are freedoms and constraints clear in your planning?
  - » Are they clear to your pupils?
  - » Is the balance between them such that pupils can be focused and engaged, while allowing them to make choices about their methods and direction?
  - » Is the work likely to result in a range of outcomes that demonstrates pupils' imagination and originality?

- Look at Module 12: Thinking together from the *Training materials for the foundation subjects* (DfES 0350/2002).
  - » Note the thinking strategies outlined in the module. Introduce one of the strategies into your next lesson involving group work.
  - » Monitor and reflect upon the impact of the strategy upon pupils' learning and outcomes.
  - » Aim to develop your practice in this area in future lessons and units, building it into your planning where appropriate.

Setting targets

Having considered your next steps, you may wish to set yourself some personal targets to support your CPD. You could use these targets to inform your performance management discussion.

-

-

-

References and further reading

Reference and examples based on Benjamin S Bloom *et al Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA. © Copyright 1984 by Pearson Education.

Extracts from and references to
www.ncaction.org.uk/subjects/music
QCA Teacher's guide
National Curriculum in Action website & Creativity: find it, promote it (2004).
© Copyright Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Used with permission.

Dawes, L., Mercer, N. and Wegerif, R. (2000) *Thinking together: a programme of activities for developing thinking skills at Key Stage 2*, Questions Publishing

Mercer, N. (2000) *Words and Minds: How we use language to think together*, Routledge. ISBN: 0415224764

Mercer, N., Wegerif, R. and Dawes, L. (1999) *Children's talk and the development of reasoning in the classroom*, British Educational Research Journal 25, no.1, pp. 95-111

McGuinness, C. (1999) *From thinking skills to thinking classrooms: a review and evaluation of approaches for developing pupils' thinking*. DfEE Research Report RR115 (available online at www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RB115.doc)

National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) *All Our Futures: Ccreativity, Culture and Education* (available online at www.dfes.gov.uk/naccce/index1.shtml)

QCA (2004) *Creativity: find it, promote it*, QCA Publications. ISBN: 1 85838 551 2 (available online at www.ncaction.org.uk/creativity)

Disclaimer

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Raising
Standards

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE