MUSIC AND ABILITY
Musicians’ Resource
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Some abbreviations of terms used in reference to children & young people with special educational needs and adults with learning disabilities:

ASD  Autistic Spectrum Disorder
ASN  Additional Support Needs (mainly used in Scotland)
MLD  Moderate Learning Difficulties
SLD  Severe Learning Difficulties
PMLD  Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties
MSI  Multi-Sensory Impairment: people with a combination of visual and hearing difficulties.
VI  Visual impairment
HI  Hearing impairment
SEN  Special Educational Needs
SEBD  Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
LACES  Looked After Children Education Service

STAVE BOARD - Notation and Composition
Working towards composing for SLD learners
Stop starts
Dynamics/speeds
Creating a melody
Call and response
Observing pupil responses

Pupil Responses
The Teacher’s Perspective

CASE STUDY
CBSO CASE STUDY LJA
Brief introduction to the project
Overview/introduction to the pupil
The pupil’s journey
Special moments
How has the involvement of the CBSO made a difference to the life of this pupil?
What were our challenges during the project?
What about emotions?

ADVICE/GUIDANCE FOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS

USEFUL LINKS
Other relevant websites and organisations
Case Studies from other organisations
Interesting articles and guides about delivering music activities for young people with SEND
Some useful books
Our Top Tips

MUSICIAN CASE STUDIES
Jackie’s Journey
Musical and Ability/Youth Music Five-Term Project
Jane’s experience

RESOURCES: MUSICIAN REFLECTION TEMPLATE
Sounds of intent
Familiarisation session checklist

CBSO INSTRUMENT LIBRARY
This resource pack has been created by musicians for musicians, and we hope that the hints, tips and shared experiences contained within it will provide you with not only with ideas for activities and projects with children and young people with special educational needs, but may inspire some musicians to try this work for the first time.

The following team have created this resource:

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CBSO MUSIC & ABILITY MUSICIANS’ TOOLKIT

‘There is always a way in with every child; it might take a while to find it but there is always a way in.’

INTRODUCTION

‘For some of the pupils in a group their life doesn’t have these opportunities, it’s a one off, it’s a unique project... There’s something about the playing element — proper instruments, played by people who can play them — the quality of the sounds. If you’re expecting a child with PMLD to make a responsive gesture, because it is so hard, and takes effort and control, the rewards have to be great.’

PMLD Teacher

The CBSO’s Music & Ability Project partnered with three Special Educational Needs schools within Birmingham, Solihull and Worcestershire over a five-term period between 2017 and 2018. Funded by Youth Music, with the support of an additional thirteen funders, the project aimed to develop positive relationships with these schools in supporting the musical development of their PMLD (profound and multiple learning difficulties) cohorts of pupils. The project simultaneously aimed to increase the workforce and delivery skills of CBSO musicians in working with children and young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities in special educational needs school settings. The project culminated in a final conference event, ‘Celebrating Musical Inclusion’, which shared a range of best practice from across the sector. This included presentations from CBSO musicians who had worked on the Music & Ability project.

Working with children and young people with such profound and complex needs – many of the pupils faced numerous challenges in being able to communicate and express themselves and lived with complex disabilities and medical conditions – meant that both musicians and pupils shared a journey in learning to understand each other and share in music together. For the musicians this was a hugely rewarding experience, but at times emotionally challenging. In some cases, the experience of working with the children and young people added a new dimension to their thinking about being an orchestral musician.

Orchestral Musicians and Engaged Participatory Practice

Existing studies of orchestral musicians participating in community-based education programmes in schools show that such experiences impact on states of professional and personal wellbeing, career perception and professional development. Abeles and Hafeli (2014) reported that orchestral musicians working on a school’s programme in the US had opportunities to express creativity, develop meaningful relationships with schools and pupils, become aware of the potential impact on individual students’ lives, and to serve the community. They also stated that ‘Orchestral musicians’ perspectives of their career paths appear to be enhanced by providing opportunities for them to work closely with students, particularly in under-resourced schools in their communities’. In the UK, these findings are echoed in recent research commissioned by London Music Masters where musicians working in primary school settings reported on the development of professional and interpersonal skills, and musical, cognitive and teaching skills. Aceño (2015) argues that community engagement offers orchestral musicians unique opportunities to develop these skills, and that such participation impacts on a musician’s sense of identity, in making meaningful creative contributions and on feelings of wellbeing.

The majority of opportunities for special schools to engage with orchestral musicians in the UK are currently presented in concert format, either as relaxed/inclusive performances in arts venues or as schools performances, providing much valued — and much needed — opportunities for special school communities to engage with international orchestral artists (Sound Around 2016-18). Programmes that enable specifically PMLD and CLDD (complex learning difficulties and disabilities) pupil populations in the UK to develop impactful, longer term relationships with orchestras and orchestral musicians are limited and not widely documented.

These programmes, however, can offer mutually beneficial learning and artistic experiences. The CBSO’s Music & Ability project has aimed to act as a catalyst in developing new musically, mutually creative, educational opportunities for pupils, schools and orchestral musicians. We have done this by identifying a programme that is of benefit to special schools who serve children with the most complex needs within their populations and producing a valuable specialised learning legacy to be shared within the orchestral sector.

This pack has been designed so that CBSO musicians can share their learning with peers in the UK orchestral sector. It uses their own thoughts and words, collected during the evaluation of the project. Whilst in no way does it assume to contain all the answers surrounding this work, this document aims to share the learning gained by the CBSO musicians in the hope that it can support and encourage other orchestral musicians who wish to — or are curious about the potential to — develop skills to work in this field.

What are special schools?

SEND stands for Special Educational Needs and Disability. The term is used in the UK to describe schools in the UK who support children and young people who have learning disabilities and complex needs. SEND can also be used to describe a child with Special Educational Needs and Disability. Not every child with a disability attends a SEND school. Where possible, pupils are included in mainstream schools as the move towards inclusive education and learning is increasing. However, there are many children and young people whose needs are very complex and who may need the support of medical and specialist teaching staff (specialists in developmental learning delay, sensory impairment or autism for example). These are the pupils whom you may meet in a SEND school.

SEND school populations can range from anything from 140 to 400 pupils. The age range in the school may be three to 19 years.
Some pupils will have been at the school from three years of age. Class sizes are much smaller than in mainstream schools – on average eight to ten pupils per class – but the age range may be much broader, as pupils are sometimes grouped together because of their learning abilities as opposed to chronological age. Classes will have a teacher, and additional support from teaching assistants. Some pupils will have a 1:1 designated support member of staff, whilst other pupils will have additional nurse support for changing and operating medical equipment like suction tubes or respiratory/breathing equipment.

There isn’t really a typical SEND school, but many schools will have populations of children and young people with a range of needs from profound disability to moderate learning disabilities, visual and hearing impairments, autistic spectrum conditions and non-verbal communication needs.

Many SEND schools operate their own curriculums which are tailored to the needs of their pupils. Depending on the ability levels of pupils, classes may study curriculum topics, or more broader areas of a curriculum such as life skills. Some may be working towards GCSEs. Cross-curricular and cross-arts models of working are often used, and classes sometimes take a multi-sensory approach to learning to give pupils an immersive exposure to learning and to build their awareness of the world.

As in any school, music provision can be very varied. Some schools will have full-time music teachers or specialists, some will have music co-ordinators in part-time roles and many schools will rely on the involvement of outside organisations to support musical opportunities for pupils.

Music is important for many pupils in SEND schools as it can be a ‘way in’ to understanding a pupil’s communication. Children and young people may have a musical talent, despite their disabilities and health needs. Music can take the place of words and support the emotional social and musical development of any child, regardless of disability.

Orchestras can bring a rich musical and multi-sensory experience to the heart of the classroom, very often reaching children who find it hard to express their feelings. This experience can support teachers in their work to develop every pupil to his or her fullest potential. For many pupils in SEND schools, opportunities for new experiences can be limited, and life experiences can be restricted. This work can reach some of the most isolated children and young people in the UK today.

**The SEND school environment - what’s it like?**

*The best thing about being in Birmingham for sure! When I first went in I was completely at a loss. Now I feel more confident to talk and not to worry. The biggest things were achieved with the children — they have learned more than I thought they could — we have learned how key we are — how frustrating for pupils when they have difficulties to communicate...we have the power to help them experience things on another level — it’s a huge responsibility.*

When you visit a SEND school for the first time there can be a lot to take in. Many of the children have disabilities and need support in almost every task they do. Many of the pupils may not use language but use their voices to make sounds. It might be hard at first to understand how many of the pupils communicate. There may be moments when you see something that may be distressing or different to what you have experienced before.

Support from teaching staff and assistants at the school can help you to better understand the pupils and your experiences.

Your orchestral education department can be there to provide pastoral support too. When you are working with pupils you should never be on your own and there should always be support with you in the classroom. Every school will have its own procedures for managing any challenging behaviour from pupils, and staff should guide you to make sure you are safe in the classroom. Schools will have guides on what to wear in the classroom and what to do if there are any emergencies. Good general advice is to wear comfortable clothes that you don’t mind getting a little dirty, tie long hair back, do not wear long or hoop earrings and be guided by staff if there is a child who is upset or distressed in the classroom. It’s their job to deal with the situation, not yours!

Music sessions may take place in classrooms, school halls or music rooms. Sometimes pupils may struggle to transition between rooms or be more comfortable in an area they know well. Staff again will be able to guide you. Making the space as focused and uncluttered as possible will give you the best start for your session. Talk to staff about this.

Pupils may respond to live music in many ways. They may vocalise, move about, or suddenly become still. They may lift their heads, turn towards the first section of the sound being made, open their eyes or smile. They may also be unsure, afraid, anxious or upset and need time to acclimatise to this new experience. Remember that the pupils must get to know who you are AND the sound of the instrument you play. It may be the first time they have experienced live music and the vibrations and frequency range may be overwhelming or hugely stimulating. Some pupils may try to reach out, grab hold of you when you play, want to touch your instrument, give you a cuddle or shake your hand! Pupils can be very spontaneous, and staff will be there to support them. Even so, it is important to be aware that a child may suddenly want to make contact with you or your instrument.

Make sure you keep your instrument safe during sessions and get advice from staff as to how best to do this. If possible, use a second instrument so that you can be relaxed in the sessions. You can also talk to your education team about the possibility of buying cheaper ‘education’ instruments – especially stringed instruments to give you the freedom to be able to engage with pupils without any worry about your instrument at all.

Keep language simple, clear and calm. You may learn to use signs to support what you say. Songs and other musical cues are a great way to introduce activities and can be more effective than talking. Take time when approaching pupils to allow them to understand that you are there. Don’t be afraid to slow down your movements or music making to allow more time for silence, particularly with pupils with more profound needs.

You will find schools use different signing methods – Makaton, sign-along etc – so take some time to familiarise yourselves with the basics – thank you, good, well done, hello, goodbye – and you’ll quickly be able to include these into your sessions. Staff are always happy to help answer questions and provide additional support with signing, so don’t be afraid to ask.

Schools will have a range of classroom percussion instruments, although some schools are better resourced than others. Get to know the instruments your education department owns. Some instruments – shakers and small marquita maracas – are light and easy to be held in a cupped hand, for example. Think about the weight of each instrument and its accessibility. Ask staff for help if you are unsure.

Working in these environments may seem a little daunting at first but it can be a fantastically rewarding experience for pupils, staff and musicians.

It’s important that any project is well structured, well supported and has every partner on board 100%. We hope that by sharing our
learning and experiences from this project we will be able to provide you with some insights into the work we have done at the CBSO, and hopefully to inspire you, and your organisation, either to take the next step and give SEND projects a try, or to offer some new ideas and approaches which can be incorporated into your existing projects.

This is incredibly rewarding work, and if you've not tried working in a special school yet do, it's amazing!

Our Project

Each term we had eight weekly sessions with two classes. This was followed by a sharing session at the end of each term where we performed what we had created together to other classes or to family and friends. There were also familiarisation sessions before we began with each new class and lots of training when it was needed which was helpful. In these training sessions we learned about Makaton sign language, Intensive Interaction (a method of interactive non-verbal communication), and ideas for engaging early years children in music making. We worked in groups of up to four musicians per week with two classes each session for around 45 minutes - one a focus class who we worked with for the full five terms of the project, and the other a shorter-term class which changed roughly every term - and aimed for fifteen minutes of reflection at the end of each session with the staff and pupils. In the middle of each term and at the end of each term we had reflection meetings with teachers and staff at the school to talk about how the project was developing and to support us in planning for the next phase of sessions.

What makes a good music session?

‘An opportunity to engage with the instruments through a multi-sensory approach catering for visual, auditory and kinaesthetic needs.’ Assistant Headteacher

Having a variety of activities, including a range of listening and playing/exploring opportunities and pacing activities well all help to make a good session. Allowing time for pupil-initiated music making, such as conducting sounds through gestural making, choices/preferences as to which instruments to play, when to play loud/quiet or fast/slow, or deciding how to structure a musical composition is important. Using a song to say hello to each pupil/learner can cue everyone in to the start of the session and allow you to see how reactions change from week to week. Choosing specific groups of sounds to explore can encourage focused listening opportunities. Thinking carefully about when to focus on rhythm, when to focus on pitch or melody, when to focus on listening and when to focus on playing can all help you to get the best from your session.

How we used our own instruments in sessions

It's important to think about how your pupils access the instruments you have. Do some of the pupils need to be able to feel vibration and have sensory support to access sound? Think about how you will manage this so that you are comfortable. Some children wanted to reach out to touch the instruments, hold the bow as it moved, or touch the strings. We had to think about what we were comfortable with and use second instruments (or specially purchased ‘education’ instruments) if necessary. Allowing time for pupils to hear our instruments being played – both individually and as a small ensemble (duo, trio or quartet) – was an important part of the sessions each week. All our sessions featured times for pupils to listen to us as we performed. We then used these opportunities to introduce contrasts in dynamics, speed and musical styles.

We thought carefully about how we positioned ourselves in the classroom when we played, sometimes being close to pupils or moving between pupils on repetition of our pieces to give a different focus of instrument.

We thought about whether to stand next to or kneel by the side of pupils so that they could best access our instruments and their vibration. We had to remember that pupils needed time to absorb our sounds and instruments.

Being able to step away from our music stands was essential, but to ensure we were providing a breadth of music we couldn’t always memorise all the repertoire for each session. Printing our parts (often larger than normal and mounting them on card or even laminating them) and placing them on the floor so we could still see the music, but without the barrier of the music stand, was really helpful, not just in terms of connecting with the pupils, but making us feel more free with our music making.

Also, don’t be afraid to repeat repertoire. We found that by repeating repertoire pupils began to respond to particular pieces more than they had on a first, second, or even third listening – especially those pieces that were less familiar to participants.

Amy reflects in an interview for the evaluation. “I am much more familiar now [with the session] so you’re not so much on high alert to what we’re doing – I can now open my mind to other things to observe. I feel like I was missing things to start off with, that now I'm seeing.”

She demonstrates this during the session by the way she plays her violin to A, a young man with PMLD. Moving slowly near to him, but not too close at first, she is watching carefully as to his facial expressions and gestures. Watching him intently, she gradually moves closer – his eyes are transfixed as he absorbs the music she is making... Tempo is steady, and the music paced to create space for him to be able to join her in listening to the music as she plays for him.

Another thing that has changed, she says, is that they’re clearer what pieces they are going to play: “We know it, and repeat it [from week to week], so our heads are not as IN the copy.” Today I felt that the quality of ensemble playing was some of the best I had heard. – a coincidence? Are the players listening more too?? “We get to know it – THEY get to know it.”

Case study: Duets

A key example has been the development of pupil-led ‘duets’, where a pupil ‘conducts’ a musician to convey a choice, preference or expression communicated in music. Over time we gained confidence to reduce the levels of activity, sound, instrumentation, and density in musical improvisations, for the listening experience offered to have more clarity, creating a more focused listening experience for pupils. Musicians’ use of their own instruments has become more specific and focused over time, with careful thought and attention paid to specific sounds, pitches or effects that an individual pupil might respond to, to offer the maximum opportunity for us to follow a gesture or direction.

1) Jackie takes the cello to the side of a young man. Her cello spike is extended so that the bridge is at his elbow height. Jackie plucks the strings and the boy places his hand on the strings, feeling the vibration. He also reaches forward to stroke the strings, making the sound for himself, his movement is consistent and brushes across the strings to make a sound. At times he holds the neck of the cello, gripping his hand around it. At
times he moves away, but then moves his hand up and down, as if in response to the music being played, or as a sign of enjoyment/fulfilment, dance-like, before returning to the strings again to contact them. At one point he vocalises ‘eee ah eee’ – and Jackie responds making a matched sound with her voice.

Later, he vocalises ‘weee – oh’ and she repeats this too.

When using the bow, Jackie pitches the short phrases offered by the boy in response to his vocalisation or singing: ‘Ba baba ba’ is repeated as an upwards scale, for example. He quickly develops this into the opening phrase of Frère Jacques. They take turns in their music making, Jackie responding to the musical instruction given by the boy.

2) Rachael plays her oboe close to a pupil in the ‘pass the scrunchie’ song. The boy turns towards the direction of the sound, smiles and makes eye contact. Rachael, seeing this, moves closer, and alternates between playing her instrument and singing. His eye contact is consistently focused in her direction: the direction of the sound. When she finally moves away, back to the music stand, his eyes follow her.

3) Jackie, Sally and Amy are playing for the class. The mood created by the music is clear, and the quality of listening within the classroom tangible, attentive. Everyone is quiet, including staff. Sally on clarinet is kneeling to be at the same height as a pupil who uses a wheelchair. She is playing whilst being focused on being close to him. At the start of the sessions, at the beginning of the term, this pupil sat with his hands over his ears for most of the session. “I wish you could have seen the first session,” the teacher says later, as an indication of how his engagement and openness has developed over the weeks. He is now able to accept and allow himself to explore not only the proximity of another person, but explore and listen to the closeness of the sound right next to him. He is still and relaxed.

Sally later comments, “I feel that he is more... open [gesturing with her hands].” She is communicating that he is emotionally, socially and physically more open to the experience the session offers him. It’s not just about one element but a combination of many. He is relaxed, so physically his body position has changed. His body position has changed so the quality of his listening experience has improved. He can engage more with the listening experience, and so he relaxes. And then his body demonstrates this. And so on.

Using Classroom Percussion

‘Pupils are reaching out, exploring and touching the instruments, feeling the vibrations... more confident.’

Teacher

Think about what kind of sounds you want your group to focus on. What support do pupils need to be able play instruments independently? Are pupils visual, sensory or auditory learners? How might their learning style affect the choices of instruments you offer to them? As well as school percussion instruments, you can use voices, body percussion, or found sounds or objects from your classroom such as pots and pans, shells, silver paper etc. Try to link the sounds you use with the activities you want to develop with your group and the musical preferences being shown by the pupils. Use groups of sounds – wooden, metal, pitched, drums – and explore these separately. Think about what instrumental contrasts might be useful to explore: deep drums might be good for one activity, contrasted with pitched, higher frequency chime bars for the next, for example. You may decide to use one instrument, like a tambour (round frame drum with a resonant skin) or small set of windchimes, to pass round the group so that each pupil can take their turn to play/explore it. You can copy their response and have a musical conversation. At other times you may use a selection of instruments for the group to use and play/stop together.

If you are using pitched instruments – chime bars, xylophones, keyboards – you can use groups of notes that sound good together – C, D, E, G, A – or just white / black notes on a keyboard will work well and are a good place to start.

In the sessions musicians and staff used classroom percussion to interact with pupils to create a soundscape, whilst just one of the team improvised on their instrument to accompany the class. At one point there is just one instrument playing – the violin – allowing pupils to focus specifically on the qualities of this instrument, as the other two musicians move from pupil to pupil with complementary sounding instruments – the Hapi drum and the wind chimes – inviting pupils to participate, explore, or just listen.

Which Beater?

Each beater will create a different sound and tone colour. Try them first so that you know what sound to expect from each beater. You may want to focus on using hands to make sounds and choose instruments like drums or tambourines to do this; or you may want to develop skills in coordination and use instruments with beaters, such as chime bars and xylophones. Your pupils will have their preferences too and you will find out which instruments suit each pupil as you develop your session.

If a pupil has very little strength or movement, it’s good to experiment with beaters to find one that will allow them to play independently – and you may need to adapt beaters to enable pupils to hold them. Wrapping fabric around the end of a beater to create a larger handle to make it easier to grip is just one idea.

Assistive Technology and Music Technology

Depending on the needs and abilities of the class you may want to incorporate switches or iPads with instrument/music apps into your session. Small ‘wowee’ speakers can target sound and vibration and can be placed on the body or held by hand. Many of the activities we used can incorporate recording sounds onto switches so that pupils can play their part using them.

Practical stuff

Use a specific Education instrument if possible: an instrument that you don’t mind being handled and that can be cleaned if necessary. Take hand gel or frequently wash your hands.

Take wipes to enable you to clean your instrument, and any hand-held instruments you have used, and give them a clean after every workshop.

Wear clothing that you don’t mind getting mucky – you just never know!

Some musicians find it more comfortable to take their shoes off in the sessions.

Tie long hair back as it can be pulled or be a distraction.

Be aware that some children are very strong and can move very quickly.
Bring your own music stand but keep it out of arm’s reach of pupils. Learning little passages of music from memory and improvising can allow much closer contact with the pupils. Be aware that instruments can be thrown, hands can be bitten/scratched. Keep your instrument case closed (locked if possible) and tucked out of the way.

Be particularly careful with instrument cases if they contain specific liquids or sharp objects (e.g. valve oil, blades for reed making) and ideally don’t take these into school at all.

Project Planning and Preparation

If possible, at the start of a project, go and perform in the setting, then you are in a totally recognised and ‘safe’ environment doing what you do best without having to say anything or interact with the pupils on a one-to-one basis. This gives staff a chance to see you and for them to have a better picture of what an orchestral musician does. It also gives you a chance to see the school, get a sense of the atmosphere, the general mood of the school and to see how staff and pupils interact.

Before working with class groups on your project, make sure you schedule a familiarisation session to meet teachers, support staff and the pupils you will be working with.

Ask the teachers what they are working on, e.g. any topics, numbers, animals, transport, colours, songs, stories etc. that could be used in planning sessions.

Ask the teachers for information on the pupils’ targets, as this can act as a guide in activities.

Ask the teachers for information on likes and dislikes of the pupils, any volume issues, intolerances etc.

Find out from teachers if there are any behavioural issues and what to watch out for.

Look at the setting you will be working in: is there enough room? Are there any major distractions? Would another space be available? Are the pupils happy going into different rooms?

Work as a team with your colleagues to plan sessions. Decide who is leading which part of the session, and what role you will take if you are supporting a colleague to deliver an activity.

Utilise the skills of your team: if one member is good at arrangements, for example, see if you can incorporate this into an element of your session.

You will find our Familiarisation Session checklist on page 21 which provides you with an outline of specific questions to ask of staff at this initial meeting.

Working with staff

‘I was holding the chimes for A and struggling really to get them in the right place. Staff member B was able to tell me where to stand.’

“Yes, he did. And when you were playing, he was observing all the time, watching to see how [the pupil] responded. It feels as if we are all working together as a team.’

Encourage the staff during sessions, be very clear with your plans throughout the session and what you would like to happen.

Communication is key so keep talking to them. Make as much eye contact with staff as you can.

Ask if you have any questions, ask staff to tell you if you are doing something that isn’t quite right or could be done in a slightly different way.

Ask if you need to be close so a pupil can hear or see you or your instrument. Ask if pupils prefer using their right or left hand.

You may find your session is interrupted by other staff members. Children may be taken out for routine check-ups for medical, wheelchair etc. Ask the teacher if this needs to happen during the session (it may be unavoidable). Other staff may just think it’s OK to come in and interrupt. A polite sign on the door can help!

Encourage the staff to be part of the circle and focus on the activities alongside the children. It’s sometimes difficult to get them all involved. Teaching Assistants can enjoy chatting on the sidelines but it’s best for the children if there is a focused atmosphere in the room.

Thank the staff for their help, and don’t be afraid to praise them, as well as the pupils, for their musical contributions – as this will be the first time many of them have also engaged with this type of activity or worked with professional musicians.

Remember that many staff may feel quite daunted by having professional musicians working in their school; they may not feel that they are at all musical, yet are being asked to sing, play along on percussion instruments etc. so they may be as nervous as you at the start of a project.

‘Reflection meetings gave us chance to talk things through with staff. By the end of the project we were more confident to just say.’

EXAMPLES FROM OUR MUSIC SESSIONS

Working with a PMLD class – five-term project

Rachael: ‘We mainly worked with PMLD classes. We spent five terms across two academic years with a mixed-ability group of nine children who were aged between five and seven years old when we began. Eight of the children were with us for the duration of the project, with just one child leaving at the end of term two and another joining at this stage. To say that the three of us enjoyed this project is an understatement. We loved it and it was the highlight of our week.’

We realised that routine was very important and ensured our sessions always followed the same format, so the children knew what to expect.

While the orchestral schedule didn’t allow us to visit on exactly the same day every week, we kept the structure of the session the same for every visit, and it is key that the management team work carefully with the schools when setting up the project to manage school expectations in this regard.

We began with us playing, either a piece or improvising, before leading into the same ‘Hello’ song. This developed as the project progressed. We began by using a visual prop — a hat — which was worn by the pupil we were singing ‘Hello’ to.

By term two we had started using percussion instruments and giving the children time and space to make a sound. We always signed the ‘Hello’ song (using Singalong — some schools use other signing methods) and encouraged the staff to sign/sing with us.

The middle part of the session involved several creative activities. The session always ended with a Time to Finish’ song.

This all lasted 45 minutes and was followed by 15 minutes of reflection, involving the children, staff and musicians. This was very valuable for influencing how the project continued and the direction we took, and it was fascinating hearing the staff contributions. We were very lucky to have the advice and help of the music teacher at the school and another teacher who had lots of experience working with PMLD children who guided us along the way. We learned a tremendous amount as the project progressed.
Activities we developed

A 'Rumble and Stop' game to introduce control of stopping and starting music.

The pupils are invited to make sounds on timp heads with their hands, feet or heads. If there are enough timp heads, split the class into smaller groups for this activity. Ask your percussion section or local conservatoire for any unwanted timp heads – this is a great way to repurpose unwanted, and otherwise pretty useless, timp heads.

The musicians sing a simple song, staff are invited to join in, and pupils are invited to play:

“Well’ll rumble and rumble and rumble and stop!” (everyone stops, with musicians – or the pupil leading the activity – lifting their hands up in the air away from the timp head providing a visual as well as audible cue, and silence is held).

This is sung three times, each time with a silence at the end of the phrase.

After the third time sing:

“Now we’ll play some more!” (play together to finish).

We developed this so that pupils could lead when to start and stop the music.

THE SCRUNCHY

'Really pleased we have found things that work, like the scrunchy – it was our idea. With the small ([younger]) class this really helped – they found it hard to hold instruments and were dropping or throwing them or putting in their mouths and the staff were not keen on this [we wanted to give the opportunity for the pupils to be able to explore instruments] – so tying instruments onto [the scrunchy] has helped.’ Rachael

The scrunchy is useful if pupils have difficulty holding or engaging with percussion instruments, or if instruments get thrown frequently. Taking turns and building anticipation became a feature of using the scrunchy. Using a scrunchy can allow pupils to work together as a group and be introduced to a range of small percussion instruments, or groups of sounds, over time.

We used a 5m scrunchy, and you can make your own if feeling creative, or we bought ours from here: https://www.jabadao.org/product-page/plain-cotton-elastic

Use a long-covered piece of elastic and tie instruments on with tape approx 1cm wide. This way the instruments stay put.

Ideas

Make up a scrunchy song:

Pass the scrunchy, pass the scrunchy, pass the scrunchy, time to play/ x 2

and use the scrunchy as a game of pass the parcel.

The scrunchy is passed through and over the hands and bodies of the children and when the music stops, the instruments are played and explored; this is repeated several times.

Develop

Over time, add ribbons for a more sensory feel.

Change instruments to add variety to the sounds being explored.

Gradually remove instruments so you are left with just one – this helps develop turn-taking and anticipation amongst participants.

SATELLITES

Jane: 'The children by the last term definitely had their favourite instruments and they were allowed the freedom to choose and play. A musician would be with each group and would improvise alongside the children or just encourage and enable the children to play their instrument.

A musician would give a musical signal, a short piece of music, so the atmosphere wasn’t disturbed too much, as the boxes were packed up and passed to the next group.'

Satellites are a way to allow pupils time to explore more instruments.

Carefully group the class into three smaller groups – taking advice from staff to ensure the right personalities are grouped together.

Have three boxes of instruments ready, one for each group. For example:

- one with wooden instruments: castanets, maracas, guiro (scraper) etc.
- a tinkly box with bells, tambourine, scrunchy paper, wind chimes
- a box with larger instruments, ocean drum, djembe, rain stick and a bass bar

SENSORY ELEMENTS

Sometimes a sensory element can add a new level of connection for pupils. The mood and emotion of pieces that you play can be reinforced with visual and sensory props such as bubbles, scarves, windmills, a bouncy ball, turning lights down, using finger lights or disco balls. Using sensory elements in sessions allowed us to find ‘a way in’ with every child, and a way to engage with the pupils through the course of the project. Sensory elements became a very large part of every visit. We found it engaged the children especially as we quickly went from one element to another.

Ideas and activities

Change the mood by changing the lighting in the room. We dimmed the lights, added a disco ball and used finger lights which we wore while playing.

Use a bubble machine; we did this while accompanying the bubbles by playing Schubert’s 'The Trout'.

Use long, soft scarves to waft over heads and to gently touch some pupils with ‘Sailing By’ gently played in the background. Do check with staff that all pupils will be comfortable with this activity before getting underway.

Sunshine: Use Grieg’s "Morning" as a starting point, playing and
improvising around melody. Use yellow material, instruments such as Chinese cymbals or a gong. Make space for one-to-one interaction: musician and pupil, or staff and pupil. Follow the pupil’s lead as they play. Don’t be afraid to wait for them and be silent.

Use Windmills, one for each child, and use electric fans to blow them. Play a flowing, bubbling piece like ‘Windmills from Amsterdam’ as they move in the wind.

Soldiers March is good for a starting/stopping activity. Pupils may be able to use a physical sign with hand, foot, head or eye to stop and start the music. If not, try using a switch to press for PLAY! and find a way for each pupil to activate. It may be a hand, a foot or knee.

Sea theme: Use pebbles for the pupils to hit together or place them on a tray and improvise over the soundscape made by pupils to create a funky piece. Fill small plastic bags with shells to create shell shakers and create a contrasting piece by improvising along in a different time and/or key. Use blue materials to waft/float/envelop the pupils and create a wave piece. Pupils can use an ocean drum, rain sticks, glockenspiels etc.

Jackie: ‘Use old timp heads to create activities. These are very accessible and can be experienced in many ways: ‘Rumble and stop’ song, creating a storm with different textures, just experiencing the vibrations/sound through hands, feet, head etc. Use timp heads to explore vibration: use one between three children and all join in singing a rumble song. Tap and bang the timps, follow the children’s lead to make sounds; place the timp heads on heads to feel the vibrations.’

THE BALL GAME - FOCUS ON RHYTHM AND PULSE

Jane: ‘Use a large bouncy ball to add a rhythmic element. Play a jig (or a cheerful tune, not too fast) to accompany. In our session the children were in a circle and the ball was bounced in the centre. Two musicians played at the same time as the ball was bounced, as I went to each child in turn, bouncing the ball close to them and stopping suddenly, the music also stopped. During one session as I held the ball still right next to them, the child reached forward to touch the ball to restart the bouncing and the music. I tried it again and each time the child reached forward to touch the ball, they were in total control, conducting me, choosing when they wanted it to start again, there was no staff help.

Over the weeks, it developed until one week every child in the circle reached for the ball or gave a signal in their own way to start the bouncing and the music again. It was truly wonderful and incredibly moving for the staff and the musicians to see the children so fully engaged and the joy of anticipating their turn.’

Development

When using the scarves, timp heads and ball also use a sudden stop element by using signing and/or vocal signals. **Hold the silence.** to give time for the children to react.

Working with a PMLD post-sixteen (older age) class – five-term project

The pupils in our class were classed as SLD pupils. Some pupils had a little bit of language and basic signing skills. Some had good dexterity, but some had limited ability to hold an instrument. We worked with a very supportive class teacher who was really good at encouraging communication. The class changed a little for the third term (new school year), however, we kept a good nucleus of pupils and had worked with the newcomers over previous terms in the short-term projects.

Our sessions were planned but we let the pupils guide us, so we rarely kept completely to the plan. We worked initially on very basic musical elements and built their skills very slowly. Therefore, this fundamental grounding helped in our latter composition sessions. Throughout the project the pupils were always given individual choice and the chance to control the music. This developed latterly into complete individual compositions. These children are given very little control over their lives and the joy and sense of achievement for them when performing their own compositions was amazing. They had complete ownership of their work and understood that. This all encouraged them to develop their communication skills either by speech or signing. It also encouraged better movement and coordination as they were motivated to use a beater, place a disc, play a percussion instrument etc. Their focus during sessions was brilliant, they were obviously very engaged and were keen to engage with others, directing and showing support and appreciation.

We planned our session template and referred to the same layout each week:

1. **‘HELLO’ SONG** – A vehicle for composition straightaway. We added choice: DYNAMICS, TEMPO. This encouraged communication, both verbal and signing.

2. **PLAY a PIECE** Move around the room between pupils. Pupils choose instruments to play along with.

3. **Finish with a JAM session, with everyone getting involved.**

Activities we developed

‘HELLO’ SONG – options

- Use a hat to interact with pupils. Good for eye contact, encouraging tracking, and meeting new faces.
- Pupils could choose the next person to sing to.
- Introduce an accessible instrument – windchimes, tambourines and bar chimes are good.
- Ask each pupil to choose an instrument to interact with you.
- Ask pupils to choose how we play/sing the song: fast-slow, loud-quiet?
- Hook into a rhythm they might play during the song and jam a short piece with them.

CONDUCTING us (some using eye movement) and then also stopping and starting us when playing our pieces.

Also conducting class mates.

This all led to them having lots of choices (which class mates, which instruments) and conversations with each other.

The pupils wrote a song. Their own words and own tune, and inspired by the fact that they were growing all the ingredients to make a pizza as part of their curriculum that term:
Stop/starts to take over is extremely helpful. Having a musician modelling all of these skills before asking a pupil to take over is extremely helpful.

STAVE BOARD – Notation and Composition
We had already done exercises with encouraging pupils to conduct high and low (arms up for high, down for low). We would choose pitches that matched wherever they showed us to play with our hands. This meant the pupils already understood pitch when we introduced the stave board.

The pupils created a short melodic piece by placing Velcro-backed counters (notes) onto a felt stave/board. Some would show us where to put the counter with eye movement, which made this a very accessible exercise.

They would choose which of our instruments to play their piece, what speed, dynamic, and which colleagues and instruments.

We would record these compositions onto switches, so they could play them themselves by touching the switch, then they were also able to play the music they had composed on a metallophone, following their notation on the stave!

‘One pupil exceeded all our expectations with this exercise... He could play the notes on the stave, EVEN WHEN WE PLAYED THEM OUT OF ORDER. (We were impressed with left to right!)’

Working towards composing for SLD learners
Having a musician modelling all of these skills before asking a pupil to take over is extremely helpful.

Stop/starts
• Musicians playing music to the pupils and adding stops to see what response there might be.
• Use Soldiers March to practise stopping musicians with a hand signal (or could be a foot, eye blinking etc.) This might take a whole term.
• Use old timp heads to practise starting and stopping. (Song: We’ll rumble and rumble and rumble and stop!)
• Move on to an individual directing the whole class, making sure everyone can see the director and respond accordingly. This might take a whole term.

Dynamics/speeds
• Musicians playing music of contrasting speeds and dynamics
• Brahms’ Hungarian Dance is good for pupils to play along to. Make sure they respond to different speeds, stops and dynamics.
• Individual pupils choosing how musicians play a piece (through speech, sign language or a choice of two).
• Individuals directing the whole group.

Creating a melody
Pupils with serious disabilities may find it tricky to hold a beater and focus on tuned percussion. Find a way of helping them to create a short melody which can be recorded by a musician onto a switch.

• One option is to create a felt board to stick Velcro-backed discs onto. Support the pupil to create a short melody. This might be possible independently, by eye-gazing, pointing etc. Introduce the concept of high/low as you help them.
• Ask for their choice of which instrument to record it on, and whether they would like it fast or slow.
• Then play a game of your turn, my turn (call and response), firstly with a musician and then get them into pairs to try independently.
• If possible for a pupil, move the melody onto a tuned percussion instrument (a metallophone is good as it rings easily and the keys are larger). They may need help holding a beater, or positioning the metallophone. A coloured dot on the key can help them to aim better.

Call and response
This can be practised in turn around the group using a simple melodic phrase or un-tuned percussion.

‘All these activities may take weeks for the pupils to gain the ability to achieve. Once they are confident, go into smaller groups to help them create their own compositions. Be careful not to give them too many options in their choices of what to create. They will just get confused.’

Observing pupil responses
Rachael: ‘For the first time today T pressed the keys on my oboe, knowing what I was doing’ (the pupils are gaining to know and feel confident with the musicians, confident to make connections). A staff member agrees: ‘Indeed – when he was playing the chime things – he was hitting it, and then stopping the sound, he knew he has changed the sound. Then he tried with his fingers and different notes...’

Part of our project’s aim was to develop a feedback sheet for orchestral musicians to use at the end of each session. Each week we would review our session, what worked well and what we might change for next time. We would fill in what we noticed about each pupil’s responses in the sessions, using information given by staff as well as our own observations. By the end of the project we were trying to note both social and musical developments in the pupils. Our forms were designed in reference to the Sounds of Intent Framework (SOI) and Youth Music’s Do, Review & Improve Framework. Links to these resources, along with our session feedback/reflection form templates can be found on pages 19-21.

Capturing pupils’ responses each week helped us to see what kind of progress they had made, and to feedback on what we had noticed to the school. This was particularly important for children who were classed as vulnerable, or who had limited access to activities where
they could shine. Schools also used the feedback from sessions to support their own monitoring and assessment of pupil progression:

‘It’s been wonderful to have the CBSO in school and I know the teachers/staff and students of course have really enjoyed and progressed through the sessions. I’ve already had lots of positive feedback from staff regarding the sharing on Thursday. Yes it’s a good model to have someone in school who can level the students in Sol so the impact of what has been happening isn’t lost.’

By the end of the project we were able to show how pupils had developed. The case study below gives an idea of what we observed and the information we could collect over the course of the project.

‘Parents came to watch in the final sharing. (They’d not been before.) It was a very positive experience for them especially as they struggle to care for them. They were amazed to see how engaged he was and how much he was enjoying himself. It was very moving.’

Pupil Responses:

Term 1

1. Responsive to sound. Enjoyed interaction of ‘Hello’ song.
2. Positive anticipation of turn. Played drum — first time.
3. Exploring the cello, took hold of the bow. Played independently.
4. Engaged listening, making hand movements to slow music.
5. Very engaged from start of session. Loved the activities, joined in with the ‘Hello’ song, played the drum, chose a shaker and played a little.
7. Loves the scrunchy and timp heads. Anticipating activities.

Term 2

5. Liking the rhythmic music, tolerating hand on hand help with rain-maker.

Term 3 – start of Satellites activity

4. Eye contact greatly improved. ‘Dancing’ a lot. Very excited during session.
6. Exploration of ocean drum, with the head, tongue, hands, feet etc finding different sounds. Holding the scrunchy. Very purposeful with playing. Played the gato drum again.
7. Intentional playing of ocean drum. Often on head, watching beads. Watching, listening, concentrating during session. Clocked the stopping of our music.

Term 4

1. Recognising the different sounds he was getting on the ocean drum. Looking through the drum to make eye contact. Hands barely in mouth. Very engaged throughout sessions. Loving the ocean drum and chimes.
2. Beginning to explore instruments independently in Satellite activity.
3. Becoming very involved in sessions. Choosing to use his feet to play. Anticipation of his turn around the circle.
5. Recognition from him that he’d done something well. Knows his turn is coming up. Vocalising a lot. Instruments not going in his mouth.
6. Beginning to wear gaiters to keep hands from mouth. This is encouraging him to engage with the instruments more. Sometimes we request for them to be taken off if it hinders his access to instruments. Tracking around the circle, great anticipation.

Term 5

1. Keeping his attention around the circle.
4. Knows what’s coming next. Showing definite preferences: sad when he doesn’t get his preferred instrument. Playing tambourine with hands and feet.

At the end of a session Amy notes: ‘for the second time in a row she is doing the bow movement’. The musicians discuss that the important thing to do will be to look out for this again, to see if happens next time.

The Teacher’s Perspective

Gaining feedback from teachers and teaching assistants throughout the project has been so important in helping us to understand the benefits of the project for the pupils and for the wider school. For many teachers this was the first time they had worked with orchestral musicians in the classroom. Here one of our five-term project teachers talks about how the project has benefited her pupils:

Teacher: “Part of the [pupils’] development is learning to cope with new situations – we aren’t always going to be there. To hear D and see him sing independently is a HUGE thing. We all know D and see him... Brilliant! – For my kids to remember they have met you before, that they remember you – a huge thing for our children (a PMLD group with very complex healthcare needs).

B – the cello – he is motivated by this.

M – tracking the musician next to her, turning, looking up, each one of you – for a child of her disability, so tiring
In another school, Teaching Assistants shared their observations of the impact of the sessions on their pupils:

‘From week one to now progression has been fantastic. It’s brought out their confidence. K is singing pitches. J: more singing. Many [of the group are] more vocal: very important. Gaining confidence, especially in group. Being able to move. Anticipation time for many of them has increased: J, on the chimes, she is reaching out more and more, extended. From this I have learned that T can sing on cue.’

‘One of the most progressive lessons I have noticed, and they love it. A starts laughing when he hears them in the room. You can see how much it means to them.’

‘They can’t take it away, it’s so important for the children’s progression, they’re stretching, vocalising. They tell us every day how much they love it. When we say ‘CBSO’ they have a bright smile.’

‘Video – we play video back to students. K sings back to his recording. And [the pupils] are recognising the instruments.’

‘If they hear the instruments played [when it’s their turn] they can’t say but we know which ones they like.’

‘T followed the oboe. It’s incredible.’

‘Their anticipation, getting excited, they know what’s happening – [there’s] massive progression.’

In another school, Teaching Assistants shared their observations of the impact of the sessions on their pupils:

‘You don’t see progress, in the same way…’ She likes that the session activities can be used outside the session: “It’s things like this that you can build on for a creative curriculum, and you can link it to communication.”

As teachers – older students they’ve done it all before so the challenge to engage them, as teachers, is hard…— to see what they can do is huge.”

“Children – they don’t get choices – they get given stuff. B has his choice with the cello, L, M, given choices because of the session. It’s about the sound. M responds to speed, B to low vibration and slow. It’s interactive – my kids don’t usually get to do this, but I think they are in this session.”

CASE STUDY

As part of the evaluation process, teachers were asked to write case studies of pupils who they felt had shown significant benefits during their time with the musicians. Laura, a teacher from one of our one term projects wrote a case study about a pupil in her class. She describes the progress made by the pupil, and her response during the sessions:

CBSO CASE STUDY LJA

Brief introduction to the project

Our class was chosen as one of the classes offered eight sessions with the CBSO to introduce music sessions that we would be able to carry on after they have left. The musicians and I had a meeting and discussed what the focus could be for our lessons. At the present time we were looking at Croatia and in particular the sensory element, so exploring sand, shells and water. We decided that we would focus on creating our own sounds to represent these elements and to explore the student’s ability to play musical instruments independently.

Overview/ introduction to the pupil

There are eight students in our class with two teaching assistants and two complex carers who look after two of the pupils’ medical needs. The class are a combination of severe learning difficulties and profound multiple learning difficulties. There is a variety of different communication needs with three having communication books, two that are able to speak and four who use symbols, gestures and facial expressions to make choices.

This particular student who is eighteen years old has a degenerative condition and it affects her motor skills, vision and hearing. Within class it is hard work for her to maintain good head control and for the majority of the day she will sit with her head down. She has limited speech and it takes her a long time to answer a question. She has listened to live music when people have been into school but as far as I am aware she has not been to any live music concerts outside of school.

The pupil’s journey

She has really enjoyed the CBSO coming into school and since the first week has tried to control her head movements and has really engaged with each element of the lesson. She has really enjoyed the live music aspect of these lessons and enjoyed exploring the orchestral instruments through listening and touching; she particularly enjoyed the clarinet. As the lessons have progressed she has begun to look and search for the clarinet. When the clarinet was played next to her she looked around for it and then reached out to grasp it with her hands and pulled it towards her. She was not that interested in the shells and the stones but when we looked at the ocean she was fantastic at playing independently. During the independent ocean piece she independently played many instruments over the eight weeks including bells, shakers and the glockenspiel. She also enjoyed listening to the variety of music played by the musicians and showed her recognition of the mood/ character in her responses e.g. head back and eyes closed for slow melodic music, and head up, clapping for fast rhythmical music. There is a short video of her playing the xylophone and she plays it brilliantly to start off with and then she moves her hand so she hits the desk. The video then shows her searching for the xylophone with the beater until she hits it again which is a beautiful video to watch. She also gave positive feedback for the sessions, even when hampered by the lack of hearing aid. Over the eight weeks she also increased her eye contact with the musicians.
Special moments

Holding the clarinet as the clarinettist was playing a piece of music next to her and she was looking up and making good eye contact. She also did not want to let go of the clarinet when the music had finished.

How has the involvement of the CBSO made a difference to the life of this pupil?

We have tried to carry on with these lessons with our class after our sessions with the CBSO finished. The musicians suggested some good clarinet music, and we now use a WOWEE speaker and the student has now started to pick that up from her tray and put it on the side of her face to feel the vibrations like she did with the clarinet. During the Kaleidoscope performance she kept her head up and was enjoying the music and was watching the musicians as they played.

‘I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed the musical collaboration between the students of Green Class and the musicians of the CBSO showcased on Thursday, July 12th.

‘I have attended three of these events and have been thrilled each time to see what our students have achieved — their sense of enjoyment was obvious and this was certainly felt by the audience.

‘A theme of World War II was introduced by a cello mimicking an air raid siren with the students dropping weights on drums as bombs. The main music was the famous “Dambusters March” and the musicians – seven of them this time — were accompanied by some energetic percussion! Students contributed with other instruments and some vocals too.

‘The session ended with the playing and singing of ‘We’ll Meet Again’. I do hope this is possible as I understand this may have been the last collaboration between the school and the CBSO. I am so glad that my son has had the opportunity to work with these gifted musicians, who again showed their patience, confidence and skills when involved with our students.

‘My brother in law, my son’s uncle, came with me today and he was very moved and impressed by what he experienced. He spoke with some of the musicians afterwards and their delight with what the music has brought to the students was obvious.

‘Please pass on our thanks to the school staff and students who participated in this and made it possible. Please also convey our thanks to the musicians of the CBSO for their commitment, skills and desire to communicate their love of music to our students. It has been great.’ Parent

What were our challenges during the project?

‘This term I’ve been a lot braver – braver to try stuff – much more tuned in to eye contact and facial expression. I feel a lot more comfortable just to try.’

There were several challenges we came across along the way. For example:

• There were often a wide range of disabilities in a group and at times it felt hard to keep everyone engaged for the whole session. We were quite apprehensive at the beginning about finding enough suitable activities for them.

• The staff obviously knew the children much better than we did and their knowledge and support were invaluable, but we sometimes found it hard to try new things. For example, when we began working with one class, the staff were quite resistant to us giving out percussion instruments and letting the children explore them in case they threw them or put them in their mouths. We had to work with staff to find a way around this.

• Some children were very unsettled at certain points in the project, for example, one girl didn’t join the group circle for quite a while and would often be given a mirror, so she could watch what was going on but with her back to us. Another child who was probably the most engaged in our music making when we began the project suddenly became very distressed in term three and spent many weeks being taken out of the group circle and even the classroom. The staff were fantastic and always keen to find ways for them to join us but understandably, their behaviour had an impact on the rest of the class.

‘I used to be [slightly afraid] of the older kids and their strengths but my awareness now of what to do and what not to do [is better]. I’m braver to ask questions – the more we ask the staff are getting more confident too. Building a relationship with staff is crucial... [I’m] braver to move forward.’

• One classroom was quite small and had lots of amazing sensory toys including a climbing frame with a slide so we were sometimes competing with lots of distractions! We had to really think about how to position everyone. It was hard to keep a small enough circle so everyone could see what was going on but also giving ourselves enough room to move around and fit in our music stands and instruments, some of which are quite large. We didn’t want to spend the whole session with our backs to the some of the children!

• The children were often very poorly with degenerative conditions and there was a lot going on for all of the children. We had to learn that however long we spent planning our session and hoping it would go well, sometimes it just didn’t. At the start we felt we had failed, but we realised over time that some circumstances are out of our control.

• There were times when staffing changed and we had to learn to work with new teachers mid-project. Having a key staff contact at the school really helped with this.

• It took a little while for us to realise that progression in the group wasn’t linear, that every child had an individual journey and it was our job to facilitate this within the group setting. We needed to repeat things for longer and not try to be constantly changing or building on an activity.

‘I feel that the team is much more cohesive now, and that we have progressed particularly with the improvisation exercises that were used in the blue class sharing. I sometimes feel that we could respond more to the movements of each pupil, particularly in the conducting and composition elements of the orange class sharing. Often this could be helped by playing more slowly/using simpler repertoire so that we can really focus on interaction.’

What about emotions?

Whilst music can have a transformational effect on children and young people with profound and complex needs, there can be an emotional impact for musicians as they form relationships with
pupils whilst music making. Hearing live music in close proximity is a huge sensory experience for any child and particularly for these children and young people due to their increased sensory needs. Seeing a child or young person’s response to live music can be an emotive experience, and music can in turn stimulate emotional responses in pupils. Sadly, some of the pupils passed away during the project and this had an impact on all those involved. It is important for organisations to be aware of these aspects of engaged practice with vulnerable groups and make sure that musicians are supported during the delivery of any project. These are some of our findings:

— It can affect you in ways you don’t expect. Seeing a child self-harm, become very upset and emotional, not getting the response you were expecting or not getting the response you got the week before can all be very upsetting and demoralising. This is totally understandable.

— Be aware of the medical needs of the children. Their health may deteriorate, or they may be feeling uncomfortable or in pain. They may be in a very different place from the one they were in when you last saw them, and this may affect their ability to join in with the session.

— Sessions can evoke all sorts of emotions, from tears of happiness and joy to sadness. Also, they can be tiring and emotionally draining.

‘Reflection and feedback, it’s so much of what we do, I can’t imagine a project now without reflection. Really good. If you were feeling tired, or something happened (i.e. something upsetting with the pupils), you can get the emotion off your chest, put it down, park/place it somewhere, and be ready for next session — nothing is open ended. Plus, immediate is good – you forget otherwise.’

**ADVICE/GUIDANCE FOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS**

As a Learning & Participation team we have learnt a great deal from this project. I was the only member of the team who had a lot of prior experience working in SEND settings, and for some of the administrative team involved this was a brand new area — but one that they have thoroughly enjoyed working in.

We have had many moments during this project which have reminded us why we went into Learning & Participation work, observing the sheer enjoyment of the young people involved in the project, and hearing about the progress they have made from week to week — particularly from parents — has been incredible.

This project hasn’t been without challenges — few projects have no challenges! — so we felt sharing some of our learning could also be really beneficial for musicians and education departments working with orchestral musicians in special school settings.

• There is a real need for high-quality performance and regular interactive, child-led creative activities in PMLD settings.

• The level of interest from our orchestral musicians in this work has been quite surprising — more musicians wanted to be involved than we had anticipated.

• The success of a project depends entirely on the skills of the musicians delivering the work, and the need for appropriate training, delivered by an expert in SEND creative music making, but who is also someone who understands the pressures of being a professional orchestral musician is essential.

• Managing expectations has been critical — not just the expectations of our partner schools, but also of the musicians.

Establishing the project’s parameters from the outset, and being very open with the schools about the challenges we faced when working around the orchestral schedule meant that scheduling of weekly activity was much easier than you might expect.

• Clear communication, and being open and honest was crucial, and sometimes having to have difficult conversations or telling people that we were unable to provide them with everything they wanted could be challenging.

• Being able to let go of the project was difficult; the musicians were there on a weekly basis building the relationships with the school staff, pupils, and taking activities in a direction we were not necessarily expecting, but it was essential that the musicians had ownership of this project and were able to take activity in the way that the children needed, which was not always the way we had ‘planned’ in the office!

**However…**

• Ensuring clarity over areas of responsibility is also key; while the musicians have built relationships with staff and participants, it can be easy for them to undertake (organically) other project management tasks, such as fixing their own dates, adapting feedback forms etc. — but these tasks should not only be managed by the admin team, in consultation with the musicians, but also need to be considered within the bigger picture of a project and ensuring all partners and stakeholders are informed, engaged and happy.

• Continuing to challenge and develop musicians, and pushing them outside of their comfort zone, is tricky, and being on-site at projects at key points, ensuring the right support networks are in place — this includes appropriate CPD and mentoring — and remembering that what is usual for us is not necessarily usual for professional musicians.

• Empathy towards their concerns about instruments, and trying to meet demands for specific equipment, instruments, musical arrangements etc. is challenging. There is always something else that it would be useful to have, but we have to manage the budget. I would always include additional budget for materials and instruments within SEND proposals in future, even though we’ve already built up a good resource of smaller instruments and cheap cellos!

• The musician team really needed to have a trusted, external expert to provide guidance that they may feel uncomfortable asking the management for, but also when they require specialist guidance that the management team don’t necessarily have.

• The input of an external evaluator was critical, and while this can be a luxury for short-term projects, working with young people with PMLD and associated needs requires a specialist evaluation — it is very time intensive, tracking the progression of pupils requires an expert eye, and being able to make the case for future funding is certainly strengthened by an external evaluation report.

• Communicating the benefit of this type of work within the wider orchestral community, staff, board and audience is difficult, but needs to be done. Try to find opportunities to show case SEND projects via social media, websites, internal and external members publications etc. What was significant for us was when players shared their experiences at an all-employee meeting, enabling all staff to understand why this work is valuable, and the impact it has on the players personally, musically and professionally.

• Don’t be scared to ask questions and learn from school staff — there is no such thing as a stupid question!
• Build in reflection time, even if this means reducing the delivery session slightly. By embedding reflection in the last 15 minutes of what would otherwise have been a one-hour delivery session, meant that we actually provided a better project for our participants.

• Try to build in an end-of-term (at the least) facilitated reflection meeting with school staff and musicians to address any concerns and issues head on, but also to share learning from different perspectives.

• If you have musicians working on equivalent projects but in different schools or settings, a facilitated end-of-project reflection meeting is invaluable. Enabling musicians to share experiences, learn from one another and not feel alone in what can be quite a challenging environment, helped build confidence and ensured shared learning was embedded across the schools, developing, in our case, a CBSO approach.

• Encourage L&P staff to join musicians in CPD and training events to help all understand the work, and each other, better.

• Know when you’re losing the battle with a specific initiative or idea, and get creative to find a way around this — for example, careful design of a feedback or reflection form to enable you to report to a specific funder or report against a specific framework, rather than forcing the musicians to work in a way that doesn’t feel comfortable to them.

USEFUL LINKS

Other relevant websites and organisations

Youth Music Network: http://network.youthmusic.org.uk
You can sign up for this website and access up-to-date resources, case studies and networking opportunities for musicians working in SEND settings. A particularly useful page is the Do, review and improve section: https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/do-review-improvequality-framework-music-education

Sounds of Intent: http://soundsofintent.org/pubs
Jessie’s Fund: A national charity helping children with complex needs through music: www.jessiesfund.org.uk

Drake Music: A national charity working in music, disability and technology: www.drakemusic.org

Intensive Interaction: www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk

RNIB: http://www.rnib.org.uk/livingwithsightloss/leisureculture/music/musicresearch/Pages/music_publications.aspx

SENSE: www.sense.org.uk

OHMI: www.ohmi.org.uk

Orchestras live – Sound Around evaluation report:

Case Studies from other organisations


Interesting articles and guides about delivering music activities for young people with SEND

1. Doing music ... A guide to support people with a learning disability to become fully involved in the creative processes of music: https://www.mencap.org.uk/doing-music


Some useful books


3. Music for Special Kids: Musical Activities, Songs, Instruments and Resources [Paperback] Pamela Ott <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Pamela-Ott/e/B001HPNNWE/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_1>

4. Pied Piper: Musical Activities to Develop Basic Skills [Paperback] John Bean <http://www.amazon.co.uk/John-Bean/e/B001KDYADY/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_1> (Author), Amelia Oldfield <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Amelia-Oldfield/e/B004LUAM08/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_2> (Contributor)


Our Top Tips

• Keep a totally open mind, realise that anything is possible with time and be prepared to give anything a go.

• We found meeting – however briefly – between each session was invaluable for keeping things fresh and relevant. It helped us decide if we needed to vary or change even in a tiny way the delivery of the session.

• The staff are invaluable; get as much information as you can on each child.

• Repeating things is OK, in fact it is really important!

• Often a reaction happens when the music stops!

• Every child and every situation are different so what works brilliantly for one class might not work for another.

• It isn’t about following a scheme of work and expecting to get results, it’s about the process and seeing the children react to your music making with them. Sometimes they take months and months to react in a tiny way. But it’s worth it!
- When performing pieces for your groups to listen to, use changes in dynamics and tempo to watch for changes in listening preferences and behaviour, and don’t be worried about repeating the same piece several times or over several weeks.
- Don’t be afraid to sing; it’s a very good way to get staff joining in supporting you and it also gives them a role.
- You don’t have to play all the time; it is good to have silences/gaps in the music or only one person playing. This enables you to watch for reactions and gives the children time and a chance to hear single lines/one instrument.
- Sessions can be unpredictable, and you have to be ready to throw the plans away. If a child is really unsettled, tired or poorly this can change things for the whole class and session. It doesn’t matter.
- Support each other and work together.
- You can learn a lot from reflecting on the session and it doesn’t matter if something hasn’t worked as you thought it would.
- Live music is incredibly powerful. Always play with meaning and expression as it will speak even to the most disabled of children.

**REMEMBER….**

‘There is always a way in with every child, it might take a while to find it but there is always a way in.’

**MUSICIAN CASE STUDIES**

**Jackie’s Journey**

Worked in a SEND environment since 1990

Experience to date:

**Calthorpe** – playing to PMLD children as a therapeutic experience.

**Conductive Education Unit** – very beneficial first toe in the water as their philosophy is a very enabling environment. Staff are very helpful in giving feedback as to how best to support a pupil without doing it for them.

**Working in a number of special schools** including Wilson Stuart, Pines, Uffcolme, Orchard, Baskerville, Dame Ellen Pinsent, Selly Oak and Foxhollies as part of a creative arts project which usually involved mainstream pupils too, although not as integrated projects.

This gave me a useful overview of different school environments and range of disabilities, including autism. Staff varied in their helpfulness to support, but mainly it was good.

Planning and delivering alongside other artists always gives a new slant on ways of working and ways of involving children with disabilities. I received some training (an overview of the nature of various disabilities, working with the deaf etc.), but mainly I’ve learned from staff and artists along the way and adapted ideas from music workshop training for mainstream.

**Long-term relationships:**

Victoria School & Specialist Arts College – cross-arts projects.

Chadsgrove School – cross-arts projects.

**Musical and Ability/Youth Music Five-Term Project**

- This project has given us the structure and space to reflect much more on our practice. It’s been incredibly valuable to monitor pupils’ responses more formally and therefore allow these responses to lead the planning process.
- Moving to pure music activities has worked very well with our five-term class at Victoria, who are more able in some respects. We used their term project theme for the first two terms, but even found this was getting in the way of their musical development. The class have become very good at creating their own music, clearly choosing speeds, dynamics, melodic shapes and instruments, without exception. Having the ability to work longer term has really benefited this class and enabled us to build their skills very slowly. They haven’t needed any other sensory input to keep their engagement.
- Other classes have benefited from a more multi-sensory approach (often advocated by the teacher) and so experience of working in a cross-arts form of activity can inform the planning. Still, we have incorporated some pure music activity within all the sessions which has been successful, such as stopping and/or starting the music in some way or helping the pupils to play/experience different instruments, playing different types of music to gauge responses.
- Another beneficial aspect of this project has been the focus on communicating with staff: making sure they understand what we’re expecting from an activity, and asking for their responses and guidance so that we can support the pupils effectively, making sure they feel an important part of the team. I feel much more confident about this now, although it’s very easy to forget to communicate well, especially as there’s always a lot going on in the classroom!
- It’s been good to develop a basic session structure over the course of this project, which of course can be adapted. But it feels much more comfortable to know it works and that activities can be slotted in to suit whatever group we’re working with.

**Jane’s experience**

It’s been an interesting journey for the three of us. At the beginning I was terrified, even scared to do the ‘Hello’ song. I feel the others have allowed me to be an equal partner by the end. Over the terms each of us has taken turns leading certain aspects of the session. I’m far braver now and can re-evaluate. Each week I have learnt something new and can input into discussions.

One of the most amazing things has been observing the staff... I have seen a turnaround in staff in their confidence, in using voice and instruments... Halfway through the eight weeks they have seen something in the children. If they see what has happened with one child then hopefully this will influence staff for years, with other children, with other staff – the knock-on effect for years – it’s priceless!

The evaluation forms each session have helped me by having a guide on what to look for, and writing it down keeps it vivid. You do know more, so you’re not afraid to ask staff more. We can help to open horizons with staff.

Familiarisation: it was helpful to see the behaviour of children without instruments and a time to break down barriers.

Keep an open mind. It’s OK to feel unsure or emotional at times. One girl cried the first time I played, which was a shock. I learned to play as a starting point and not to be afraid to ask questions. I learned to watch the children for the slightest movement. I also learned at times not to get too close.

I learned not to be afraid to improvise or get rid of music stands, as no sheet music is better. Stillness and silence were important. Learning just to create music using movement was liberating. You can see a child do something and build on it. Holding a note, a drone, to keep something going in the gaps was useful, as was using pizzicato.

A special moment came from one boy. He hadn’t sung before,
and he started to sing. We had at least two terms break before we saw him again. I played to him and he remembered everything — plucking the strings, eye contact — he really remembered, it really mattered, he was feeling it.

Also seeing somebody do something for the first time. Another boy signalled to me by breathing to bounce the ball. Incredible. I had to prepare him, allow him time to mentally prepare, and say, ‘gentle, gentle’. I learned to give time, to prepare the ground.

I have been pushed outside of my comfort zone. The experience has improved the connection between me and the audience and made me aware of the power that that can have, that we can have. It has really pushed me. It is good for me developing my skills in this work and in presenting children’s concerts too. Going forward I can see the benefit now of working with just two of us: to be more involved and have more involvement for staff.

In the sessions don’t be afraid to sing, don’t think twice about it. Just go for it and don’t be afraid. This is something the pupils don’t get to experience normally so it will be different. If you are worried about the standard it will still be good. You can evaluate afterwards, just go for it.

Has this work impacted upon our work within the Orchestra – on the concert platform?

For many of us, yes:

‘It has put things into perspective — not to worry about that little solo you have... [it has helped in] being quite free without music, freed me up, enriched ...not so closed off in terms of my career, more open to other opportunities.’

‘The best thing ever... 100% supported all the way.’

‘I think it makes you more of a live performer on stage. [In school] the children are right there with you, it’s not just about how perfect a note is, although we always try to make it the best we can — it’s about the whole experience — they are in it with you, the children keep it real and live... I think it makes you a stronger performer... when you are [making music] with the children — you should be doing this with the audience too. It brings performance to life.’

‘Working with the children helps you appreciate what live music is all about and helps us to keep it real and live. We all want to (and will) play our best, but the experience we have together is the most important thing. Exploring live music and sharing it is what we should be doing on the concert platform in the concert hall. I think playing to a very appreciative audience gives you confidence and playing to the children helps you investigate the music in different, maybe deeper way. Also, if you can perform in the chaos of a noisy school hall you can perform anywhere!’

‘I will now always smile when I make eye contact if I see a child or, even thinking about our dementia project, people in the audience. It has made me more conscious of the audience... you forget the audience CAN see everything. Sometimes being in the Orchestra is like being in a bubble. I want to meet their eye contact. It has made it more real. It has improved the/my connection between the audience and made me realise the power that can have, that we can have.’
RESOURCES:

MUSICIAN REFLECTION TEMPLATE

Your reflections are really important in helping us to evaluate our project. Please fill in at the end of each session.

Name of School and Group:

Session No.:

1. Did your session change in any way from your template today? If so, what did you do differently?

2. What did you notice about the group today?

3. Observations on staff – any developments / needs?

4. What did you notice about each pupil’s response today? (refer to the levels in the SOI)

First Class

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil name</th>
<th>Musical Response</th>
<th>Social Response</th>
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Second Class

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<tr>
<th>Pupil name</th>
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5. Notes for next session:

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6. Any additional comments e.g. surrounding pupils, staff, timings, etc.?

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Sounds of Intent

1. Rarely (on around one in eight occasions or fewer)
2. Occasionally (on around one in four occasions)
3. Regularly (on around one in two occasions)
4. Frequently (on around three in four occasions)
5. Consistently (on around seven in eight occasions or more)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REACTIVE</th>
<th>PROACTIVE</th>
<th>INTERACTIVE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.1 encounters sounds</td>
<td>P.1 makes sounds unknowingly</td>
<td>I.1 relates unwittingly through sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.2 shows an emerging awareness of sound</td>
<td>P.2 makes or controls sound intentionally</td>
<td>I.2 interacts with others using sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.3 responds to simple patterns in sound (made through repetition or regularity)</td>
<td>P.3 makes simple patterns in sound intentionally, through repetition or regularity</td>
<td>I.3 interacts through imitating others’ sounds or through recognising self being imitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.4 recognises and responds to distinctive groups of musical sounds (‘motifs’) and the relationships between them (e.g. in ‘call and response’)</td>
<td>P.4 (re)creates distinctive groups of musical sounds (‘motifs’) and links them coherently</td>
<td>I.4 engages in dialogues using distinctive groups of musical sounds (‘motifs’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.5 attends to whole pieces: recognises prominent structural features (e.g. choruses); responds to general characteristics (e.g. tempo); develops preferences</td>
<td>P.5 (re)creates short and simple pieces of music; potentially of growing length and complexity; increasingly ‘in time’ and (where relevant) ‘in tune’</td>
<td>I.5 performs and/or improvises music of growing length and complexity with others, using increasingly developed ensemble skills</td>
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<td>R.6 engages with pieces as abstract ‘narratives in sound’ in which patterns of notes are repeated or varied over time to create meaning; differentiates between styles and performances</td>
<td>P.6 seeks to communicate through expressive performance, with increasing technical competence; creates pieces that are intended to convey particular effects</td>
<td>I.6 makes music expressively with others, with a widening repertoire, in a range of different styles and genres</td>
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Familiarisation session checklist

**Watch:**
How do the staff communicate with the pupils?
How do the pupils communicate with the staff?
How long do activities last for?
What do you notice about the pacing of the activities?
How much language is used?
How do support staff work with the pupils?
How are sessions structured?

**Ask:**
How long has the group been together?
What kind of music sessions does the group have already?
Age range?
Are there any individual learning targets (IEP’s) that might be useful for us to know about?
Are there any pupils who are sensitive to sound?
Are there any pupils who find group activities difficult?
Are there any useful signs (Makaton) I could learn?
Are there any other useful communication techniques I could learn?
Has the group experienced live music before?
### CBSO INSTRUMENT LIBRARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3-bar chimes</th>
<th>Hapi drum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS hand drum</td>
<td>Maracas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beaters</td>
<td>Rain stick</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabasa</td>
<td>Sea / Ocean drum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caterpillars</td>
<td>(Egg) Shaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claves</td>
<td>Slit drum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Djembe</td>
<td>Sound Shape</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frog scraper (guiro)</td>
<td>Table bar chime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand bells</td>
<td>Tambourines</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* A short video clip featuring some of the pupils, teachers and musicians involved in our Music & Ability project can be viewed here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqAu2UKdx78](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqAu2UKdx78)