

Response to the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum Interim Report

This response is written from the perspective of the National Association of Music Educators (NAME), the principal subject association for music, whose members cover the spectrum of music education providers including class teachers in all phases and the Music Education Council (MEC), the umbrella body for all organisations connected with music education in the UK.

We realise there is a very tight timeframe after the closing date for these responses and so we are confining ours to the points about which we feel strongest.

We welcome and affirm this interim report and its underlying concepts and principles. Given the original remit, we support the simplified curriculum structure in its proposed format with its intention of

- reducing curriculum overload;
- linking between the EYFS and KS3 in a way that is constructive and relevant for the primary phase *per se* as well as a connecting phase; and
- providing potential for developing understanding within and across all subjects, including within a subject by means of links with other subjects.

We agree with the division into the suggested six Areas of Learning. Whilst we understand the link made between arts and design, we believe that the connection with creativity, as identified in the Cambridge Review, is a more natural one and is in tune with the current priority of developing creativity across the curriculum and in the arts in particular.

The following are points that, although contained within the report, we would like particularly to emphasise:

Within each Area of Learning it is essential that each individual subject area retains conceptual integrity, with deep-level links made between subjects. This will require considerable exemplification and guidance, especially as music is particularly vulnerable to superficial links on a thematic level, which may enhance the other subject more than musical development itself (e.g. a song about electricity).

Links should be encouraged *between* Areas of Learning where relevant. There is a danger the Areas of Learning are seen as discrete units linked only by numeracy, literacy and ICT. Music, in particular, shares conceptual links with many of the other Areas and thus can enhance and be enhanced by Areas other than its 'home' one. (Perhaps implied by dotted rather than solid dividing lines in the diagram on p39 of the interim report?) As well as valuable links between the six Areas of Learning, the creative arts also play an important role in the wider personal development of a child. In NAME's response to the Call for Evidence we wrote 'Music can support self-esteem, aesthetic and emotional development and expression, social interaction and team-building, concentration, awareness and appreciation of other cultures, pride in one own culture...' The illustration on p28 of the Interim Report demonstrates the power of music for *all* children. Such potential needs to be both accommodated and promoted by appropriate curriculum structure and guidance.

The need for active involvement should be emphasised, encouraging process as well as, when appropriate, product. Learning in music is best promoted through active engagement in the main processes of composing, performing and listening/appraising.

If, as seems logical, level descriptors will apply to the Areas of Learning rather than individual subjects, they should be couched in ways that

- move from the generic links between subjects in each Area of Learning, through to exemplification within *each* component subject area;
- ensure *all* subject areas must be covered for children to move up through levels.

Assessment might therefore involve developing an individual pupil's profile within the Area. It is important to include subject specific vocabulary in order to emphasise the conceptual understanding within a subject as well as across the Area of Learning.

While we agree that it is important for schools to have a statutory duty to teach the recognised components of a broad and balanced curriculum, including music, we also agree that schools need the freedom to organise the curriculum flexibly, in ways appropriate for their particular contextual needs. This is particularly important as far as interacting with the wider community is concerned. Links must be able to be developed with outside agencies and initiatives as well as between them. In music there are currently several important national initiatives taking place; in particular we urge reference to the Key Stage Two Whole Class Instrumental and Vocal Tuition programme and the Music Manifesto National Singing Campaign (Sing Up). Although the objectives are to enable all children to have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument and belong to 'singing schools', both initiatives contribute powerfully to whole school aims within the Every Child Matters agenda. It is important that these initiatives can continue under any future curriculum structure so they can carry on providing the already manifest benefits to children and their schools.

All of the above have important implications for training at various levels both before and alongside the introduction of the new curriculum structure. Such training is critical to the success of any changes and should take place at the initial teacher education stage, as well as be part of the continuing professional development for existing teachers. The use of subject associations in this training will help retain the deep level subject concepts as well as explore the potential of cross subject links.