



St. John's C of E Primary School Music Curriculum



Intent

The intent of the primary music curriculum is to inspire and foster a love for music, empowering children to explore, create, and appreciate music in a supportive and engaging environment. This curriculum aims to develop students' understanding and enjoyment of music through active participation, enhancing their creativity, emotional expression, and cultural awareness.

Through hands-on musical experiences—singing, playing instruments, listening, moving, and composing—the curriculum nurtures essential musical skills, including rhythm, pitch, tempo, and dynamics. Students will build foundational knowledge of musical concepts, vocabulary, and notation while cultivating critical listening skills and an appreciation for a variety of music genres and traditions from diverse cultures.

Implementation

EYFS Curriculum

Our Primary Curriculum builds on the strong foundations for learning developed in Reception. In Reception the objectives below are taught within the 'Understanding the World' specific area

	Expressive Arts and Design (Being Imaginative and Expressive)
EYFS	Children sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs. Children perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and (when appropriate) try to move in time with music.

Primary Curriculum

Year	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
1	My Musical Heartbeat	Dance, Sing and Play!	Exploring Sounds	Learning to Listen	Having Fun with Improvisation	Let's Perform Together
2	Pulse, Rhythm and Pitch	Playing in an Orchestra	Inventing a Musical Story	Recognising Different Sounds	Exploring Improvisation	Our Big Concert
3	Writing Music Down	Playing in a Band	Compose Using Your Imagination	More Musical Styles	Enjoying Improvisation	Opening Night
4	Musical Structures	Exploring Feelings When You Play	Compose with Your Friends	Feelings Through Music	Expression and Improvisation	The Show Must Go On



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5	Melody and Harmony in Music	Sing and Play in Different Styles	Composing and Chords	Enjoying Musical Styles	Freedom to Improvise	Battle of the Bands
6	Music and Technology	Developing Ensemble Skills	Creative Composition	Musical Styles Connect Us	Improvising with Confidence	Farewell Tour

Knowledge

National Curriculum KS1

Pupils should be taught to:

- use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes
- play tuned and untuned instruments musically
- listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music
- experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music.

National Curriculum KS2

Pupils should be taught to:

- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
- use and understand staff and other musical notations
- appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
- develop an understanding of the history of music.



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Skills Progression

	Year 1	Year 2
Singing	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sing simple songs, chants and rhymes from memory, singing collectively and at the same pitch, responding to simple visual directions and counting in.• Begin with simple songs with a very small range, mi-so and then slightly wider.• Sing a wide range of call and response songs, control vocal pitch and match pitch with accuracy.	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sing songs regularly with a pitch range of do-so with increasing vocal control.• Sing songs with a small pitch range, pitching accurately.• Know the meaning of dynamics (loud/quiet) and tempo (fast/slow) and be able to demonstrate these when singing by responding to (a) the leader's directions and (b) visual symbols (e.g. crescendo, decrescendo, pause).
Listening	<p>Teachers should develop pupils' shared knowledge and understanding of the stories, origins, traditions, history and social context of the music they are listening to, singing and playing. Listening to recorded performances should be complemented by opportunities to experience live music making in and out of school.</p>	<p>Teachers should develop pupils' shared knowledge and understanding of the stories, origins, traditions, history and social context of the music they are listening to, singing and playing. Listening to recorded performances should be complemented by opportunities to experience live music making in and out of school.</p>
Composing	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvise simple vocal chants, using question and answer phrases.• Create musical sound effects and short sequences of sounds in response to stimuli. Combine sounds to make a story, choosing and playing instruments or sound-makers.• Understand the difference between creating a rhythm pattern and a pitch pattern.• Invent, retain and recall rhythm and pitch patterns and perform these for others, taking turns.• Use music technology, if available, to capture, change and combine sounds.• Recognise how graphic notation can represent created sounds. Explore and invent own symbols.	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create music in response to a non-musical stimulus.• Work with a partner to improvise simple question and answer phrases, to be sung and played on untuned percussion, creating a musical conversation.• Use graphic symbols, dot notation and stick notation, as appropriate, to keep a record of composed pieces.• Use music technology, if available, to capture, change and combine sounds.
Musicianship – Pulse/Beat	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walk, move or clap a steady beat with others, changing the speed of the beat as the tempo of the music changes.• Use body percussion, (e.g. clapping, tapping, walking) and classroom percussion (shakers, sticks and blocks, etc.), playing repeated rhythm patterns (ostinati) and short, pitched patterns on	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand that the speed of the beat can change, creating a faster or slower pace (tempo).• Mark the beat of a listening piece by tapping or clapping and recognising tempo as well as changes in tempo.



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	<p>tuned instruments (e.g. glockenspiels or chime bars) to maintain a steady beat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to the pulse in recorded/live music through movement and dance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk in time to the beat of a piece of music or song. Know the difference between left and right to support coordination and shared movement with others. • Begin to group beats in twos and threes by tapping knees on the first (strongest) beat and clapping the remaining beats. • Identify the beat groupings in familiar music that they sing regularly and listen to
Musicianship – Pitch	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform short copycat rhythm patterns accurately, led by the teacher. • Perform short repeating rhythm patterns (ostinati) while keeping in time with a steady beat. • Perform word-pattern chants; create, retain and perform their own rhythm patterns. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play copycat rhythms, copying a leader, and invent rhythms for others to copy on untuned percussion. • Create rhythms using word phrases as a starting point. • Read and respond to chanted rhythm patterns, and represent them with stick notation including crotchets, quavers and crotchets rests. • Create and perform their own chanted rhythm patterns with the same stick notation.
Musicianship – Rhythm	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to sounds in the local school environment, comparing high and low sounds. • Sing familiar songs in both low and high voices and talk about the difference in sound. • Explore percussion sounds to enhance storytelling. • Follow pictures and symbols to guide singing and playing. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a range of singing games based on the cuckoo interval matching voices accurately, supported by a leader playing the melody. • Sing short phrases independently within a singing game or short song. • Respond independently to pitch changes heard in short melodic phrases, indicating with actions. • Recognise dot notation and match it to 3-note tunes played on tuned percussion.

	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Singing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing a widening range of unison songs of varying styles and structures with a pitch range of do–so, tunefully and with expression. Perform forte and piano, loud and soft. • Perform actions confidently and in time to a range of action songs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to sing a broad range of unison songs with the range of an octave (do–do) pitching the voice accurately and following directions for getting louder (crescendo) and quieter (decrescendo). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing a broad range of songs from an extended repertoire with a sense of ensemble and performance. This should include observing phrasing, accurate pitching and appropriate style. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing a broad range of songs, including those that involve syncopated rhythms, as part of a choir, with a sense of ensemble and performance. This should include observing rhythm, phrasing, accurate pitching and appropriate style.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk, move or clap a steady beat with others, changing the speed of the beat as the tempo of the music changes. • Perform as a choir in school assemblies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing rounds and partner songs in different time signatures (2, 3 and 4 time) and begin to sing repertoire with small and large leaps as well as a simple second part to introduce vocal harmony. • Perform a range of songs in school assemblies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing three-part rounds, partner songs and songs with a verse and a chorus. • Perform a range of songs in school assemblies and in school performance opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to sing three- and four-part rounds or partner songs, and experiment with positioning singers randomly within the group – i.e. no longer in discrete parts – in order to develop greater listening skills, balance between parts and vocal independence. • Perform a range of songs as a choir in school assemblies, school performance opportunities and to a wider audience.
Listening	Teachers should develop pupils' shared knowledge and understanding of the stories, origins, traditions, history and social context of the music they are listening to, singing and playing. Listening to recorded performances should be complemented by opportunities to experience live music making in and out of school.	Teachers should develop pupils' shared knowledge and understanding of the stories, origins, traditions, history and social context of the music they are listening to, singing and playing. Listening to recorded performances should be complemented by opportunities to experience live music making in and out of school.	Teachers should develop pupils' shared knowledge and understanding of the stories, origins, traditions, history and social context of the music they are listening to, singing and playing. Listening to recorded performances should be complemented by opportunities to experience live music making in and out of school.	Teachers should develop pupils' shared knowledge and understanding of the stories, origins, traditions, history and social context of the music they are listening to, singing and playing. Listening to recorded performances should be complemented by opportunities to experience live music making in and out of school.
Composing - Improvise	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become more skilled in improvising (using voices, tuned and untuned percussion and instruments played in whole-class/group/individual/instrumental teaching), inventing short 'on-the-spot' responses using a limited note-range. • Structure musical ideas (e.g. using echo or question and answer phrases) to create music that has a 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvise on a limited range of pitches on the instrument they are now learning, making use of musical features including smooth (legato) and detached (staccato). • Begin to make compositional decisions about the overall structure of improvisations. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvise freely over a drone, developing sense of shape and character, using tuned percussion and melodic instruments. • Improvise over a simple groove, responding to the beat, creating a satisfying melodic shape; experiment with using a wider range of dynamics, including very loud (fortissimo), 	<p>Pupils should extend their improvisation skills through working in small groups to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create music with multiple sections that include repetition and contrast. • Use chord changes as part of an improvised sequence. • Extend improvised melodies beyond 8 beats over a fixed groove, creating a satisfying melodic shape.



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	beginning, middle and end. Pupils should compose in response to different stimuli, e.g. stories, verse, images (paintings and photographs) and musical sources.		very quiet (pianissimo), moderately loud (mezzo forte), and moderately quiet (mezzo piano).	
Composing - Compose	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combine known rhythmic notation with letter names to create rising and falling phrases using just three notes (do, re and mi).• Compose song accompaniments on untuned percussion using known rhythms and note values.	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combine known rhythmic notation with letter names to create short pentatonic phrases using a limited range of 5 pitches suitable for the instruments being learnt. Sing and play these phrases as self-standing compositions.• Arrange individual notation cards of known note values (i.e. minim, crotchet, crotchet rest and paired quavers) to create sequences of 2-, 3- or 4-beat phrases, arranged into bars.• Explore developing knowledge of musical components by composing music to create a specific mood, for example creating music to accompany a short film clip.• Introduce major and minor chords.• Include instruments played in whole-class/ group/individual teaching to expand the scope and range of the sound palette available for composition work.• Capture and record creative ideas using graphic symbols, rhythm notation and time	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compose melodies made from pairs of phrases in either C major or A minor or a key suitable for the instrument chosen. These melodies can be enhanced with rhythmic or chordal accompaniment.• Working in pairs, compose a short ternary piece.• Use chords to compose music to evoke a specific atmosphere, mood or environment. Equally, pupils might create music to accompany a silent film or to set a scene in a play or book.• Capture and record creative ideas using graphic symbols, rhythm notation and time signatures, staff notation or technology.	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CPlan and compose an 8- or 16-beat melodic phrase using the pentatonic scale (e.g. C, D, E, G, A) and incorporate rhythmic variety and interest. Play this melody on available tuned percussion and/or orchestral instruments. Notate this melody.• Compose melodies made from pairs of phrases in either G major or E minor or a key suitable for the instrument chosen.• Either of these melodies can be enhanced with rhythmic or chordal accompaniment.• Compose a ternary piece; use available music software/apps to create and record it, discussing how musical contrasts are achieved.



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<p>Performing – Instrumental Performance</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop facility in playing tuned percussion or a melodic instrument, such as violin or recorder. Play and perform melodies following staff notation using a small range (e.g. Middle C–E/do–mi) as a whole class or in small groups (e.g. trios and quartets). • Use listening skills to correctly order phrases using dot notation, showing different arrangements of notes C-D-E/do-re-mi. • Individually (solo) copy stepwise melodic phrases with accuracy at different speeds; allegro and adagio, fast and slow. Extend to question-and-answer phrases. 	<p>signatures, staff notation or technology.</p> <p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop facility in the basic skills of a selected musical instrument over a sustained learning period. • Play and perform melodies following staff notation using a small range (e.g. Middle C–G/do–so) as a whole-class or in small groups. • Perform in two or more parts (e.g. melody and accompaniment or a duet) from simple notation using instruments played in whole class teaching. Identify static and moving parts. • Copy short melodic phrases including those using the pentatonic scale (e.g. C, D, E, G, A). 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play melodies on tuned percussion, melodic instruments or keyboards, following staff notation written on one stave and using notes within the Middle C–C'/do–do range. • Understand how triads are formed, and play them on tuned percussion, melodic instruments or keyboards. Perform simple, chordal accompaniments to familiar songs. • Perform a range of repertoire pieces and arrangements combining acoustic instruments to form mixed ensembles, including a school orchestra. . • Develop the skill of playing by ear on tuned instruments, copying longer phrases and familiar melodies. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a melody following staff notation written on one stave and using notes within an octave range (do–do); make decisions about dynamic range, including very loud, very quiet, moderately loud and moderately quiet. • Accompany this same melody, and others, using block chords or a bass line. • Engage with others through ensemble playing with pupils taking on melody or accompaniment roles.
<p>Performing – Reading Notation</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the stave, lines and spaces, and clef. Use dot notation to show higher or lower pitch. • Understand the differences between crotchets and paired quavers. • Apply word chants to rhythms, understanding how to link each syllable to one musical note. 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the differences between minims, crotchets, paired quavers and rests. • Read and perform pitch notation within a defined range (e.g. C–G/do–so). • Follow and perform simple rhythmic scores to a steady beat: maintain individual parts accurately within the rhythmic 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further understand the differences between semibreves, minims, crotchets and crotchet rests, paired quavers and semiquavers. • Understand the differences between 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 time signatures. • Read and perform pitch notation within an octave (e.g. C–C'/do–do). 	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further understand the differences between semibreves, minims, crotchets, quavers and semiquavers, and their equivalent rests. • Further develop the skills to read and perform pitch notation within an octave (e.g. C–C/ do–do). • Read and play confidently from rhythm notation cards and



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		texture, achieving a sense of ensemble.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read and play short rhythmic phrases at sight from prepared cards, using conventional symbols for known rhythms and note durations.	rhythmic scores in up to four parts that contain known rhythms and note durations. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read and play from notation a four-bar phrase, confidently identify note names and durations.
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Impact

An effective primary music curriculum has a profound impact on children's personal, social, and academic development. By actively engaging in music, students gain essential skills that extend beyond the classroom, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Music education encourages self-expression, boosts confidence, and provides a constructive outlet for emotions, allowing children to explore and communicate their feelings in healthy and enriching ways.

At its core, an impactful music curriculum promotes inclusivity and cultural awareness. Students gain a deeper understanding and respect for diverse musical traditions, broadening their worldview and fostering empathy. Through exposure to music from various cultures, they develop an appreciation for the universal power of music to connect people and communities.

From an academic perspective, music education strengthens cognitive skills that are directly transferable to other subjects, such as maths and the arts. The curriculum supports memory, concentration, and pattern recognition, skills that are foundational for academic success. Research consistently shows that students involved in music education demonstrate enhanced literacy and numeracy, improved problem-solving abilities, and increased perseverance in complex tasks.

Socially, music education builds teamwork, patience, and communication skills as children collaborate in group activities and performances. These experiences instil a sense of responsibility, cooperation, and mutual support, preparing students to work effectively with others in future endeavours.

Ultimately, an effective primary music curriculum lays the foundation for a lifelong appreciation of music, empowering children with the skills, confidence, and cultural awareness to thrive in a diverse world. It shapes well-rounded individuals, nurturing their artistic expression, enhancing their cognitive and social abilities, and inspiring a love of music that they carry forward into their lives and communities.