

INSPIRING SOUNDS

BIRMINGHAM MUSIC SERVICE RESEARCH REPORT 2022

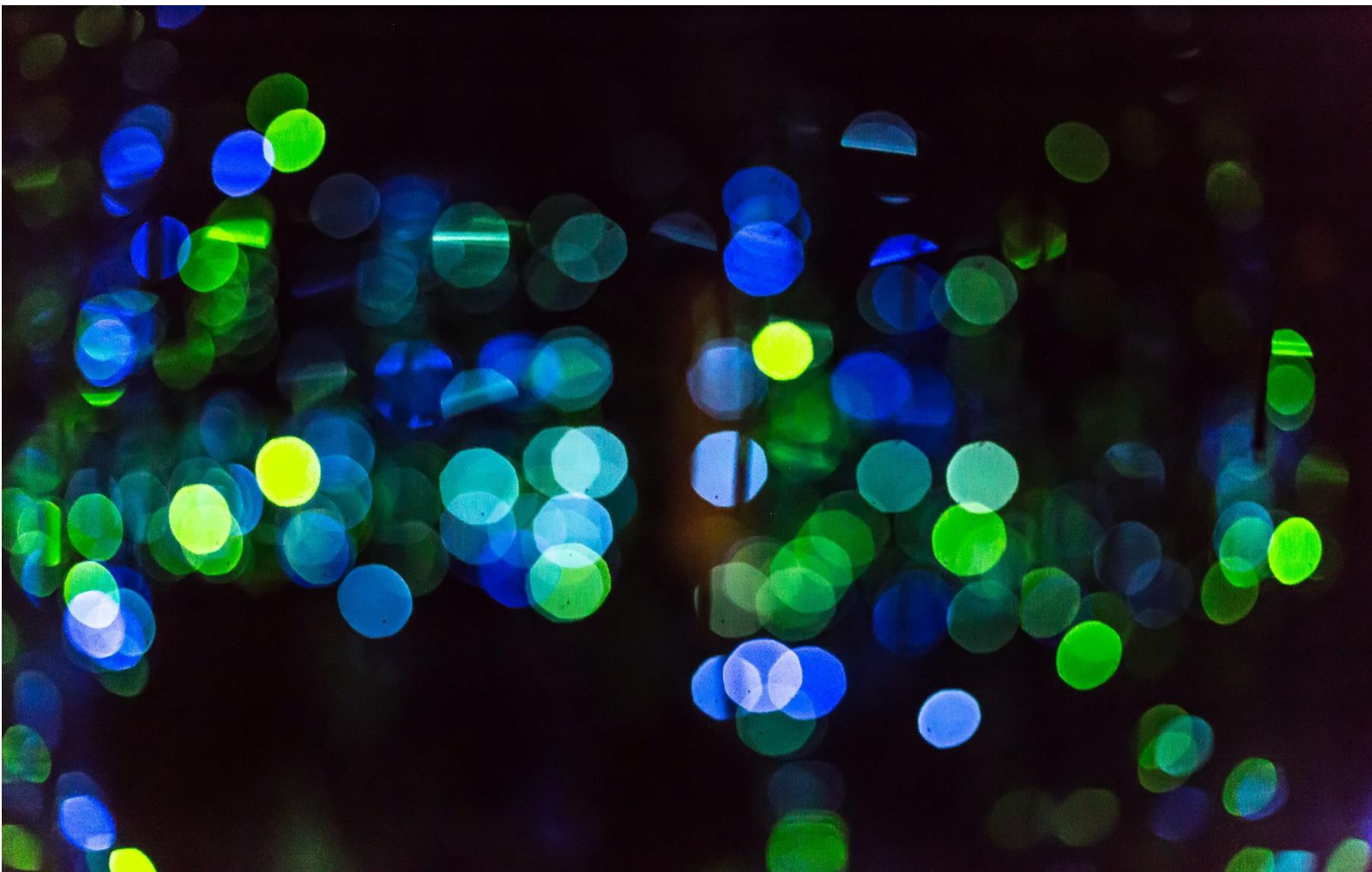
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Introduction

Equality in education is a necessary condition for a democratic society (UNESCO, 2007). Equality is not achieved solely by providing equal resources for each student but requires that personal circumstances should not be obstacles to educational success (OECD, 2012). This means that students' characteristics and personal learning needs should be taken into account. Teachers must therefore develop and support educational practices that help students progress and meet their learning potential.

Wider education goals and benefits of learning through music are well known (Hammel and Hourigan, 2011), especially in special schools. Musical engagement supports social development and citizenship. This includes motor development, communicative action and social and emotional engagement with others (Hallam, 2015). It is therefore a crucial aspect for any curriculum in special schools. The Provision of Music in Special Education (PROMISE) research (Welch et al., 2001) and the Sounds of Intent framework of musical development for children with complex needs (Ockelford et al., 2005) are examples of empirical work that have contributed significantly to the field of music education in special schools. However, although there has been much work in music education into music and additional needs (Ockelford 2015), music education in special schools undertaken by non-music specialists continues to be an area needing further development. More work needs to be done to develop non-music specialist teachers' knowledge, understanding and assessments of music education to help young people fulfil their potential, both individually and in society.

Inspiring sounds, a three-year Youth Music funded project brought together music teachers from Birmingham's Music Service and in-school generalist teachers from special schools to develop generalist classroom teachers' musical knowledge, understanding and SEND musical assessment processes. A key framework which shaped the project was Sounds of Intent, which investigates and promotes the musical development of young people with learning difficulties. The framework of musical development covers the whole range of ability from profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) to those with autism, with or without exceptional musical abilities.

This report documents the experiences of in-school generalist teachers, music teachers and the project lead on their perceptions of the successes and challenges of this project.

Methodology

To gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of music teachers, classroom teachers and the project lead, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interview questions centred around key areas including the development of musical knowledge, the impact of Sounds of Intent, partnership working between music teachers and classroom teachers and young people's progression. The choice of semi-structured interviews was purposeful so that the interviewer could be responsive to the interviewee's responses. This involved subsidiary questions to explore interviewee responses, with new questions designed to tap the experience and knowledge of each interviewee (Flick, 2014: 208). The semi-structured interview also acted as a powerful instrument allowing the interviewee time to assess responses, ensure interviewees understood the questions and provided detailed answers relevant to their own position (Cohen et al., 2007).

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was selected as an iterative approach to analysing data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Transcribing and analysing the data helped the researchers make sense of participants' views and their reasoning behind these perceptions. This approach helped delve 'beneath the surface' (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 174) and explore teachers' perceptions of the impact of Inspiring Sounds.

Ethics

Full ethical consent was granted by Birmingham City University for the research interviews.

Project Lead Perspective

This interview sought to gain in-depth insight to the project aims, outcomes, aspirations and impacts.

Project Aims

Inspiring Sounds sought to tackle a long-standing issue in SEND music training: support and CPD for music teachers and classroom teachers to develop music teaching and learning. A main stimulus for the project was the lack of generalist in-school teacher confidence teaching music in SEND settings. It was therefore felt that without some support key developmental and communication needs would not be met for students attending these schools. Inspiring Sounds sought to tackle some of these issues:

Due to the lack of music specialists in special schools we wanted to come up with a programme that would help support schools in music, give teachers more confidence in using music: either in discrete music lessons or in their practice. The idea is that we'd send in Music service teachers to work with class staff in special schools to kind of help them feel more confident in using music.

The project lead recognised the importance of sustained and long-term partnership work for professional development. Therefore, three years of funding was sought:

We went for funding for three years because with this kind of thing it takes time. Obviously, it will also always look different in every single setting because we might have some teachers who were, you know, already musical, already confident using music. But we knew that there were many teachers who would benefit most, so probably those with perhaps less experience in using music or using music confidently were people we wanted to work with. Time was important.

Outcomes and impact of the Project

There were three identified outcomes for the project including:

- Using sounds of intent within the classroom, to explore musical communication and progression
- In-school classroom teacher development of musical confidence, knowledge and understanding.
- By the end of year three, classroom teachers would be delivering music lessons, planning, and assessing progress via Sounds of Intent.

Year one planned to include a range of activities such as classroom teachers observing music teachers teaching and learning approaches alongside sounds of intent training and development of in-school classroom teacher music practices. Year one was therefore planned as a discovery phase:

In the first year, the idea was that there would be hope. They would have a go at delivering one of the activities in the session. I wasn't prescriptive about this. There were also Sounds of Intent training in the first term and then they would explore this further in practical lessons in the second term.

A key aspect in this quote from the project lead is that they were not prescriptive about how this would happen, allowing fluidity between music teacher and in-school teacher. In some cases this worked well, as we shall see in the music teacher and in-school classroom teacher interviews. These collaborations led to classroom teachers feeling confident leading music lessons and beginning to identify progress via Sounds of Intent. However, for some

classroom teachers and music teachers, the lack of structure meant that some classroom teachers disengaged, that classroom teachers and schools were not fully invested, and therefore the project remained non-visible to the wider school population.

Year two aspirations involved upskilling the classroom teachers and also putting into practice the Sounds of Intent training for both planning and delivery:

In year 2 we were helping to upskill the classroom teachers. So, I guess in the second year would be thinking about using maybe some of those skills that they've learned and also using Sounds of Intent in planning, but also when thinking about delivery.

By year three the project aimed to have developed in-school classroom teacher confidence including musical skills, knowledge of musical development for students with SEND and confidence to deliver music lessons:

I guess that the endpoint, in an ideal world, would be that by year three it would be very much co-delivery rather than just our teachers delivering and then the class teacher observing. It was meant to be about them slowly taking over and leading.

Overall, the project sought to develop and deepen generalist in-school classroom teachers' knowledge of SEND music practice and associated assessment frameworks, as well as giving them confidence to deliver music lessons more broadly:

To have a valid research framework to underpin the work we do via Sounds of Intent. But also, you know, we wanted to leave something with the schools, even if that's all that's left, you know, is that they use and have Sounds of Intent or they know it exists and they can look on the website and get ideas on the website or you know, use it too.

Sounds of Intent

Inspiring Sounds focused on musical development and its assessment. To do this the Sounds of Intent framework was identified as a suitable evaluative tool to underpin the project. Sounds of Intent makes observing, attributing and assessing musical progress for students with SEND or PMLD possible:

It sets out what we're looking for at the very basic levels in terms of music development or interaction through sound...it's been really useful for them to also see progress happening.

Through professional development training in Sounds of Intent in-school classroom teachers' aspirations for students would be raised, as well as deepening their understanding of what musical progression looks like over a long period of time for students within their schools:

We're really looking at communication through sound. It is about giving the teachers something that they can look at using music and think about breakthrough moments. In some cases, young people having agency that first time or making signs intentionally where there may never have done that before and it's just a way of recording it and recognising it.

The project lead felt that this framework could be used in many ways, not only for the assessment of musical progress but also future short, mid, and long-term planning:

It helps them in their planning as well.... and makes it individualised.

Curriculum Guidance

The Inspiring Sounds project highlighted competing priorities for classroom teachers, which had resulted in a reduction of classroom time for music. On occasions, whole school procedures and protocols were inhibiting musical development in the special school classroom:

Teachers were previously given these objectives and a lot of them aren't appropriate for the kids in this class: they are set because of school stuff.

The paucity of special needs music curriculum guidance for school teachers was also acknowledged by the project lead. The lack of a music focused 'close to practice' literature impacted musical classroom experience, as classroom teachers did not have the capacity for further research into this field. Whilst classroom teachers were drawing upon existing curriculum literature, strands which addressed music for children with additional needs in the classroom were more challenging for the teachers to locate. Examples of this include the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) and the Model Music Curriculum (DfE, 2021), where the project lead sensed the teachers were having difficulty sourcing appropriate guidance:

In special schools, generally with curriculum, there's very little guidance. The teachers don't have time to do massive amounts of their own research. They're trying to use the National Curriculum, but it's often not appropriate, or they don't see how it's appropriate. The Model Music Curriculum does say it can be used in special schools, but it doesn't give you much to go on if you're a special school class teacher at all.

These perceived gaps in support and guidance and their impact on provision were a motivation to the project lead to develop the SEND offer from the local Music Education Hub, in supporting and enabling classroom teachers in facilitating musical experience and development for the children in local special schools. The vision for affordable access to additional needs curriculum support for teachers was therefore emphasised and regarded as inhibiting music education across the country:

Curriculum support for special schools can be very expensive. For something which is such a national issue, there should be something out there that you don't have to buy in.

Challenges

The main challenges for the project were situated in staffing capacity. Retaining staff engagement in the project for the three years was problematic in some settings, with issues of staff turnover, supply staff and maternity cover for the project lead herself impacting on its delivery. The difficulties in consistency of teacher CPD and classroom engagement was therefore difficult to manage at times:

Keeping the same staff over the three years, that's the biggest challenge. I think the turnover in special schools can be quite frequent.

The Covid-19 pandemic also had a significant impact on the project. The imposition of lockdowns and school closures through 2020 and 2021 disrupted learning all impacted. These also meant that research visits to school settings were conducted online rather than in person. Reflecting on this, the project lead felt that the pandemic meant that Inspiring Sounds was less impactful than its potential, and made it difficult at times to receive responses from schools:

Covid has made everybody more stressed and this is especially the case for special schools. There's a heightened risk associated with Covid and with the vulnerable young people, many didn't go to school even when it was open.

Impacts and plans for development

Inspiring Sounds impacted the schools where it was taking place in developing relationships between these settings and the Music Education Hub. These relationships make it more likely for greater connectivity in the future, where schools may approach the hub for support in enabling musical experiences for the pupils in their schools. This supportive ethos was one which the music hub was keen to engender:

One of the challenges is that we don't want to give teachers extra work, because that's the last thing they need. One teacher has talked about how much she has learned and in one school some young people that wouldn't usually be comfortable in a group setting have been in the room for the sound sessions.

The project has also enabled conversations for plans for future development of music provision in special schools. These conversations have included the development of a special school music curriculum with some generic threads that could then be adapted for individual needs within each school. The lack of music curricula underpinned by research thinking, or the need for development of curriculum for non-music specialists was also something the project lead experienced in her engagements with schools, where common school approaches to different curriculum subjects caused potential tensions:

Class staff in school have to fight to get time for reflection. The school teachers talk about curriculum, that they're expected to do certain things, but you know for music, there is often not a curriculum. The idea of having a role in helping develop a curriculum with schools I think is massively important.

Project lead key findings:

- Project aims and outcome were disrupted due to a range of factors: COVID, in-school staff retention, development of partnerships between music teacher and classroom teachers.
- Some of the project aims were not fully met; an extension of funding is needed to continue to develop the project.
- A more structured approach to professional development is needed. This includes school buy-in and knowledge of the project aims and progress, time afforded to all teachers to reflect together and co-deliver lessons and increased knowledge of the importance of music for communication development for young people with SEND.
- To increase understanding and use of Sounds of Intent in SEND settings to ensure that musical progression is recognised, individualised and supported.
- Whole school approaches can inhibit development of music curricula in special school settings
- There is a lack of curriculum guidance for music in special schools and curriculum support in this area can be expensive and difficult for classroom music teachers to access
- Staffing and Covid made it more challenging to realise the aims of the project as originally conceived
- There is a gap in support for the development of music curricula in special schools, which music hubs could help to fill
- Time for class teachers to reflect on music curricula and whole school curriculum formats can inhibit access to music for school pupils

Music Teacher Perspectives

This section will outline the music teacher perspectives on the aims and outcomes of inspiring sounds.

Music Teachers Prior Experiences

The music teachers who took part in the interviews both had different prior knowledge and experiences before embarking on the project. Music Teacher 1 had previously undertaken the Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) in Sounds of Intent, giving them a deeper understanding of working with children and young people with additional needs. During the PG Cert, Music Teacher 1 was introduced to the Sounds of Intent musical development framework which gave them tools for tracking and assessing musical development as well as resources to use in the classroom.

Music Teacher 2 however, had very little prior experience of working in a SEND setting stating:

I haven't done the PG Cert. I have no prior real experience to working in SEND apart from running the open orchestra at school for the past four years. I came to this project quite inexperienced.

In order to support this less-experienced teacher, a qualified practitioner from a music organisation specialising in working with children and young people with severe and complex disabilities worked with them as a mentor over a period of a year and a half. This professional development opportunity had three key features:

Duration

In order for professional development (PD) to be impactful, Desimone (2009) suggests that PD needs to involve a high number of contact hours between teacher and mentor over a long period of time. The support offered to teacher 2 took place over a year and half, giving them time to process and put their learning into practice. The structure of the sessions helped develop teacher confidence, moving from observing the mentor teaching with the music teacher supporting the lesson, to the music teacher teaching with mentor supporting the lesson. The teacher noted the impact of this structure stating:

I have spent the first year working with a practitioner who was coming in and working alongside me, they would deliver a lesson then I would deliver the next two and then he would deliver. While they were delivering, I would observe, I would take note of how they had structured the sessions and then I would teach the next lesson and think about ways in which I could move it forward. But as time's gone on, they sit back more. I genuinely plan and will give them something to do in the session, which I feel I might need some support with.

Development of SEND musical knowledge and understanding

The mentor and music teacher considered appropriate subject matter, student centric pedagogies, teaching methods, musical communication and student thinking and learning. In particular, the music teacher discussed how they now consider extending some young people's knowledge further in lessons, and also how to structure their lesson to give students more one-to-one time:

...it's working out ways to offer extensions to those children that are achieving more. My mentor put those in place to show me how to do that. I think the main thing for me is allowing individual time within sessions. And obviously, class sizes are about 10 children, so there is that opportunity to give more individual time. And I wasn't very good at that before. I now make sure everyone has that individual time and that I can then work to whatever their needs may be or thinking of ways to extend what they can achieve. This professional development opportunity has been really good at helping me with that.

Reflective practice

Central to the success of this mentorship was the provision of time to reflect together, including collegial sharing, time for questions and discussion as well as developing an understanding of what musical progression looks like for young people. This reflective time developed into a collaborative team-teaching process with a sharing of knowledge:

We would do a session 10 to 10.30 and then 12 to 12.30. We'd then have a whole hour in 20 minutes when we just talk through what worked, what didn't work. They would show me resources online that I wasn't aware of. They have got their own way of doing things so we had to negotiate and think about the things we would do differently. And I think they learnt a little bit from me, as well as me learning from them. I know they have got the SEND experience, but I've got the experience in how it works within a school base and curriculum work and things like that. It was quite intimidating to start with having them there because I thought they knew everything, but actually it's just a whole part of the learning journey isn't it? I Learn from them and them from me. We ended up team-teaching which is nice.

Partnership working with classroom teachers: successes and challenges

A central tenet of the Inspiring Sounds project was the collaborative partnership between the music teacher and in-school classroom teachers. There were many successes and challenges to these partnerships. The challenges included:

Lack of in-school teacher confidence

The Key Stage 4 class teacher was reluctant to get too involved with the teaching, the Key Stage 3 class teacher was much more on board. I think it was just a confidence thing, really. And I think getting used to the idea of what the programme was about, and what we would what we were trying to do and getting the Sounds of Intent assessment embedded into the teaching. *Music Teacher 1*

Disruptions to timetables, changes of locations and in-school teacher retention. Music Teacher 1 discussed the differences between working consistently with one teacher compared to the disruption when working with another.

Music Teacher 1 noted how one in-school teacher made little progress due to various issues noted above:

The teacher who was in the key stage for class has moved to another site. That meant that I was then with a different teacher, a new teacher, not just a new teacher, to me, but a new teacher to the school as well. So obviously, I'm starting from scratch

with them in terms of what Sounds of Intent is, and how it fits into the Inspiring Sounds project. It has been a big learning curve for the teacher, although they have been very open to learning about it. But they are obviously still settling into the school and settling into the class. Also, they have had a significant turnaround in terms of new pupils coming in. So again, I'm working with a larger number of students in that class who have not had music before. This just makes it all complex. It feels like we've, we've kind of gone a long way back really. *Music Teacher 1*

And Music Teacher 2 highlights issues of timetabling stating:

I'm currently doing alternative weeks because of COVID and the school's new timetabling. This means progress is slower. Classroom teachers are also having to find time for the music lesson to plan, because senior leadership is saying if you don't do your planning time now, you won't get any planning for the week. This is the battle from the top. *Music Teacher 2.*

Music Teacher 2 also discussed the difficulties in establishing a collaborative partnership with the classroom teachers, especially if they are not on board with the project aims and outcomes:

I had a massive battle. The teachers were not helpful, they were not willing for me to do things. No positive atmosphere in the class. I can work with the kids, but this project is about teacher development and the teachers not taking anything on board and it feels like I'm being slapped in the face.

When working with classroom teachers for a long period of time, in-school teacher knowledge and growth in musical understanding was developed.

Although there have been many challenges to partnership working, Music teacher 1 discussed the success of working for two years with another teacher. This highlighted a key theme of partnership working:

With another teacher the two years had been fairly consistent in terms of the pupils that were in the class and the collaboration with the teacher with me has been great. I've really seen them grow in terms of being competent enough to deliver this work, which is that part of the project, that's what we want to see. Year two was significantly disrupted by COVID, and that became very difficult. However, one of the teachers who was really on board continued to deliver music to the students, which I helped them with. So that was there was some continuity. We could then pick up some of the work that I'd sent in and what was really encouraging was the work that I had sent in, the teachers had actually delivered and I think they were getting to a point where they felt confidence in confidence enough to do that. *Music Teacher 1*

However, due to personal circumstances there were also disruptions to this progression:

Unfortunately, after having been in probably for the first three or four weeks of term, they are now gone off on long term sick. And now there's constant change of staff every week, which you can appreciate the pupils who have got severe autism, that is quite disruptive for them. *Music Teacher 1*

Although Music Teacher 2 did have difficulties in their school with building successful collaborative partnerships with classroom teachers, they also noted the ways that school culture factors into, and impacts upon, this progression. Namely the importance of Senior Leadership Team (SLT) involvement and a catch-up culture post-covid:

At the moment there's a lot of pressure on teachers, just in general to get children up to certain levels. They are squeezed ...SLT are trying to push their teachers and their schools up to another level and that's from COVID. Partnership with teachers is, I think, really crucial. But for that to work, you've got to have that partnership with SLT, because if you have teachers who are not particularly engaging, if actually the partnership is working with that level of both and then actually you've got some kind of leverage to then make that work. But if they don't know when you're in from one week to the next, and you've got a class teacher who's not engaging then that leaves you pretty powerless.

Due to the variety of factors highlighted above, Teacher 2 did not think that the project aim of in-school teacher development was met in their partner school:

I don't feel personally that the project is where it's meant to be at this point. I've had a lot of teachers change. I haven't got to a point where any would be competent to lead anything, but that's because most of them haven't worked with me for very long or been pulled in other directions away from music.

Sounds of Intent

The Sounds of Intent framework was an important element of Inspiring Sounds. Both of the music teachers discussed the importance of the framework for their developing musical understanding and knowledge, as well as student progression:

It is a different way of assessing the students. On my training the Sounds of Intent leader talked about entry levels and how that that the idea of assessment-ready isn't a good fit for the students we teach. I think Sounds of Intent assessment structure is far more nuanced and gives you a clear picture of what students are achieving and the progress they are making. *Music Teacher 1*

Being autistic can really shape the day. How it was for them on their journey travelling into school. You know they might have had a melt down on the bus or the night before. So in some respects you're always kind of starting afresh - it's only until you've done that first time activity with them you get an idea of where we're at today. However, Sounds of Intent has helped me recognise the smaller progression the young people make, and this is really important. *Music Teacher 2*

Although Music Teacher 2 did use Sounds of Intent assessment in the classroom, these were not implemented on a formal basis. A key part of the formal Sounds of Intent framework is to record lessons and document progression which will be submitted as a formal assessment approved by an external assessor. Due to not receiving consent forms for videoing, the formal assessment process could not take place:

The students are wonderful. And it's always a really great morning to be there. And we do lots of brilliant things. We have had some assessment going on but haven't had any videoing going on yet, because they haven't got the consent forms back.

Key findings from music teacher interviews:

- The importance of collaboration between classroom teachers and SLT. This includes everyone recognising the importance of music in school, its impact on student development and time given each week for musical progression.

- Time afforded for both music teacher and in-school classroom teacher to reflect in and on teaching and learning. This includes time planned for post-lesson reflections and co-planning.
- To embed Sounds of Intent in SEND schools so that musical progression can be assessed and recognised.
- Long-term partnership between music and classroom teachers to develop confidence, shared practice and co-working. This should be with more than one teacher so that practice can continue within the school, should there be any issues with staff retention.

Classroom Teacher Perspectives

This chapter will outline the classroom teacher perspectives on the aims and outcomes of inspiring sounds.

Classroom teacher prior experiences

Prior to Inspiring Sounds, participating classroom teachers described their confidence levels in supporting musical activities as low. They described others as musical and did not regard themselves as possessing musical characteristics. The starting point for this project was therefore one of perceived musical dependency:

I've got a teaching assistant in my class. He's very musical himself and can do the musical side of things. Obviously, I'm very lucky that way.

I'm not musical. I'm not good with music, so it's been quite good to have someone sit and talk me through it.

I don't really know where to start, or I'm not confident in it. I would put musical instruments out for the children to explore, but that was it really. That was my musical lesson.

It's a lesson that I would normally shy away from because of my own subject knowledge.

I would avoid music as much as possible.

Musical Development

Musical development can be difficult to quantify, although research has identified stages of handling materials, realising expression, finding form and ascribing value (Swanwick & Tillman, 1986). Despite these complexities, during the course of Inspiring Sounds, specific musical developments have been evident through growth in teacher and pupil expression. As the music hub teachers have worked with the classroom teachers, confidence in creating musical experiences has emerged and the classroom teachers have begun to branch out on their own and to fill in gaps in schemes of work. This has given teachers the permission, and confidence, to allow space for reflection and evaluation of the music their pupils are making. In addition, classroom teachers have been able to observe characteristics of pupil responses that they were not noticing before, due to their anxiety around teaching music, resulting in a more targeted approach to enabling musical development that picks up on the cues the pupils are giving. For example:

When we were [between sessions] fortnightly, we tried to do the music lesson anyway, just with a few songs.

Taking a step back sometimes and just waiting for them to respond...just stopping and listening and really taking notice.

I notice the non-verbal and they'll hum it, so it's picking up on things like that, expressing that communication.

Pupils' musical development was evident to the classroom teachers in their responses to musical moments in the classroom, through the ways that pupils engaged and their journey of pattern-making:

They're engaging with certain songs or if they're engaging in ways that they haven't before, like, if they're joining in and looking where they haven't necessarily paid attention before. She was so excited because she got so much feedback from just tapping her hands down because of the music that was on the tablet that she was getting all excited. So that was lovely because that was probably the most I've seen her do in any kind of lesson for a very long time.

We're starting to see quite intentional, and some patterns being made which we weren't seeing at the beginning of the sessions. And we've got some children that were pattern makers initially, but now are developing to more complex patterns and quite technical patterns that their friends are doing.

Curriculum

How classroom teachers understand curriculum can also create challenges for how musical experience is shaped in a classroom setting. In some cases, creative responses to music and music creation were perceived by classroom teachers as lying outside of a designed music curriculum:

We haven't really got a curriculum as such. Music tends to be where we'll look at some composition or we'll look at playing alongside music. We don't look at the finer details or how these can be assessed.

The place of music within whole-school curricula also created some areas of tension, especially where music was regarded as less essential than other curriculum areas. However, in the development of the project, which presented regular opportunities for teachers and pupils to engage with music, classroom teachers described their growing appreciation for the importance and potential impact of musical experience:

Music can get brushed aside if you know you've got other curriculum areas you want to cover. Since we've been having the weekly lessons, the pupils who weren't engaging with it are now very much enjoying it and making progress. It's definitely impacted and is something I will be keeping on the weekly timetable.

Teachers described how embedding music more regularly into the curriculum inspired them to think about the development of musical skills and about the importance of helping to make sure all pupils could access what they perceived as beneficial musical experience:

We looked at how skills can be adapted regardless of genre and how instruments can be made accessible for our pupils.

Sounds of Intent

The Sounds of Intent framework was seen by many classroom teachers as a positive development, which encouraged their own reflection on the musical interactions taking place in their classroom and helped them to see progress that they would otherwise have missed:

You think they might not be engaging in the lesson, but then you look at the Sounds of Intent framework and think, no, because they are doing something differently, and they are making progress. You're reflecting a lot and thinking about what's going on in your classroom.

Giving teachers a structure in the Sounds of Intent framework appeared to enable them to understand progress as pupils demonstrated increasing levels of *intent* and this also created

a validated space for teachers to reflect on classroom music-making. *Inspiring Sounds* therefore gave teachers a reason to focus on musical pedagogies in a reflective manner and confidence to facilitate musical experiences, and a means to evaluate musical development as it unfolded in their classrooms. As one teacher put it:

The training gave me designated time to sit down, think and reflect, which you don't usually have, because you're so busy. Sounds of Intent has given me a clue what to look out for and what kind of levels the children can be. And the differences between them are so subtle – I wouldn't necessarily have picked up on a pattern before. Now we're creating sounds for them to copy and we're copying their sounds in intensive interactions. That would have gone unnoticed before, but now we're honing in.

Classroom teachers also identified assessing using the Sounds of Intent framework as an area for their own development, especially where the visiting music teacher had been doing more of the evaluation than they had.

I haven't had a go inputting any of the Sounds of Intent data yet...obviously I need to be assessing this more, so that I can carry this on for the rest of the academic year.

Successes and challenges

Alongside opportunities for classroom teachers to reflect on musical practices, *Inspiring Sounds* has also enabled these teachers to view their classes from a different perspective as they observe the musical interactions taking place. This is evident in the way they describe the development of musical engagement in their classes, making comparisons with previous pupil attitudes towards music and also in their articulation of the impact of their own reflective moments as teachers:

The pupils were moving around the classroom before, but now they do stay; they explore the instruments, join in with some of the songs and tap their knees, joining in with the action. They weren't really like that at the start of term.

In terms of the whole class, it's a really useful opportunity to have someone else lead and just observe. It's giving me ideas of how to teach music.

There have been some stand-out moments of musical connection which the project has enabled, where pupils have demonstrated intuitive musical understanding and response as part of the music-making they were given opportunity to engage with. Such moments have impacted the classroom teachers, who were keen to describe them during their interviews:

We were doing a song and there is a point where everyone throws their scarves in the air and he started doing it at the right time. There's a girl in the class where we did things like stamping our feet and clapping our hands fast and slow, and she started doing that independently. She joined in slowly, then quickly on her own – she was just listening to the song and its speed.

One girl will dance to music and now she's actually tapping out a pattern with her foot which is quite intentional. Another child is making a pattern that I didn't even realise *could* make patterns!

As well as these moments of musical engagement and success, there have been challenges too. Many of these have revolved around the difficulties which Covid created in the classroom and this has already been mentioned in other sections of this report. In addition to these issues, school resourcing was also frequently mentioned by classroom teachers.

This was apparent both in staffing levels and associated difficulties, instrumental resources which schools had at their disposal, and curriculum priorities in whole-school structures.

Finding someone to cover me is quite tricky to do. It's one of those things that keep going down the 'to do' list, because more urgent things are always coming up.

It's been really useful that the project lead brought in some instruments for us to use. In terms of our school resources, we haven't got many and they tend to be kind of pricey.

It tends to be one of those lessons that gets forgotten. I think almost because the curriculum is just so full of everything else.

Key findings from classroom teacher interviews:

- Classroom teachers are underconfident in teaching music, believing they are 'unmusical'
- Inspiring Sounds developed classroom teachers' confidence in music teaching
- During Inspiring Sounds, classroom music teachers began to observe and to think about musical development in ways they hadn't before
- How teachers think about curriculum determines what musical experiences are permitted in their classroom
- The more teachers were engaged with regular musical teaching, the more confident they became
- The Inspiring Sounds framework enabled teachers to distinguish sounds and patterns and facilitated a musical dialogue during the music-making sessions
- Classroom teachers identified a need to develop their confidence with the Sounds of Intent framework alongside the visiting music teacher
- The project has provided teachers with a structured space in which to reflect on their musical pedagogies
- Inspiring Sounds has revealed pupils' previously unrecognised abilities to engage in musical ways and to create and manipulate patterns
- Schools are hampered in the musical experience they can provide for pupils due to instrumental resources, staffing capacity and perceptions of curriculum priorities

Conclusion

This report has shown the benefits of partnership working between music teachers and classroom teachers for the development of musical understanding and knowledge and the impact this can have on young people. The project also impacted on in-school teacher confidence where they felt more enabled to lead music lessons, understand the assessment of musical communication via Sounds of Intent and suitable progression routes for young people. However, this report has also highlighted the challenges of COVID-19 and the impact it has had on teaching and learning, especially for young people in special schools. COVID-19 also disrupted the progression and development of the project, due to music teaching staff unable to access schools and strict health and safety regulations.

Inspiring Sounds is important as it provides a structure for musical learning in special educational needs schools. This model is underpinned by the Sounds of Intent evaluative framework, within which both classroom teachers and music teachers, collaborate, compare and discuss musical assessments. Collaborative working enables musical understanding to develop both for classroom teachers in their musical perceptions and confidence and in music teachers' understandings of the unique requirements which musical development in special school classroom contexts requires. When such collaborative and negotiated structured reflection, discussion and longitudinal musical working comes together, this has the powerful potential to enable pupils to access music in ways that they have not before experienced and to give both sets of teachers confidence in such engagements. This leads to the musical development of pupils and the potential for further musical expression in future iterations of Inspiring Sounds and in classroom music-making which classroom music teachers may offer as bridging units of work. This diagram attempts to capture the relationship between the teachers and how this enables musical development for pupils too:

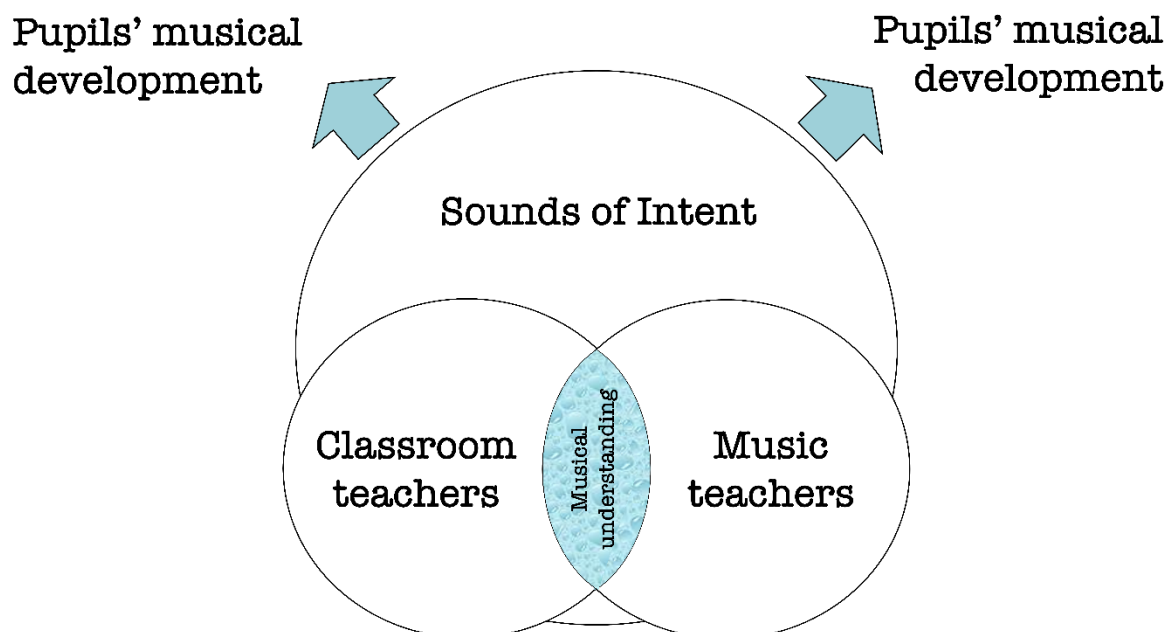


Figure 1: Inspiring Sounds teacher interactions for musical development

Alongside these positive impacts, this report, however, has also highlighted the challenges of COVID-19 and the impact it has had on teaching and learning, especially for young people in special schools. COVID-19 also disrupted the progression and development of the project, due to music teaching staff unable to access schools and strict health and safety regulations.

Recommendations for future research

This report concludes with a series of recommendations for future research.

- We know there is a lack of curriculum guidance for music in special schools and that this work can be expensive for schools to access. More work needs to be done to explore the possibilities of what a localised music curriculum for special schools could and should look like. By localised we mean a curriculum that is bespoke to meet the needs and aims of the school, gives advantage to the young people it serves and allows for more meaningful learning experiences. A reflective research process is central to this development, where music teachers from the music hub and in-school generalist teachers are seen as equal partners with knowledge and expertise to be shared. Through partnership a co-created music curriculum can be developed.
- Supporting partnerships between music teachers and in-school generalist teachers is important for musical development across the wider school curriculum. This includes schools allowing space and time for the music teacher and generalist in-school teacher to meet, plan and reflect. A structured environment within which reflection can take place is also important. Inspiring Sounds provided this framework, but we do not yet know enough about how teacher practices have changed as a result. A future research process that has reflection at the heart of its methodology is therefore also likely to be significant.
- This report has highlighted that the retention of staff in special schools is low. Therefore, partnership work should include sharing activities with the broader school staff population so that knowledge is widespread and there is a legacy that extends beyond individual practitioners.
- More work needs to be done to join up and connect schools with other music organisations who can support young people's musical development both within and outside of formal education.
- Not enough is yet known about the collegiate impact of challenges in accessing adequate resources (staff time, curriculum priorities and accessible instruments) in settings where musical opportunities are offered to young people with additional needs. This requires further thought and research activity.
- More research is needed into musical assessment processes across a range of differing types of special schools.

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