

This document is the Accepted Manuscript version of a Published Work that appeared in final form in Music Teacher, copyright © MA Education, after review and editing by the publisher. To access the final edited and published work, see <https://musicteachermagazine.co.uk>

INCREASING INCLUSIVITY IN WHOLE CLASS ENSEMBLE TEACHING AND THE BENEFITS THIS BRINGS.

Emma Nenadic and Nikki Booth, Birmingham City University, UK.

49% of participating schools within two Music Education Hubs identified young people who may experience barriers to learning a musical instrument in WCET classes. Research Assistants, Emma Nenadic and Nikki Booth, both from the Birmingham Music Education Research Group, evaluated the Inclusive Access to Music-Making project and the benefits it brought.

The need, and importance, for greater inclusivity

In 2011, the then National Plan for Music Education called for ‘equality of opportunity for all children’ (DfE & DCMS, 2011: 8). Despite this, though, some research evidence has found that whole class ensemble teaching (WCET) has been frequently cited as a barrier to music-making for pupils with disabilities and that a key factor is the difficulty in accessing suitable instruments (Take It Away, 2018). This is further compounded by a ‘lack of knowledge’ (Youth Music, 2020: 10) regarding adapted instruments and equipment. The refreshed National Plan for Music Education states, ‘a high quality music education is the right of every pupil. It should be inclusive of all, regardless of additional needs...’ (DfE & DCMS, 2022:

42). It is crucial, therefore, that the notion of inclusivity remains within our discussions about music education

OHMI and the IAMM project

The One-Handed Musical Instrument (OHMI) Trust is a charity which specialises in commissioning and increasing access to adapted instruments (for example, artiphon, one-handed clarinet and stand, trombone stand, ear defenders, guitar with strap, iPads and the ‘Pocket Pets! App) to help remove barriers faced by any individual who is physically disabled. Funded by Arts Council England, and delivered in partnership with Creative United, the Inclusive Access to Music-Making (IAMM) project was set up to offer equality of access to WCET pupils with additional physical needs in mainstream primary schools. In 2022, the project included a total of 283 participating schools within two music education hubs (MEHs): Nottingham Music Service and Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Trust. The IAMM project was independently evaluated by Emma Nenadic and Nikki Booth, both Research Assistants from the Birmingham Music Education Research Group (B-MERG) at Birmingham City University.

The benefits of the IAMM project

During post-project interviews some important, and inclusive, benefits became evident for pupils, visiting music teachers, and MEHs:

1. *Young people with additional needs were able to progress in their musical learning.*

Through using an adapted instrument pupils were provided with the opportunity to learn alongside their non-disabled peers. As two music teachers commented:

- “The student would not be progressing anywhere near as fast if they were using traditional instruments ... By using adapted instruments, they’re accessing the same learning – it’s equitable ... they’re getting the same chance to progress.”
- “[Using the trumpet with stand meant that the pupil] has no physical issues creating the sound ... they were flying and the barriers that were previously there didn’t exist anymore.”

2. *Visiting music teachers gained a much better understanding of how to support learners with additional needs.*

Teachers who had pupils with adapted instruments in their WCET classes were given additional training, provided by OHMI. It focused on how a young person’s additional needs could impact on their learning and what strategies could be used to support their musical learning. As two music teachers voiced:

- “It’s certainly made me think very hard about how I teach. [For the artiphon,] we use coloured stickers to notate what finger to use. So, we say ‘red dot’ or ‘red sticker’ to those using the artiphon and ‘D string’ to children using the traditional instrument.”
- “It stops you putting the default ‘I’m not sure this is going to work’ into ‘how are we going to make this possible’, which is different to how I might have taught a few years ago.

3. *The identification of young people with additional needs at MEH-level.*

What the IAMM project brought to the forefront was the need to put support in place which otherwise would have gone unnoticed. Here are some comments shared with us by MEH representatives:

- “It’s [the IAMM project] highlighted children that we wouldn’t have been aware of”.
- “It didn’t figure on my radar until I became involved [with the IAMM project] and then I realised the scale of a) the problem, and b) the solutions that are there”.
- “I think it’s opened the eyes of our staff to possibilities rather than barriers.”

A full version of our 2022 IAMM project evaluation can be accessed here: bit.ly/3IfvOMj

Concluding remarks

As noted above, some previous research has identified that WCET can be a barrier for pupils with physical disabilities and that there is currently more to be done with providing knowledge regarding adapted instruments and equipment. Through our evaluation we have found the IAMM project to be making highly valuable contributions to problematising these issues and that these are having a significant positive impact on young people’s musicking and learning experiences. Of course, we acknowledge that this is only the beginning of an exciting journey. So, where to next? Well, we are delighted to say that, in 2023, the IAMM project is continuing in Nottingham and Northampton and has expanded into Birmingham’s MEH. We are also thrilled that we will be evaluating the project once again. Watch this space!

[879 words]

REFERENCES

DfE & DCMS (2011) *The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education*.

Available from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180973/DFE-00086-2011.pdf [last accessed 11 February 2023].

DfE & DCMS (2022) *The power of music to change lives: A National Plan for Music Education*. Available from:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1086619/The Power of Music to Change Lives.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1086619/The_Power_of_Music_to_Change_Lives.pdf) [last accessed 11 February 2023]

Take It Away Consortium (2018) *Make Some Noise Report*. Available from

<https://takeitaway.org.uk/makesomenoise/> [last accessed 11 February 2023].

Youth Music (2020) *Reshape Music: A Report Exploring The Lived Experience Of Disabled Musicians In Education And Beyond*. Available from:

https://youthmusic.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/Reshape%20Music%20-%20A%20report%20exploring%20the%20lived%20experience%20of%20Disabled%20musicians%20in%20education%20and%20beyond_0.pdf [last accessed 11 February 2023].