



Music Development in Early Childhood

Key music skills taught to the different age groups includes strengthening vocalising, developing confidence, independent creative responses and developing an imaginative, enquiring mind.

Flexible modules include:

Welcome

Lots of vocalising and sound games are enjoyed with a generic “hello” song to welcome children and adults, acknowledging all those present, and encouraging turning taking over time.

Warming up

Lively action songs that warms up the voice, gross and fine motor action – whole sensory awakening.

Children and key adults are encouraged to spontaneously change songs thus, bouncing ideas off each other through creative musical play.

Topics

Using specially chosen resources such as puppets, fabric and different instruments, children learn new topics such as The Farm or Transport. The activity often takes them on adventures, and into the next module involving moving and dance to music heard. Musical aims are met through the amalgamation of arts based activities (music, drama, movement, visuals).

Mini Story

Engaging children through spoken word, rhyme together with relevant visuals, sound play and multi-sensory interaction. A mini-story can come from a book, a poem, or taken from a song. Children are encouraged to create their own sounds through questions and shared participation with peers and key workers.

Moving to music

Children move around the space to different sounds, songs or music, often with a rhythmical element to engage different movement. Key workers tease out imaginative play through independent responses. This module’s focus is on encouraging listening and responding to music, rather than an instructive approach to learning. Children learn through interacting with others.

Instrumental Exploration

Using a range of specially chosen songs and mini-musical stories children experience a range of percussion instruments. Children learn their names, and experience different sound textures to enjoy, particularly if using these to create a mini-story. Using the traditional orchestra idea approach the group can enjoy an orchestral experience by playing together and conducting.

Reflection

By listening to a specially chosen piece of music, children are encouraged to respond to what they hear. ‘What did it sound like?’ ‘Was it fast?’ ‘Slow?’ For older children styles and instrumental sounds will be discussed and shared activities such as pretending to play the violin or other instrument together as they listen.

Farewell

A brief recap on what was achieved helps the group to recall, and to remember for next time. The importance of acknowledgement is always extended to the key adults. Different ways of singing goodbye are often compelled by the children

Approximate stages of development

Babies and Toddlers

With a loved adult babies engage with musical activities through supported moving and shared experiences. They may listen and watch their adult, create spontaneous sounds, explore movement and reach for tactile, visual resources (instruments, puppets and other).

2-3 year olds

Supported by adults children are encouraged to engage in a range of exploratory and structured music activities using movement, song, sound making, percussion instruments and a range of tactile resources and music visuals. They develop curiosity in how music works in the context of sound, song and instrumental play. They will engage in solo and group activities learning about musical objectives such as regular beat, tempo (fast and slow), pitch (high and low) and dynamic (loud and soft).

Children begin to respond vocally or through movement, to make suggestions for sounds and words, and experience playful, multi-sensory (moving, sound, playing, exploring) musical games. Children learn to take turns, to share instruments, experience the space through musical games and develop core skills such as listening and responding, recognising melodies and making choices.

3 – 4 year olds

This age group is more independent and vocal in their ability to engage in solo activities, share group activities, and to sing, compose and participate in musical games. Children invent new ideas to enjoy with familiar activities. They enjoy accompanying others in musical play, sound and songs. Children begin to understand what it means to play in tempo, pitch, dynamics, engaging through different rhythms and playing in time to each other with a regular beat. They vocalise their thoughts and responses to different music heard including the significance of silence and listening. Music from different cultures will be experienced with the opportunity to reflect and provide feedback.

4 – 5 years

This age group is more vocal in their understanding and analysis of musical terms, and show instrumental preferences to accompany songs and activities. An introduction of music symbols will be accompanied by music terminology that are provided to indicate timings, pitch and rhythmical patterns. Often music terminology will be referenced to instruments such as the violin, piano and drums. Vocal ability will continue to flourish, with the opportunity to freely improvise on pitched instruments such as the piano and xylophone.

Turn-taking music activities includes phrase patterns including call and response, memory recollection games, and the chance to change a familiar melody through singing, playing and moving. As a group they will explore different voice and instrumental parts together and independently, explore and appraise different instrumental sounds (live and recorded), and make choices on different songs to reflect themes and topics. A range of more complex music will be introduced to challenge aural discrimination on the instruments heard, and to decipher rhythm and phrase patterns. As a group they will work with the music teacher to create a performance to bring together all the musical skills they have learnt.

5 – 6 years

This age group will be read for the challenges of music making together and in solo using instruments, voice, movement and a range of percussion instruments, music notation and resources. They will learn how to lead a composition as a group or in pairs. They will learn to recognise known songs through the use of notated flash cards, and to make new compositions, singing and tapping the beat. They will be able to recall and memorise longer notation of phrases and appreciate and be challenged by different and more complex rhythms.

Their vocal and rhythmical range will be greater, with the chance to apply their knowledge to different orchestral and percussion instruments. Together they share ideas on composition and recording to include available digital equipment. Ostinato and melody based activities using instrument, body percussion and voice will be enjoyed, with stories and adventure being developed and brought to life through music composition. Musical form and structure will be introduced and the history and origin of music and instruments will be shared in more depth. With support they perform and share a range of music and multi-arts compositions with confidence.

Useful documents:

Understanding Music in Early Childhood available: <https://www.musichouseforchildren.com/training-downloads>

Music Development Matters in the Early Years available: <https://early-education.org.uk>

Development Matters in the Early Years available: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads>