

Youth Music - Westfield

'Engaging Sounds' - Increasing engagement of learning through music

Term 2

KEY:

ML: Music Leader

TML: Trainee Music Leader Buckinghamshire Music Trust

WPS: Westfield Primary School

The Term 2 report was completed by Kath Borer (Project Leader and ML) and reviewed by Kirsty Mees (Evaluation Officer)

OVERALL AIM

To enable Westfield Primary children to engage in high quality ensemble sessions that challenge, develop and progress musical, social and personal skills for life.

The 'Engaging Sounds' Project offers live group music making sessions and performance opportunities to the children attending Westfield Primary School (WPS). WPS caters for children experiencing difficulties in communication and interaction. Term 2 of the project consisted of the Music Leader (ML) and Trainee Music Leader (TML) providing weekly music sessions to three classes in KS1. The project will run for 6 terms alternating between KS2 and KS1 classes each Term.

All sessions resumed face to face for Term 2. They were held for the most part in the school hall which is a large area usually used for PE. Due to continued COVID-19 restrictions ML and TML both wore visors to teach the children and maintained a distance from teaching staff. Lesson plans were adapted due to the space and mini islands were set up around the hall to enable the children to interact with musical instruments and activities in different spaces. This supported the children to maintain focus as extended sitting in one part of the hall would be challenging for many of the children at WFS.

The lesson structure included a performance element where the children could perform to each other each week by either accompanying the TML on the piano or by playing the tongue drum, cajon and wind chimes. The children really enjoyed this section of the lesson plan. They were eager to perform, often looking up whilst playing to ensure their friends were listening and involved in their performances. They appeared proud of themselves at the end of the performance often bowing, smiling, laughing or clapping as their peers clapped and cheered for them. This enabled the children to grow in confidence but also musical ability as each week they became more adept in different ways of using the instruments and exploring their timbre, texture and sound.

A performance by 'Matt Bond and the Good Time Boys' was able to take place this term in the school playing field. This was such a joyous occasion for all the staff and children. The band played Rock'n'Roll songs with catchy melodies and also performed some of the songs the children had been on working on in sessions: e.g. "King of the swingers", "3 Little Birds".

The children danced around the playground with freedom moving how they wished and interacting with their peers with squeals of delight and energy. Some danced in front of the band, others moved and sang on the play equipment, others sat to the side and listened. This was a much needed release and positive social experience for all of the children and staff at WFS.

The challenges this term were much reduced by being able to be face to face. The children really enjoyed exploring all the different instruments, interacting with the ML and TML and listening to live instrumental sounds from the ML and TML.

The following structure and outcomes were the basis for all sessions:

Welcome - Hi Ya

- Singing repeated song, fine/gross motor skills, vocal sounds, following musical cues, rhythm and pulse

Group Playing - I wanna be like you, Shake it off, We're playing together

- Playing together, dynamics, crescendo/decrescendo, performing to each other during weekly sessions, playing and following simple melodic patterns, playing untuned percussion solo, duet or as a group using musical games

Group Singing or Sound Making - I feel good, Sometimes, Can you make a sound for me?

- Language, word and sound making skills, singing and sharing favourite pop, folk & world songs together with instruments

Moving - Led by TML playing instrumental music and adapting based on children's responses

- Moving and engaging creatively, independently and as a group, improve gross motor skills and physical response to the music

Rhythm - Everybody Can You Play Along, Name Song, Ooooo, Can you show me your spider fingers (weekly + new song)

- Playing in time and feeling the rhythm/pulse, following musical cues, playing untuned percussion solo, duet or as a group using musical games, improvising rhythmic patterns using simple notation

Songwriting - If you were an animal what would you be?

- Writing topical songs together led by the children.

Listening - This section has adapted to Listening and Performing. Children perform solo to the rest of the group by playing a musical instrument along with TML. These include Piano, Tongue Drum, Cajon.

- Reacting to a piece of music heard by responding musically, vocally or with movement.

Goodbye - Reach for the Stars (weekly, with signing)

- Singing repeated song, fine/gross motor skills, vocalisation & following musical cues.

The children adapted well to the structure and by keeping the overall aims and Island spaces the same each week the children settled into the sessions and responded positively to the repetition. This enabled them to engage and become more confident to explore musically.

The drumming and movement sections were highlights for all year groups this term. The movement section enabled them to be free and respond to the movement how they wished without restrictions. Some of the children moved together or copied actions their peers had displayed. Others were exploring based on sensory needs; spinning, jumping, tumbling with pom poms, scarves and ribbons. The teachers also really enjoyed this section and were always up on their feet encouraging those children who tended to shy away from moving.

Drumming again caused excitement and a sense of energy each week. The children were desperate to get the drums out of the bag and once handed to them would begin their own tapping rituals. Some would bang loudly, others would put their ear to the drum and listen, some would hold it upside down and put their hand through the other way and others would feel everyone else's drum to make sure they felt happy with their own. Calling out names with syllable drumming patterns captured the children's attention and they would also at times join in with singing the name of the child as well as tapping out the drumming pattern. Drumming and singing seemed to go hand in hand this term with children making different vocal sounds and the ML supported this allowing the children the freedom to improvise.

OUTCOME 1 - MUSICAL

To improve rhythm, pulse & tempo skills using group musical activities

This will be explored by:

- *Playing untuned / tuned percussion in solo, duet or as a group using musical games*
- *Improvising rhythmic patterns using simple notation*
- *Moving and dancing with a variety of props/instruments to different tempo's*

The reception group liked to free flow around the room. Mostly we moved as an Island together but at times the children found it easier to move freely around the space interacting with musical activities by being in different parts of the room. The ML and TML would simply follow the children's lead and move where they felt most comfortable. Sometimes the whole activity was developed with the children spread all over the hall with the ML playing the song and the TML interacting with the children on a one to one basis, encouraging them to play their instrument or interact with the ML or peers. This strategy worked well when the children wanted to be more free as it enhanced their musical learning as they were not restricted. The teachers would often ask "Is it ok they move around". By not allowing the children to move around we would have been suppressing their natural desire to interact with the musical activity how they wanted to and perhaps they would not have engaged at all. F, G and J who had more significant needs responded to this freedom with vocal sounds, performance of musical phrases and positive social interactions with peers which allowed them to feel included. When sitting or encouraged to remain in one place, their interactions and musical responses were not as apparent.

'I wanna be like you' or 'Shake it off' were songs either familiar to the children or became familiar after a period of weeks. The children actively participated by playing their instruments as a group, duet or solo. Instruments explored included shakers, bells, chime bars and ukuleles. Along with Makaton led signs for Loud, Quiet, Fast and Slow the children explored playing their instruments with dynamics. All the children enjoyed learning the signs and would often use the sign to tell us how they wanted to play rather than using the word. This was particularly prevalent for those children who were less verbal. Their understanding of dynamics and musical differences increased as the weeks progressed.

Drumming was something the children always looked forward to. For those children who found it too loud they would often wear ear defenders and move to another space in the room. However they wanted to take part in the activity but felt more comfortable further away. The ML and TML and teaching staff let them participate in their preferred way.

OUTCOME 2 - PERSONAL

To improve language and communication through composition and songwriting

This will be explored by:

- *Singing and sharing favourite pop, folk and world songs together with instruments*
- *Writing topical songs together led by the children*
- *Sound making games*

The children really enjoyed the 'Can you make a sound like me?' game. The ML or TML would lead this section initially and then ask children in turn to make sounds however they wished. This was a fantastic opportunity to hear what the children wanted to express. For example children less confident using their voice would often make sounds with their bodies rather than voice however as the weeks progressed they became more confident and made louder vocal sounds. The ML would praise the children each time for their vocal sounds which helped them build confidence and experiment more with their voices.

As the children for this term were in KeyStage 1 we had to adapt the way we applied songwriting. For the reception groups we would simply call out short storytelling sentences and see if they added to these e.g. What sound does a Lion make? What are the animals doing on the farm? The two older year groups in Key Stage 1 (Y1-Y2) really enjoyed the songwriting and if the ML was running short on time and tried to skip over it the children would ask for songwriting. We kept the theme to animals this term due to age/needs of the children.

SONGWRITING LYRICS

Theme: ANIMALS

Storytelling song with responses added by the children

If you were an animal what would you be?
If you were an animal what would you see?
Who are your friends?
What would you eat?
If you could be an animal?

Responses were as follows:

If I were a wolf, I'd play in the woods?
If I were a wolf, I'd play in the woods?
My friends are other wolfs
And I'd eat rabbits
Oh if I were a wolf

If I were a Lion, I'd play in the Jungle?
If I were a Lion, I'd play in the Jungle?
My friends are crocodiles
And I'd eat donuts
Oh if I were a Lion

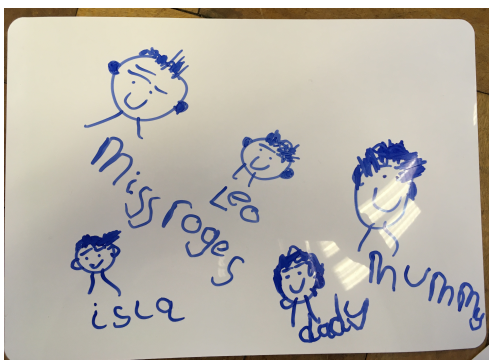
If I were a boa constrictor, I'd play in the grass?
If I were a boa constrictor, I'd play in the grass?
My friends are snakes
And I'd eat birds
Oh if I were a snake

If I were a Cow, I'd play on the farm?
If I were a Cow, I'd play on the farm?
My friends are pigs
And I'd eat everything
Oh if I were a cow

LISTENING - TERM 1

In Term 2 the children listened to a variety of pieces of music performed by the TML. Sometimes we would listen and talk about what we heard, other times we would move and other times we would draw and share our findings. This was especially interesting with the younger year groups in Key Stage 1 as they drew quietly, calmly about what the music meant to them.

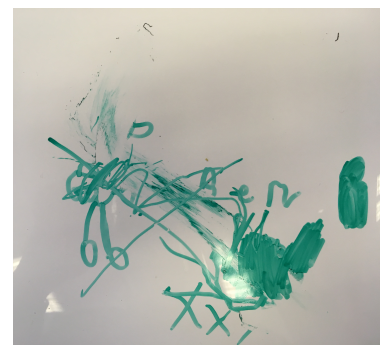
These are some of the pictures the children drew when listening to music



L drew the people that mattered to him



T drew himself in a boat



B drew a tiger in the jungle. However he was not happy with his drawing and so crossed it out.

These are some of the responses from the children when listening to music:

"It sounds like an animal stomping"

"I like it, It makes me smile"

"It's number is 3 and the colour is yellow"

"It's made me sad" (B looks sad with head in his hands)

"It could be a bear grrrrrrrr"

"What could it be? I'm not sure, But what could it be? I don't know."

TEACHERS FEEDBACK

1. After a term of music sessions how do you feel the sessions have been for your year group?

'The music sessions have been great, all the children enjoyed the lessons.'

'Positive, engaging and inclusive.'

2. Is there anything that would be useful to change or adapt in sessions to meet the children's needs?

'Works better in the classroom than the hall for the little ones.'

'No'

3. What activity do you feel the children enjoy the most during sessions?

'Children liked all of them.'

'Drum call out and reply. Everybody can you play along'.

4. What activity do you feel the children enjoy the least during sessions?

'Children liked all of them.'

'Movement with ribbons and scarves.'

5. Are there any topics that would be useful to cover in music?

'Stories being able to know sound through stories.'

'Friendship'.

6. Are there any other resources you feel would be helpful to have at music sessions?

'No.'

'MP3 of generic songs - Hiya, Everybody play along, Reach for the stars.'

TML FEEDBACK

1. How are you finding sessions at Westfield School now we are back in the classroom?

'There is a much more direct connection between the musicians and students through the workshop period'

2. What challenges have you encountered?

'Applying COVD safety measures while performing. Some spontaneous responses from the children as a result of positive music making had to be limited. With requirement of wearing a face shield, I was unable to play one of the instruments'

'As the workshop took place in the hall, using a stage piano (keyboard) resulted in the sound not coming through loud enough. It was hard to make a judgement to lead the children's movement from a fixed playing point where I would also be behind the instrument'

3. What have you enjoyed during sessions?

'Direct interaction with the children and watching them develop their sense of movement, verbal response and anticipation for the musical climax and watching them responding to this'

4. Do you think there is anything we could change to make sessions more effective?

'Playing a full range keyboard gives options to play a wider range of musical repertoire, however, it is not always easy to connect with children who are always on the move due to my fixed performing position'

5. Is there anything that you are not enjoying during sessions?

'Though it was absolutely necessary, the requirement to wear a face-shield or mask during the session meant that I am unable to play some instruments which would allow me to be moving with the children'

6. So far what have you learnt from the project?

'The communication and stimulation through music make a difference in children's response in a positive way'

ML REFLECTIONS

'Based on the feedback from Term 1 and also Term 2 I feel the sessions have developed and landed with a good firm structure which is inclusive for all of the children no matter what their needs'

'Constant dialogue with the teachers is still needed by the ML as some instruments / activities may not be appropriate to do based on what has happened in the morning in the classroom. As an example at the end of the term the ML got out the parachute and bubbles for the last part of the sessions for the children to enjoy. However before starting the activity the ML would ask the teacher if this was suitable for today. 1 of the groups had, had a stimulating morning and the teacher felt it would be too overwhelming for the children. Their energy levels, autistic traits (spinning, rocking, shouting out phrases etc) were particularly high and so we all felt it best to provide further moments of calm, silence and gentle musical activities to support the children. This dialogue with teachers is so very important as the ML has not been in the classroom in the morning and therefore some guidance is at times needed'.

CONCLUSION

The Engaging Sounds project provides musical experiences for children from Key Stage 1 and 2 for a term each alternating across 6 terms. This term was Key Stage 1's first term of music sessions and overall results of the project highlight the consistent musical achievement and enjoyment of the children across the two Key Stages.

COVID-19 restrictions have continued to impact how the 'Engaging Sounds' project can be implemented and the TML noted some of challenges in use or instrumentation and resources during this term of the project. However the children have continued to share their adaptability and

resilience in engaging in a variety of experiences and finding ways to explore musically throughout the project.

Songwriting has remained a valuable, motivating and engaging experience even with the younger year groups and Term 2 provides many examples of different ways this age group shared their musical ideas, created mini songs, musical phrases and the enjoyment they received from participating in these activities. This element of the sessions has resulted in many creative, musical and communicative responses across the project and its continuation into the following terms may result in further extensions of these skills and new achievements.

Performance also remains a key area of the lesson structure and across Term 1 and 2 we see the children's confidence developing, musical skills extending and different ways of sharing musical ideas with peers and staff. The impact of regular performance opportunities is evidenced in Term 2 as the children share their enjoyment, preference and motivation for these opportunities as well as their extended musical skills, confidence and communicative play. Evidence also shows the engagement of peers in listening and celebrating each other's achievements creating awareness and connection within their social world and positive experiences to extend these skills.

The ML and TML's adaptability, reflection and effective practise is also evidence in Term 2 as the set up of the environment and lesson flow allowed all students to engage in the session and its resources in ways most appropriate to their needs. This inclusive environment has resulted in all children succeeding in sharing musical ideas and although some children in Term 2 explored at a distance, all were engaged and participating as a group. The effective approaches and considerations of the ML and importance of having a strong understanding of the children's needs is also reflected in the ML's moment by moment changes based on individual and group responses. The ML continuously reflects on how best to support and engage the students and maintains consistent dialogue with teachers to ensure sessions meet children where they are at and adapts to their needs.

The project aims to enable the children to engage in high quality ensemble sessions that challenge, develop and progress musical, social and personal skills for life. Many examples of this can be observed across Term 1 and Term 2 of the project and we look forward to exploring these ideas further in Term 3.