Music: Progression of Knowledge

Musical foundations · History, genre and culture · Years 3 to 6

Our music strands

Musical community | Musical celebration | Musical creativity | Musical foundations | Music appreciation

The musical foundations

What children know about each of the inter-related dimensions of music, by year group. Shaded cells show where a dimension has no new knowledge in that year.

	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Pulse The on beat of a piece of music.	• I know that the 'on beat' is the pulse of a piece of music.	• I know that the 'on beat' is the pulse of a piece of music, and the 'off beat' is beats that fall in between these.		• I know that the conductor beats time to help the performers work well together.
Pitch How high or low the sounds are within a piece of music.	• I know that pitch of a note is how high or low it is. A scale is when notes move up or down by steps. • I know that the group of pitches in a song is called its 'key' and that a key decides whether a song sounds happy or sad. • I know that some traditional music around the world is based on five notes called a 'pentatonic' scale. I know that a pentatonic melody uses only the five notes C, D, E, G and A.	• I know that a bass line is the lowest pitch line of notes in a piece of music, and a walking bassline (where patterns of notes go up then down again) is common in rock and roll. • I know that 'transposing' a melody means changing its key, making it higher or lower pitched. • I know that harmony means playing two notes at the same time, which usually sound good together.	• I know that a minor key (pitch) can be used to make music sound sad. • I know that major chords create a bright, happy sound. • I know that a 'bent note' is a note that varies in its pitch, e.g. the pitch may slide up or down. • I know that varying effects can be created using only your voice, for example by changing the pitch, dynamic or tempo of the sounds made. • I know the concept of an octave, can recognise it on staff notation and can play it at the correct pitch.	• I know that the Solfa syllables represent the pitches in an octave. • I know that 'major' key signatures use note pitches that sound cheerful and upbeat. • I know that 'minor' key signatures use note pitches that can suggest sadness and tension. • I know that a melody can be adapted by changing its pitch.
Duration The different length of sounds and notes within a piece of music.	• I know that different notes have different durations, and that crotchets are worth one whole beat. • I know that written music tells you how long to play a note for. • I know that a semibreve is worth 4 beats. A crotchet is worth 1 beat.	• I know that playing 'in time' requires playing the notes for the correct duration as well as at the correct speed. • I know that a motif in music can be a repeated rhythm.	• I know that 'poly-rhythms' means many different rhythms played at once. • I know that the duration of a note or phrase in music can be shown using a repeated symbol or the size of a symbol on a graphic score.	• I know that all types of music notation show note duration, including the Kodály method which uses syllables to indicate rhythms. • I know that representing beats of silence or 'rests' in written music is important as it helps us play rhythms correctly. • I know that a quaver is worth half a beat.
Dynamics How loud or quiet the music is.	• I know that the word 'crescendo' means a sound getting gradually louder. • I know that dynamics are how loud or quiet the music is. Forte is the musical term for loud whilst piano is the musical term for quiet.	• I know that changing the dynamics of a musical phrase or motif can change the texture of a piece of music.	• I know that varying effects can be created using only your voice, for example by changing the pitch, dynamic or tempo of the sounds made.	• I know that a melody can be adapted by changing its dynamics.
Tempo The speed of the music.	• I know that the tempo of the music relates to how fast or slow the music is.	• I know that playing in time means all performers playing together at the same • speed.	• I know that a slow tempo can be used to make music sound sad. • I know that varying effects can be created using only your voice, for example by changing the pitch, dynamic or tempo of the sounds made.	• I know that a melody can be adapted by changing its dynamics, pitch or tempo.
Timbre The type of sound that is created by different instruments within a piece of music.	• I know that the timbre of instruments played affect the mood and style of a piece of music. • I know that 'scat singing' is using made-up words to create the sound of an instrument playing.	• I know that grouping instruments according to their timbre can create contrasting 'textures' in music. • I know that both instruments and voices can create audio effects that describe something you can see. • I know that a glissando in music means a sliding effect played on instruments or made by your voice.	• I know that human voices have their own individual timbre, and that this can be adapted by using the voice in different ways. • I know that varying effects can be created using only your voice, for example by changing the pitch, dynamic or tempo of the sounds made. • I know that a vocal composition is a piece of music created only using voices.	• I know that timbre can also be thought of as 'tone colour' and can be described in many ways e.g. warm or cold, rich or bright.
Texture The different layers of sound within a piece of music.	• I know that many types of music from around the world consist of more than one layer of sound; for example a 'tala' and 'rag' in traditional Indian music. • I know that a 'drone' in music is a note that goes on and on, staying the same, a bit like someone humming a long-held note.	• I know that combining different instruments and different rhythms when we compose can create layers of sound we call 'texture'. • I know that harmony means playing two notes at the same time, which usually sound good together.	• I know that a chord is the layering of several pitches played at the same time. • I know that 12-bar Blues is a sequence of 12 bars of music, made up of three different chords. • I know that poly-rhythms means many rhythms played at once.	• I know that a 'polyphonic' texture means lots of individual melodies layered together, like a canon. • I know that texture can be created by adding or removing instruments in a piece and can create the effect of dynamic change. • I know that a counter-melody is different to harmony because it uses a different rhythm as well as complementary notes.

	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Structure The arrangement of a piece of music.	• I know that in a ballad, a 'stanza' means a verse. • I know that lyrics are the words of a song. • I know that in a ballad, a 'stanza' is a verse. • I know that music from different places often has different structural features, e.g. traditional Chinese music is based on the five-note pentatonic scale. • I know that an ensemble is a group of musicians who perform together. • I know that to perform well, it is important to listen to the other members of your ensemble. • I know that when someone improvises, they make up their own tune that has never been heard before. It is not written down and belongs to them. • I know an ostinato is a repeated pattern. A harmonic ostinato is two or more repeated patterns played at the same time in a harmony. • I know that a bridge is a contrasting section of the music that is different to the original melody line.	• I know that deciding the structure of music when composing can help us create interesting music with contrasting sections. • I know that when you sing without accompaniment it is called 'a cappella'. • I know that an ostinato is a musical pattern that is repeated over and over; a vocal ostinato is a pattern created with your voice. • I know that musical motifs (repeating patterns) are used as a building block in many well-known pieces of music. • I know that a motif can be adapted by changing the notes, the rhythm or the order of notes. • I know that a 'loop' in music is a repeated melody or rhythm. • I know that a rhythmic break is a place in the music where some of the instruments play a new rhythm before going back to the original rhythms.	• I know that simple pictures can be used to represent the structure (organisation) of music. • I know that a loop is a repeated rhythm or melody, and is another word for ostinato. • I know that 12-bar Blues is a sequence of 12 bars of music, made up of three different chords. • I know that when you sing without accompaniment it is called 'a cappella'. • I know that improvisation means making up music 'on the spot'.	• I know that recitatives are a section of an opera or oratorio where the sung melody imitates speech. • I know that a canon is a musical structure or ‘form’ in which an opening melody is imitated by one or more parts coming in one by one. • I know that a chord progression is a sequence of chords that repeats throughout a song. • I know that a ‘theme’ in music is the main melody and that ‘variations’ are when this melody has been changed in some way.
Notation The link between sound and symbol.	• I know that 'reading' music means using how the written note symbols look and their position to know what notes to play. • I know the key features of staff notation including: clefs, key signatures, time signatures, minims, semibreves, crotchets, rests, and how pitch is shown. • I know that the five lines are called a stave/staff and you read them left to right like a book. At the beginning of the staff is a clef, which tells you which lines and spaces show which pitches. • I know that different instruments use different clefs – to read music for the glockenspiel you have a treble clef. • I know that the vertical lines are called bar lines, that separate the music into equal units of time (e.g. 4 beats in a bar). • I know that time signature tells you how many beats are in a bar. • I know that a double bar line with two dots next to it is called a repeat, this tells you to repeat the section of music you have just played. • I know that the horizontal lines and spaces show the pitch of the notes. • I know that a semibreve is worth 4 beats. A crotchet is worth 1 beat.	• I know that ‘performance directions’ are words added to music notation to tell the performers how to play. • I know how to play pitches and rhythms from staff notation without prompts.	• I know that simple pictures can be used to represent the structure (organisation) of music. • I know that in written staff notation, notes can go on or between lines, and that the lines show the pitch of the note. • I know that the duration of a note or phrase in music can be shown using a repeated symbol or the size of a symbol on a graphic score. • I know the concept of an octave, can recognise it on staff notation and can play it at the correct pitch.	• I know that 'graphic notation' means writing music down using your choice of pictures or symbols but 'staff notation' means music written more formally on the special lines called 'staves'. • I know that chord progressions are represented in music by Roman numerals. • I know that all types of music notation show note duration, including the Kodály method which uses syllables to indicate rhythms. • I know how to play complex melodies in two parts from staff notation without prompts. • I know that representing beats of silence or ‘rests’ in written music is important as it helps us play rhythms correctly. • I know that a quaver is worth half a beat.

History, genre and culture

What children know about the history, genres and cultures of the music they study, by year group.

Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
• I know that a ballad tells a story through a song. • I know that Ragtime is piano music that uses syncopation and a fast tempo. • I know that some traditional music around the world is based on five notes called a 'pentatonic' scale. • I know that Indian music uses all of the sounds in between the 12 'notes' that we are used to in western music. • I know that a 'tala' is a set rhythm that is repeated over and over, usually on the drums called 'tabla'. • I know that a 'rag' is the tune in traditional Indian music, and is often played on a stringed instrument called a 'sitar'. • I know that many types of music from around the world consist of more than one layer of sound; for example a ‘tala’ and ‘rag’ in traditional Indian music. • I know the key features of South African Gumboot music. • I know that call and response is a tradition used in South African music, where the leader sings or plays something and the rest of the group sings or plays it back.	• I know that samba music originated in Brazil, South America and its main musical feature is syncopated rhythms. • I know that expressive language (like a poem) can be used as inspiration for composing music. • I know that Latin music is music from or inspired by the music of French, Spanish or Portuguese speaking countries within Central and South America. Salsa is a style of music based on Afro-Cuban music, funk and disco, which was developed by the Spanish immigrant communities of New York. • I know that Son Cubano is an Afro-Cuban style of music. Rumba is a dance originated from Cuba. The Cha-cha-cha is a ballroom dance which developed out of Cuban Danzon. The Samba is a type of dance from Brazil, and the Tango is a dance that originated in Argentina. • I know that a carnival is where people dress up in costumes and dance down the street.	• I know that 'The Click Song' is a traditional song sung in the Xhosa language and is believed to bring good luck at weddings. • I know that songs sung in other languages can contain sounds that are unfamiliar to us, like the clicks of the Xhosa language.	• I know that the Baroque period was between 1600 and 1750 when a particular type of music was being composed across Europe. • I know that ground bass is a repeating melody played on a bass instrument in Baroque music. • I know that fugue music incorporates music in multiple parts where a main theme (subject) and secondary theme (counter subject) appear over and over in different parts and at different pitches. • I know that opera is a dramatic performance in which a story is told using music and singing • I know that an oratorio is a dramatic vocal work on a religious theme, like an opera, but sung without staging. • I know that Felix Mendelssohn was a German composer of the early Romantic period. • I know the history and key features of minimalist music. • I know that Electronic Dance Music (EDM) started in the 1980s and was created for dancing in nightclubs and remains a very popular style of music today.