

## Music in Autism Resource Bases: what the evidence shows and how to act on it

A guide for headteachers, senior leadership and governors



### Why music in ARBs?

Music education is a curriculum entitlement for every child, including autistic young people. Music is also important beyond the curriculum:

“For autistic pupils, music-making can support communication, regulation, social connection and self-expression, while also recognising musical strengths and the potential for exceptional musical ability in some children.” (Ockelford, 2015; Shaughnessy et al., 2024).

Research indicates that music builds confidence and wellbeing and can be both a tool for communication and a means of building communication skills for autistic young people.

But our research found that currently, many don't get the same access to music in school as their peers.

There's now a practical guide to help your school and teachers address this gap, backed by research evidence and supported by policy briefings.



### How can the practical guide help your pupils, staff and school?

- Built around what autistic young people have told us they need and want
- Adaptable to different settings, budgets and musical experience
- Shows what quality teaching and learning looks like in practice
- A values-based framework – not prescriptive
- Requires only curiosity, flexibility and a pupil-led approach
- Grounded in the social model of disability and a strength-based understanding of autism
- Based on three years of evaluated research (24 ARBs, 340 pupils) and one year of formal action research
- Co-created with staff and pupils in two ARBs, autistic musicians and music educators across the UK.

### What headteachers can do:

1. Support staff confidence – download and share the FREE practical guide with school staff and any peripatetic music tutors already working in your school : <https://bit.ly/MusicInARBs>

2. Connect with your local music education hub – links in the guide.

3. Treat music in your ARB as curriculum entitlement, not enrichment, in planning and resourcing.

