

Mapping the Arc to Music Curricula and Musical Development Frameworks

Below are some examples of how the Arc maps onto UK primary music curriculum frameworks and onto the Sounds of Intent musical development framework. We've included examples from projects involving visiting musicians, as well as classroom staff with and without musical expertise.

	Safety	Connection	Exploring	Ending Well
Welsh Curriculum (Expressive Arts)	Progression step 1			
	"I am beginning to talk about my moods and emotions and use these to impact upon my creative work" How it looks During the familiar Hello Song, when it's Cai's turn to participate, contribute or listen, he explains that he is feeling sad today. The teacher shifts to a minor key and softer style of playing. Cai responds, "Yes, that's how I'm feeling ... sad today". Why it's important The learner recognises that emotions can be expressed and communicated creatively. Over time, learners develop emotional literacy, confidence in self-expression and an understanding that creative work can communicate meaning. How we get there Remain responsive rather than directive. Validate authentic emotional expressions which emerge naturally through interaction, play and creative exploration.	"I can ask questions to discover how creative work is made" How it looks As the musician strums a familiar welcome song, Kwame asks what's placed on top of the tuning pegs. The musician explains that it is a tuner and how it works. Kwame strums the string and adjusts the peg himself. Why it's important Learners discover that creative work is made through tools, techniques and choices that can be asked about and understood. Curiosity about how music is produced supports active participation and a sense of agency. How we get there Welcome questions and respond by showing and explaining, giving learners time and space to handle instruments and try things for themselves.	"I am beginning to use creative materials safely with guidance and direction" How it looks Taking a turn in the band, Manon explores a tongue drum for the first time, turning it over and finding a beater to make sounds. A teaching assistant plays alongside her, offering techniques and ideas while leaving her choices intact. Why it's important Learners begin to use instruments and materials with growing independence. Guided exploration builds familiarity, confidence and safe handling while keeping the learner's own choices central. How we get there Join in alongside the learner/s, modelling techniques and offer ideas without taking over. This means support is available but agency stays with the learner.	"I can share my creative work" How it looks At the close of the session, a familiar question is asked: "How was that today?" Siwan says she enjoyed singing her song 'Pretty Pink Flowers' and sings the chorus again, standing with her arms open wide. Why it's important Learners share and reflect on what they've made. A predictable closing point gives space to value contributions and recognise creative work as something worth communicating to others. How we get there Use a familiar closing routine and an open question that invites reflection. Receive what each learner offers without correcting or directing it.

**Northern
Ireland
Curriculum
(Music)**

	Safety	Connection	Exploring	Ending Well
	KS1/2 Listening:	KS1/2 Singing:	KS1/2 Composing:	KS2 Listening:
	“listen and respond to their own and others’ music-making, thinking and talking about sounds, effects and musical features in music that they create, perform or listen to” How it looks The familiar Hello Song begins. Erin watches and listens from across the room while the musician keeps the volume gentle and the playing unhurried. Erin turns to face the sound, and the musician holds a quiet sustained note. Why it’s important Listening is recognised as an active form of participation. Responding to sound at a distance, in the learner’s own time, is valued as engagement and supports the first connections within a session. How we get there Keep the opening calm and unhurried, notice how each learner is responding, and adjust your playing to meet that response rather than prompting a particular reaction.	“sing and perform with simple instruments to develop vocal and manipulative control” How it looks The musician strums a well-known song from Sinéad’s class repertoire. Recognising the melody, she moves closer and joins in with the chorus. The musician mirrors her changes in volume and follows her lead. Why it’s important Familiar songs give learners a route into singing and playing together. Joining in develops vocal control and a sense of shared participation built on material the learner already knows. How we get there Draw on songs that the learner knows and enjoys. Follow the learner’s lead, matching dynamics and pace so that joining in feels safe and shared.	“work creatively with sound by investigating, experimenting, selecting and combining sounds to express feelings, ideas, mood and atmosphere” How it looks A range of instruments is laid out on the floor. Cormac moves around them, listening to each one, then selects an ocean drum and tilts it slowly back and forth. The musician follows his tempo, adding a quiet sustained note that moves with him. Why it’s important Learners investigate and select sounds to create mood and atmosphere. Open exploration supports composing as a process of trying out, listening and choosing, expressed in the learner’s own way. How we get there Offer a range of instruments and time to explore them. Then follow the learner’s choices and tempo, adding sound that supports rather than leads.	“listen and respond to their own and others’ music-making, thinking about and discussing a variety of characteristics within music that they create, perform or listen to” How it looks As the Goodbye Song is sung, the musician slows the tempo and lowers the volume, giving the group time to settle. Jack taps the drum twice. The musician echoes his two taps before the final chord. Why it’s important A clear, gradual ending supports listening and response at the close of a session. Brief musical exchanges are recognised and answered, marking the transition out of music making. How we get there Slow the tempo and reduce the dynamic to signal the ending. Respond to any contribution a learner makes so the end of the session stays interactive.

English
National
Curriculum
(Music)

	Safety	Connection	Exploring	Ending Well
	KS1:	KS1:	KS2:	KS1:
	"listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music" How it looks The session opens with a familiar song on guitar. Jayden sits with his back to the musician, but his body is still and his head tilts towards the sound. The musician sustains the final chord and waits. Why it's important Listening is recognised even when a learner is not facing the music or joining in. Quiet, attentive engagement is valued as a starting point and supports a settled, safe opening. How we get there Open with familiar music, allow learners to listen, in whatever position suits them. Leave space and silence rather than prompting a visible response.	"use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes" How it looks The musician begins a call-and-response song, leaving a clear gap for the group to fill. Asha joins in with a single word, then a phrase, and moves in time with the music. The musician works Asha's interest in trains into the sung words. Why it's important Learners use their voices expressively within a shared structure. Call and response offers a clear, low pressure way to join in, and connecting to a learner's interests supports confidence and ownership. How we get there Leave clear gaps for learners to fill and build their contributions and interests into the song, so each learner can take part at their own level.	"improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music" How it looks Kai opens an instrument app on the iPad and tries each sound before deciding. He settles on a low tone and loops it, then layers a higher repeating pattern on top. The teaching assistant adds a quiet sustained note on the keyboard underneath. Why it's important Learners improvise and compose by selecting, layering and structuring sound. Music technology offers an accessible route into composing and supports clear, intentional creative choices. How we get there Make instruments and music technology available and give time to test and build sounds. Then add support that fits the learner's structure rather than changing it.	"experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the interrelated dimensions of music" How it looks The Goodbye Song begins. Lily picks up the woodblock she used earlier and taps the closing pulse alongside the guitar. As the final chord resolves, she places it back on the mat and says "same next time". The musician confirms, "yes, same next time". Why it's important Learners select and combine sounds to take part in a shared ending. A consistent close supports regulation and gives a predictable point to contribute and to mark what will happen next time. How we get there Keep the closing song familiar and consistent. Invite learners to add to it with available instruments, and acknowledge what each learner says or plays.

Scottish Curriculum (Expressive Arts)

	Safety	Connection	Exploring	Ending Well
	EXA1-19a	EXA1-18a	EXA1-17a	EXA1-16a
	"I have listened to a range of music and can respond by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work" How it looks Moirra uses her communication board to share reflections about a range of music she has listened to. She shows a preference for a peer's composition by joining in and moving to it, and accepts a peer joining her own composition with a new rhythm. Why it's important Learners respond to music and to each other's work in their own communication style. Sharing and accepting ideas supports listening, reflection and the give and take of working together. How we get there Accept responses through whatever communication a learner uses. Create situations where learners can join one another's work.	"Inspired by a range of stimuli, and working on my own and/or with others, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through musical activities" How it looks The musician plays the guitar gently, moving between two open chords. Betsan takes part through her block play, engaging rhythmically and expressively with the blocks and using known phrases of speech and vocalisations that relate to the musical interaction. Why it's important Learners express ideas and feelings through musical activity in their own way. Play and vocalisation are recognised as valid musical communication and as the basis for improvising with another person. How we get there Improvise gently and steadily, leaving room for the learner to respond, and treat play, movement and vocalisation as part of the musical exchange.	"I can use my voice, musical instruments and music technology to discover and enjoy playing with sound, rhythm pitch and dynamics" How it looks Femi moves around the sensory room, singing into the microphone as he goes. He notices the Bloom app on the iPad and explores looping sounds by tapping the screen. Once the sounds are set, he lifts the speaker to his ear and adjusts the volume himself. Why it's important Learners discover sound, rhythm, pitch and dynamics through voice, instruments and technology. Controlling sound directly supports enjoyment, agency and understanding of how musical elements work. How we get there Make voice, instruments and technology available in a space learners can move through freely. Let learners control the sound, including its volume.	"I can sing and play music from other styles and cultures, showing growing confidence and skill while learning about musical notation and performance directions" How it looks Brodie points to the Goodbye Song on the visual schedule as the familiar music begins. He says "Hello song!", as though he would rather not finish yet. Soon he is singing along, giving his own performance directions: "Faster!", "Louder!", which the musician follows. Why it's important Learners take a shaping role in a familiar song, giving performance directions and building confidence. A predictable ending supports transition while still leaving room for the learner's choices. How we get there Use a visual schedule and a familiar closing song. Act on the performance directions a learner gives, adjusting pace and dynamic in response.

Sounds of Intent

	Safety	Connection	Exploring	Ending Well
	Reactive, Level 4:	Interactive, Level 4:	Proactive, Level 4:	Proactive, Level 3:
	“Recognises and responds to distinctive groups of musical sounds (such as motifs, hooks, and riffs) and the relationships between them (as in ‘call and response’)” How it looks When the musician sings hello and greets her, Skyla responds by singing about her felt bat. She joins in at the right moment in the song’s call-and-response pattern. Why it’s important The learner recognises the call-and-response structure and responds within it. This shows developing awareness of musical relationships. How we get there Use a clear, repeated call-and-response frame. Leave space at the response point, so the learner can recognise it and answer in their own way.	“Engages in dialogues using distinctive groups of musical sounds” How it looks During a duet, Henry plays a short melody on the Thumbjam app on the iPad, then looks up to the musician, who answers with a phrase on the clarinet. When her phrase ends, Henry returns to the iPad to develop his melody, then waits for her response. Why it’s important The learner takes part in a musical dialogue, exchanging and developing ideas with another player. Turn-taking through sound supports interaction, anticipation and shared musical attention. How we get there Set up a clear duet structure. Answer the learner’s phrases with related ideas, and wait for the learner to take their turn.	“Creates or recreates distinctive groups of musical sounds and links them coherently” How it looks Playing in the band, Ravi keeps a repeating rhythmic phrase on the drum. He notices the move from one section of the piece to the next and adjusts his part to fit, then returns to his original phrase when that section comes back. Why it’s important The learner creates and links musical ideas coherently, responding to the structure of a longer piece. Adjusting and returning to a phrase shows control of musical material over time. How we get there Give the learner a clear role within a structured piece, with sections that are predictable enough to follow and room to keep and adapt their own part.	“Interacts through imitating others’ sounds, or through recognizing self being imitated” How it looks As the musician sings the familiar refrain of the Goodbye Song, Rayya repeats parts of the vocal line, such as the rising “next time” phrase. She continues to explore these as she moves around the edge of the room. Why it’s important The learner interacts by imitating sounds within a familiar ending. Echoing and reworking a phrase supports connection and gives an active part in closing the session. How we get there Sing a consistent closing refrain with clear, repeatable musical phrases. Leave space for the learner to echo and develop them in their own way.