



working for the best in music education

## **Music and Media: Integrating musical practices in the Key Stage 3 curriculum**

### **Main emphasis**

Music and Media is taught in an innovative way at Great Sankey High School. Reflecting the school's engineering consider how compelling learning experiences in music can be planned through linking music, engineering and enterprise in explicit ways.

### **School Profile**

Great Sankey High School is a large, mixed, 11-18, co-educational comprehensive school situated in Warrington. It is a Specialist Engineering and Enterprise College. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds but predominantly from advantaged homes and have slightly higher than average attainment on entry into the school. The school has achieved the status of a Training School as well as the Arts Mark Gold, Investors in People, Investors in Careers Awards, and Healthy Schools status.

The music department at the school is large, consisting of four members of staff and a full time Teaching Assistant. One of the Deputy Heads is also involved in teaching music.

### **The Starting Point: Identifying the priorities for development**

The music department at the school has changed considerably in recent years. It has pursued a vision for music education inspired through the school's engineering specialism and a corresponding focus on enterprise. This has resulted in significant changes to the curriculum at all levels and, as this case study will show, has resulted in a curriculum at Key Stage 3 that, whilst already being innovative, exemplifies important aspects of the new National Curriculum for Music. Music is taught with one eye on its status as a performing art, and the other on underpinning an approach to engineering with a more scientific dimension. This exhibits itself through an increasing focus on a range of 'engineering' themes, such as audio engineering and sound design throughout the curriculum at all Key Stages. As such, pupils at

the school are increasingly aware of the broad range of music and music/engineering based careers. Linking music with engineering in this way has resulted in an increase in participation and greater inclusion across all years.

Year 9 pupils undertake a unit in Music and Media during the autumn term. This unit involves pupils collecting, recording and manipulating sounds and images to produce music for pieces of film. Pupils engage in a creative process by which they experiment with sounds, selecting or rejecting various options, justifying and evaluating their final choices.

The case study shows some of this work in action. It addresses important questions such as:

- How do the themes of 'engineering' and 'enterprise' permeate and influence the design of the Key Stage 3 music curriculum?
- What impact has the above had on pupils' interest/motivation in music at Key Stage 3?

In addition, the music teachers are keen to develop their work further. During the case study we will see them discussing a number of other questions, including:

- How are music technologies enhancing processes of musical performance or composition?
- How do the skills that pupils learn with music technologies relate to traditional musical skills?
- How is creativity encouraged in pupils' work?

### **How did you set about making a change?**

The Year 9 Music and Media unit engages pupils in a range of musical activities. Many of these are focused around the use of computer software and recording technologies. Pupils need to spend time learning how to use these tools and generate their skills of musical composition through them. The teachers were concerned about the impact that this work might have on their wider musical studies. The key concept of 'Integration of Practice' was important to their planning and mentioned frequently in department meetings. Performing, composing, listening, reviewing and evaluating should all be taught in an integrated manner. Too much time sat in front of a computer might be detrimental to a pupil's overall music education.

Conversely, staff saw the potential of new pieces of technology to engage and motivate pupils. There was a keen sense that the focus on audio engineering or sound design as a new type of musical composition could democratise the curriculum and give pupils wider access to a new set of musical skills.

The music staff has worked hard to maintain a good balance of activities in the music curriculum. The engineering specialism of the school has had a

major impact on their work, but they have resisted the temptation to throw the baby out with the bathwater! Musical activities such as singing, playing traditional instruments and using electronic keyboards are all part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. As we will go on to see, developing the use of new technologies as part of musical performance will become an important element of their future work.

Pupils have responded well to this range of musical opportunities. They are enthusiastic about their music lessons and keen to try out new ideas, both in their performing and composing work. There is a good buzz around the department as pupils are actively engaged in their work, discussing possibilities and exploring new dimensions of the software that they are using. They understand that creativity is a process of trial and error. They are able to explore musical materials, whether they are in a digital form or through acoustic instruments, and make decisions about their expressive potential and affect. Pupils can make good links between the more traditional aspects of the music curriculum and the new dimensions afforded by the emphasis on new technologies. Through skilful teaching, pupils are able to make links to previous learning and conceive of future opportunities or applications of this learning into new areas.

### **What differences are evident? What impact have you made on your learners?**

The linking of the old with the new has had a positive impact on music education at Great Sankey High School. Pupils are keen and the teachers are highly motivated to continue to develop the curriculum in line with the new secondary curriculum. There are a number of areas that they are seeking to develop through careful planning.

Firstly, the personalisation of the learning experience is high on their agenda. Ensuring that each pupil is challenged by the curriculum and motivated to succeed is essential. Given the broad range of musical activities that the pupils undertake throughout Key Stage 3, it is essential that they are able to join up their learning and be empowered to make these connections through skilful teaching. Practically, personalisation can also have an impact on the nature of the musical activities that pupils undertake. When this unit is taught in the future, rather than compose music to films that have been made and produced by other pupils, Year 9 pupils will have the opportunity to go into the local community and make short films of their own. They will learn the associated skills of camera work and video editing alongside the musical composition skills. Through this activity, pupils will have a greater degree of choice about the expressive content of the film and how this relates to their wider lives. The teachers hope that this will encourage an even greater understanding of how music can be used as a means of personal expression and reflection.

Secondly, staff will be seeking to develop further their uses of new technology to support each dimension of the key processes outlined in the new secondary curriculum. As you will have seen from the video case study,

composition with technology is already well established. Future developments may see the music department adopt a range of new music performance technologies. There are many options that could be considered here. New types of musical instruments will enable and empower new types of musical expression. Teachers are looking closely at a range of new instruments that might be appropriate for the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Some of their thoughts and ideas in this area can be explored through the web-links below.

Finally, as well as exploring the possibility of utilising new musical performance technologies, staff are considering how music can be linked together with video performance in explicit ways. VJ-ing tools that allow the user to link together music with graphical and other video content in a live performance setting are being considered. This would move the outcomes of the unit of work away from a composition that is stored on a computer hard disk to a performance that is delivered to peers in classrooms, concerts or other community settings.

### **Web-links**

New Instruments for Musical Expression: <http://www.nime.org/>

Hand2Hand: <http://www.hand2hand.co.uk>

Edirol Motion Dive:

[http://www.roland.com/products/en/motion\\_dive\\_tokyo\\_performance\\_package/index.html](http://www.roland.com/products/en/motion_dive_tokyo_performance_package/index.html)

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