



NEWTON BLUECOAT CE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Music

Progression of Key Learning

Nursery to Year 6 • 2026–27

LISTEN • SING • PLAY • IMPROVISE • COMPOSE • PERFORM

“Shine from the inside out”

Purpose

This document makes the progression from EYFS Expressive Arts and Design into the school’s Music curriculum explicit. It shows how children move from playful exploration of voice, movement, rhythm and sound towards increasingly confident listening, singing, instrumental playing, improvising, composing, notation, ensemble work, performance and musical evaluation.

Progression at a glance

EYFS foundation. Children explore voice, movement, songs, rhymes, sound-makers and instruments. They copy simple rhythms, respond physically to music, experiment with sound and perform familiar material with others.

Key Stage 1 foundations. Pupils feel and identify a steady pulse, explore high and low pitch, sing and play by following a leader, perform simple instrumental parts, create short melodies and begin to connect sound with symbols.

Lower Key Stage 2 development. Pupils sing in unison and simple parts with greater tuning awareness, play from memory or notation, use musical dimensions when discussing and creating music, improvise and compose in context, and reflect on musical ideas.

Upper Key Stage 2 depth. Pupils perform with increasing technique and ensemble awareness, compare styles and performances, compose and improvise with purposeful choices, use increasingly precise vocabulary and notation, and evaluate and refine outcomes.

The musical journey

LISTEN	SING	PLAY	IMPROVISE	COMPOSE	PERFORM
Hear, notice, compare & appraise	Use the voice expressively & together	Develop instrumental control	Create music spontaneously	Shape & record musical ideas	Rehearse, share & evaluate

Listening & appraising

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Listen to songs, rhymes and contrasting sounds; move or respond to changes in music; begin to express simple preferences and notice loud/quiet or fast/slow.
Reception	Listen attentively and move in response to music; identify obvious contrasts in tempo, dynamics and pitch; talk about feelings, sounds and instruments using simple musical language.
Year 1	Find and move to a steady pulse; recognise high/low and fast/slow; describe how music feels and begin to identify simple musical features.
Year 2	Identify pulse, rhythm and pitch with increasing confidence; compare contrasting styles and describe simple features using appropriate vocabulary.
Year 3	Listen for structure, texture and instrumental/vocal features; compare music and explain preferences with reasons; recognise how musical dimensions work together.
Year 4	Identify style indicators and discuss pulse, rhythm, pitch, dynamics, tempo, texture and structure with growing precision; compare performances and recordings.
Year 5	Listen critically across styles; identify harmony, timbre, groove, bass line and other features; make connections between musical choices, style and effect.
Year 6	Listen attentively and critically to a broad range of music; compare styles, traditions and performances using precise vocabulary and explain how interrelated dimensions create meaning and effect.

Singing

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Join in familiar songs and rhymes; explore vocal sounds; copy simple melodic phrases; sing as part of a group with enjoyment.
Reception	Sing familiar songs, rhymes and simple melodies; match pitch increasingly well; follow a leader and begin to control voice, breathing and expression.
Year 1	Sing confidently in unison; follow a leader; develop awareness of pitch, posture and starting/stopping together.
Year 2	Sing with a secure pulse and improving pitch accuracy; use expression and dynamics and listen to others in an ensemble.
Year 3	Sing in unison and begin simple parts; develop tuning, posture, breathing and awareness of how an individual voice fits the ensemble.
Year 4	Sing with increasing control, expression and tuning; maintain a part when appropriate and respond accurately to musical direction.
Year 5	Sing confidently in unison and harmony/simple parts; sustain tuning and phrasing, use dynamics expressively and listen closely across the ensemble.

Stage	Key learning
Year 6	Sing confidently and expressively with secure posture, tuning and ensemble awareness; sustain harmony/parts where appropriate and respond sensitively to rehearsal direction.

Playing instruments

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Explore untuned percussion and sound-makers safely; discover different ways to make sounds; copy a simple beat or rhythm.
Reception	Play classroom instruments carefully; copy simple rhythmic patterns; follow start/stop signals and begin to play with a steady pulse.
Year 1	Play simple glockenspiel/percussion parts by following a leader; keep a steady pulse and begin to connect sounds with simple symbols.
Year 2	Play differentiated glockenspiel parts with improving accuracy; follow simple notation or visual cues and perform with others.
Year 3	Develop ukulele technique and ensemble skills; play from memory and/or notation; maintain pulse and perform a part alongside others.
Year 4	Play tuned instruments with greater fluency and control; perform differentiated parts from memory or notation and follow musical instructions accurately.
Year 5	Play with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression; maintain an independent part, respond to ensemble cues and refine technique.
Year 6	Play tuned/untuned instruments with confidence and expression; maintain parts securely, use notation effectively, support ensemble balance and, where appropriate, lead aspects of rehearsal.

Improvising

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Make up sounds, movements or vocal responses during songs and musical play; enjoy copying and changing simple patterns.
Reception	Create short spontaneous vocal or instrumental responses; use familiar sounds and rhythms in call-and-response activities.
Year 1	Improvise short rhythmic or melodic responses using a small number of known sounds/notes.
Year 2	Improvise simple question-and-answer phrases and short musical ideas within familiar songs.
Year 3	Improvise in context using known notes, rhythms and patterns; listen and respond musically to others.

Stage	Key learning
Year 4	Create spontaneous musical responses with greater rhythmic and melodic control; use musical dimensions deliberately.
Year 5	Improvise confidently within a given structure, selecting notes, rhythms, dynamics and phrasing to suit the style.
Year 6	Improvise purposeful musical ideas with fluency and stylistic awareness; respond to ensemble context and explain choices.

Composing & notation

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Experiment with arranging sounds; create simple sound sequences and represent ideas through movement, pictures or marks.
Reception	Create simple sound patterns or sequences; choose sounds for an effect and begin to represent musical ideas through pictures, symbols or simple marks.
Year 1	Create short melodies and rhythmic patterns; make simple decisions about pulse, rhythm and pitch; begin to connect sound and symbol.
Year 2	Compose short musical ideas; use question-and-answer, rhythm and melody; record ideas using graphic/pictorial notation and simple symbols.
Year 3	Compose in context using pulse, rhythm, pitch, dynamics and tempo; organise ideas into a simple structure and use increasingly recognisable notation.
Year 4	Create and refine musical ideas using structure, texture and other dimensions; use notation to support performance and reflection.
Year 5	Compose with purposeful choices about melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, dynamics, tempo and structure; use increasingly formal notation and revise after listening back.
Year 6	Compose coherent musical ideas for a purpose; manipulate interrelated dimensions, structure and texture; use appropriate notation to record ideas and evaluate/refine compositions independently.

Performing, rehearsing & evaluating

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Perform familiar songs and actions informally for others; take turns and enjoy making music together.
Reception	Perform songs, rhymes and simple instrumental pieces to a familiar audience; follow cues and talk about what went well.

Stage	Key learning
Year 1	Rehearse and perform simple songs and instrumental parts; know there is an audience and identify one thing that went well.
Year 2	Perform with growing confidence; keep together as a group; record/listen back where appropriate and suggest a simple improvement.
Year 3	Rehearse ensemble repertoire, including ukulele; consider audience and performance space; listen back and identify specific improvements.
Year 4	Perform with greater accuracy, expression and ensemble awareness; compare performances and use feedback to improve.
Year 5	Rehearse purposefully, respond to feedback and refine balance, accuracy and expression; evaluate performance using musical vocabulary.
Year 6	Choose and rehearse repertoire, communicate meaning to an audience, use performance space effectively, record/review outcomes and identify precise improvements; contribute confidently to the Year 6 performance.

Musical knowledge & vocabulary

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Develop everyday musical language such as song, music, sound, beat, loud, quiet, fast and slow.
Reception	Use words such as pulse/beat, rhythm, pitch/high/low, loud/quiet, fast/slow, instrument, sing, play and perform in context.
Year 1	Use pulse, rhythm, pitch, rap, improvise, compose, melody, drums, keyboard, percussion, perform, audience, dynamics and tempo.
Year 2	Secure KS1 vocabulary and add question and answer, Blues, Bossa Nova, Afropop, Rock, Reggae and Pop in musical contexts.
Year 3	Use structure, introduction, verse, chorus, texture, hook, riff, unison, solo, notation and musical style; develop instrument-specific ukulele vocabulary.
Year 4	Use structure, texture, hook, riff, pentatonic scale, backing vocals, lyrics, synthesiser, Gospel and Grime accurately.
Year 5	Use bridge, backbeat, syncopation, note values, harmony, timbre, ostinato, phrase, groove, bass line, brass section and style indicators.
Year 6	Use upper-KS2 vocabulary precisely, including harmony, timbre, syncopation, note values, ostinato, phrase, groove, producer and relevant style vocabulary such as Motown, Soul, Jazz, Neo Soul and Urban Gospel.

Musical culture, styles & belonging

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Experience songs, rhymes and music linked to classroom life, celebrations, stories and different cultural experiences.
Reception	Encounter a varied repertoire of songs and music; notice that music is used for celebration, worship, storytelling, dance and shared occasions.
Year 1	Experience Old School Hip-Hop, Blues, Bossa Nova, Pop and music from different historical contexts; take part in Christmas/Nativity performance.
Year 2	Experience Afropop, Rock, Reggae, Pop and historical repertoire; recognise that musical styles have different features and cultural roots.
Year 3	Develop ensemble identity through the Year 3 ukulele programme and performance; listen to music from varied traditions and contexts.
Year 4	Explore Pop, Grime, Gospel, Beatles repertoire and music history; compare styles respectfully and recognise cultural context.
Year 5	Explore Rock, Pop, Old School Hip-Hop, Motown and music history; identify style indicators and appreciate how music connects people and communities.
Year 6	Explore Pop, carol repertoire, friendship-themed music, Music and Me and performance repertoire; appreciate varied musical traditions, identities and contexts and understand music as a shared cultural experience.

Year-by-year Music journey

Year 1: Glockenspiel • Hey You – Old School Hip-Hop • In the Groove – Blues • Round and Round – Bossa Nova • Your Imagination – Pop • Reflect, Rewind, Replay • Christmas Concert/Nativity

Year 2: Glockenspiel • Hands, Feet, Heart – Afropop • I Wanna Play in a Band! – Rock • Zootime – Reggae • Friendship Song – Pop • Reflect, Rewind, Replay • Christmas Concert/Nativity

Year 3: Ukulele programme • ensemble development • performance • Christmas Concert/Nativity

Year 4: Glockenspiel • Mamma Mia – Pop • Stop! – Grime • Lean on Me – Gospel • Blackbird – Beatles • Reflect, Rewind, Replay • Christmas Concert/Nativity

Year 5: Glockenspiel • Livin' on a Prayer – Rock • Make You Feel My Love – Pop • The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air – Old School Hip-Hop • Dancing in the Street – Motown • Reflect, Rewind, Replay • Christmas Concert/Nativity

Year 6: Glockenspiel • Happy – Pop • A New Year Carol • You've Got a Friend • Music and Me • Year 6 Performance • Christmas Concert/Nativity

End-of-phase expectations

By the end of Nursery: Children join in songs and rhymes, explore vocal and instrumental sounds, respond physically to music, copy simple beats and patterns and enjoy performing with others.

By the end of Reception: Children sing familiar songs with growing pitch awareness, keep or copy a simple beat, explore classroom instruments, create short sound patterns, respond to contrasting music and perform to familiar audiences.

By the end of Key Stage 1: Pupils feel and identify a steady pulse, explore pitch, sing and play by following a leader, perform simple parts, create short melodies, begin to connect sound and symbol and talk about music using core vocabulary.

By the end of Lower Key Stage 2: Pupils sing in unison and simple parts with greater tuning awareness, play from memory or notation, use musical dimensions when discussing and creating music, improvise and compose in context and reflect on performances.

By the end of Key Stage 2: Pupils listen critically, sing and play with increasing control and ensemble awareness, improvise and compose purposefully, use increasingly precise notation and vocabulary, rehearse independently and evaluate/refine musical outcomes.

Thinking like a musician

- What can I hear, notice and describe?
- Where is the pulse, and how does the rhythm fit over it?
- How are pitch, tempo, dynamics, timbre, texture and structure being used?
- How can I use my voice or instrument with greater control and expression?
- What musical idea could I improvise or compose here?
- How can notation help me remember, share or develop my idea?

- How well are we listening and responding to one another as an ensemble?
- What is effective in this performance or composition, and what could we refine?
- What does this music tell us about a style, tradition, culture or context?
- How can I communicate meaning and connect with an audience?