

Evaluation of the impact of additional training in the delivery of music at Key Stage 1

Executive Summary

Introduction

Music offers powerful potential to enrich primary pupils' learning experiences. In addition to its role in developing musical skills many claims have been made regarding the benefits of music education in relation to a range of transferable skills. However, research evidence concerned with music education during the early years of primary schooling also suggests that short-term interventions may not support sustained developmental gains and may draw attention away from high quality programmes that are of sufficient duration and intensity to have a positive impact on children. It is therefore important that interventions have a built-in potential for sustained progression.

In the United Kingdom (UK) during the early 1990s, it was acknowledged that many primary teachers felt ill equipped and insecure at the prospect of having to teach music and that very few teachers in primary schools had any qualifications in music, even at a comparatively modest level. Since then, there is evidence from a number of sources that there has been a gradual improvement in the quality of music provision in primary schools, but progress in engendering change has been slow.

Music has been found to be one of the most difficult foundation subjects to deliver at Key Stages 1 and 2. Teachers lack confidence in teaching music particularly if they are non-specialists and there is an urgent need for continuing professional development or better initial training to address specific musical skills and musical vocabulary. In particular, teachers of Foundation Years and Key Stage 1 require support if they are to deliver a well-defined and organized music curriculum that will equip children with basic musical literacy that will underpin progression through Key Stage 2.

The standards for teacher training require 'newly qualified teachers to be confident and authoritative in the subjects that they teach and to have a clear understanding of how all pupils should progress and what teachers should expect them to achieve.' As music is not mentioned specifically, only under the umbrella of the performing arts, it is possible that teachers may enter the profession with no direct experience in teaching music. In the light of this the aim of this research was to explore:

- the levels of confidence of Key Stage 1 teachers in delivering the music curriculum;
- their views as to whether music should be taught by specialists;
- whether they felt that the amount of training they had received as part of Initial Teacher Training was sufficient to be effective in teaching music;
- the views of Head Teachers relating to the priority music is given within the overall curriculum;
- the views of Head Teachers relating to the training needs of KS1 teachers;

- whether additional training in delivery of the KS1 music curriculum had an impact on teachers and pupils
- what additional input, if any, teachers feel they need.

Objectives of the current research

The evaluation concerned itself with three broad but interrelated impacts of the project:

- impact on the delivery of the Key Stage 1 music curriculum;
- impact on teacher confidence and enthusiasm relating to the music curriculum; and
- impact on the musical skills of pupils.

Methodology

The research was carried out in twenty-two Local Authorities representing rural and urban areas of the UK, between September 2007 and July 2008.

Twenty-seven Secondary Arts Colleges, all sponsored by the EMI Music Sound Foundation, were recruited to take part in the research. Heads of Music from each of the secondary schools identified clusters of their feeder primary schools. Each of these feeder primary schools was given the opportunity to take part in the project. One hundred and sixteen primary schools in rural and urban locations were recruited, each sending at least one Key Stage 1 teacher to a day of music training delivered by an experienced teacher trainer. In total, one hundred and sixty-two classroom teachers, twelve teaching assistants and four music specialists participated in the training.

A mixed-method approach to the research was taken, employing questionnaires with open and closed questions together with qualitative interviews and observations of classroom practice. Classroom teachers completed questionnaires before the training and again at the end of the school year after having had the opportunity to implement new ideas and classroom music strategies. Teachers completed six 'case study' assessments of pupils in their classrooms before and after implementation of the project who represented 'low', 'medium' and 'high' ability groups in music. Five teachers were visited and interviewed and videos were made of their classroom music practice. The teacher trainer who had delivered the training was also interviewed. Participants evaluated the training day, and Head Teachers and Heads of Music in the participating arts colleges completed questionnaires at the end of the project.

One hundred and seventy-eight participants completed evaluation forms at the end of the day on the training, 107 completed the pre-training questionnaire, 51 the post project questionnaire. Pressure of work on the secondary music teachers who distributed the questionnaires was the cause of the relatively low response rate to the follow up questionnaire.

The analysis of the data focused on change brought about as a result of the training intervention. Change was examined in relation to the questionnaire data and the checklist of children's musical development. Rigorous repeated measures statistical techniques were adopted to assess whether any change observed could have occurred by chance. These findings were supplemented by the data derived from the qualitative

in-depth interviews and examples of classroom practice demonstrated in the video recordings.

The project: Implementation of the training

One full day of training was given in each Local Authority, delivered by an independent music consultant who provides music education courses for teachers throughout the country. The day was divided into four sessions:

- Session one: Exploring Sounds (descriptive skills)
- Session two: Rhythm skills
- Session three: Singing and pitch
- Session four: Exploring resources, individual planning advice and interviews

Specific topics covered included:

- an introduction to the seven musical elements identified in the National Curriculum
- adding sounds to stories and songs
- graphic notation
- rhythm notation
- developing a sense of beat
- contrasting beat and rhythm
- introducing rhythm patterns
- helping children to sing
- action and movement songs
- using percussion to accompany a song

Throughout the day musical concepts, materials and activities were introduced within the framework of the Key Stage 1 curriculum. Suggestions were made at every point in the training regarding how progression could be built into each activity and the learning of each concept that was introduced. A booklet was given to each teacher that included detailed notes on the material covered during the day.

The training was targeted at teachers with little or no prior specialist training experiences in music. The teachers were generally very satisfied with the training day, indicating that it had fulfilled their expectations but that it could have been improved had there been more time for practical activities, a better venue and a follow-up session.

The findings

The teachers' perspective

Twenty-three percent of responding teachers indicated that they played an instrument, 27% did not, 4% had started to learn as an adult, 45% had played an instrument as a child but had given up and no longer played. The most popular instruments were piano and keyboards followed by recorder. The majority (71%) had reached Basic or Foundation levels of attainment.

The majority of teachers could not read music at all (38%), or did so at a very basic level (35%). 13% read musical notation at an intermediate level and 14% at an advanced level.

Very few teachers reported having had any experience of participating in musical groups either instrumental or vocal.

Only 20% of the teachers considered that their past musical experience was relevant to teaching music in Key Stage 1 classrooms. Of these, 33% indicated that it gave them more confidence, 26% that being able to sing songs in the classroom was a useful skill, 11% that they could play musical pieces to their class, and 20% because their prior learning had equipped them with the knowledge to understand musical terminology.

Forty-eight percent of responding teachers had received some training in music during their teacher training, 42% had received no training, and 11% a little training that had had minimal impact.

Thirty-one percent of those who had received training had received a total of between one and five hours of music training, a further 13% could not recall how much training they had received. 26% reported that the music training component of their Initial Teacher Training had been effective.

Eighty-five percent of teachers had no additional specialist training in music since qualifying. Those who had engaged in specialist music training identified a number of difficulties:

- that it was unrelated to the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum;
- that there was too little time and no follow up;
- that the training was only useful to teachers with some prior musical knowledge.

Training that was useful included opportunities for practical music-making, being introduced to new approaches to teaching music, and being encouraged to teach music.

Twenty-seven percent of the teachers did not have responsibility for delivery of music in their classrooms. In some cases music was 'covered' during Planning, Preparation and Assessment time (PPA) by a Teaching Assistant, in others specialist teachers taught music.

Forty-six percent of teachers delivered one designated music lesson each week, lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. 26% gave one music lesson per week and occasional short singing activities in their classrooms, 13% taught music in their classrooms very infrequently, 11% frequently engaged in short musical activities with pupils throughout the week.

Only 5 teachers indicated that children who learnt an instrument outside of school used their instruments in school music.

Fifty-eight percent of teachers used music in other curriculum areas, an additional 20% stated that they did, but found it difficult to do so.

Fifty-one percent of teachers had access to pitched percussion, 72% to un-pitched percussion. One percussion box was often shared amongst all of the Key Stage 1 classrooms, placing a constraint on when and how these instruments could be used.

Eighty-six percent of teachers indicated that their schools had pianos although often there was nobody in school who could play. Most schools had both un-tuned and tuned percussion instruments, 31% of schools had keyboards, 21% had recording and ICT equipment. 25% of schools had purchased music books, CDs and published schemes of work.

Thirty-three percent of teachers reported that they would benefit from having percussion instruments in every classroom, 24% access to pitched instruments, 21% access to world music instruments. 12% wanted opportunities to observe, work alongside and receive training from visiting specialists. 10% wanted music software, CD players and recording equipment, and orchestra instruments.

Thirty-three percent of teachers reported that their school's annual music budget was less than £400, while a further 10% of teachers reported that it was between £400 and £999. Fifteen percent of teachers reported that their school had no budget for music. Just 8% had input into decisions relating to their school's music budget.

Teachers hoped that the training would equip them with enhanced skills and knowledge of the Key Stage 1 music curriculum. 66% wanted to acquire new ideas, 37% hoped to increase their confidence, 22% wanted strategies for making music fun. 19% wanted strategies for teaching musical elements, 18% knowledge of how to implement music in a cross-curricular way, 13% basic knowledge of musical notation, 10% help with composition activities, and 9% knowledge of instrument groups.

Evaluation of the training

Ninety-seven percent of teachers indicated that the training fulfilled their expectations, 98% that it would benefit their classroom practice, and 98% that it would benefit their professional development. 31% indicated that they would like a refresher day to reinforce the new material, 17% training on developing children's singing voices, 15% on planning work for mixed year age groups, and 15% on strategies for composition.

Delivery of music at KS1

The quality of music delivery at Key Stage 1 was extremely uneven. This was the case both between the school clusters and within the clusters. Some secondary school heads of music were shocked when they observed the huge range in the quality of what was happening in music in their feeder primary schools. This at least partly explained the great diversity of ability and interest in music that they found amongst their Year 7 intakes.

Ninety-eight percent of the teachers agreed that the training had been successful in helping to improve their music teaching, 75% indicated that music teaching in the school had changed as a result of the training.

Participating primary schools had been offered a package of resources, funded by the EMI Music Foundation. 74% of teachers were happy with the choice of resources, 89% reported that the resources had contributed towards enhancing effective music teaching in their schools, 78% felt confident using the new resources.

Teacher confidence

The general confidence level amongst the teachers rose over the course of the term following the training on a rating scale of 1-5 from 3.07 to 4.22 for teaching music and 3.25 to 3.96 for teaching singing. Teaching of music was enjoyed more (3.84 to 4.43) as was liking teaching music (3.72 to 4.2).

Competence ratings increased in relation to playing a musical instrument sufficiently well to use in music lessons (2.5 to 3.27), and singing well enough to teach music (3.29 to 3.8). After implementation of the training there was relatively high agreement amongst the teachers that they were able to read music.

Analysis of the observations of teacher practice suggested that there was much scope for further development. The evidence suggested that the training had possibly been most beneficial for those who had some prior musical experience or training, providing these teachers with the strategies and skills for appropriate and effective music-making with Key Stage 1 children. For those with little musical experience, however, there was clearly a need for further support.

Impact on pupils' musical skills and attitudes

In the interviews, the teachers agreed that their participation in the training and their implementation of new ideas and approaches to music had benefited the pupils.

There were statistically significant improvements in perceptions of pupils enjoying music lessons (4.33 to 4.73), enjoying singing (4.46 to 4.76), having confidence in music lessons (3.9 to 4.38), having a range of well developed musical skills (2.84 to 3.92), having strategies for composing (2.3 to 3.17), performing well (3.82 to 4.21), having well developed listening skills (3.36 to 4.21), loving music (4.16 to 4.53), and having positive attitudes towards music (4.1 to 4.63). However, few pupils were reported to take part in extra-curricular musical activities either before or after the teacher training (1.29 to 1.29).

Teachers were asked to select six children from their class who were perceived prior to the training to be low, moderate or high in musical ability. Statistically significant increases were found in the teachers' assessments of the pupils in relation to musical skills (4.03 to 5.52), attitudes towards music (6.35 to 7.46) and musical knowledge (1.97 to 3.43).

No significant differences were found between boys and girls with respect to change in musical skills or attitudes towards music. However, assessments of the increase in musical knowledge amongst girls were significantly higher than amongst the boys.

Statistically significant differences were found between pupil ability groups in the teachers' assessments of change in musical skills and attitudes towards music, with

low ability pupils benefiting more than either moderate ability or high ability groups. The greatest benefits were in relation to concentration and motivation in classroom music. Amongst the high ability children the greatest benefits were in relation to enhanced enjoyment of music and desire to achieve in music. Pupils in all three ability groups were judged to have improved significantly in terms of ability to sing in tune. For the average and high ability groups two of the most significant areas of development were composition and improvisation skills, where relatively large increases were noted.

Primary Head Teachers' and Secondary Heads of Music perceptions of the impact of the training

Ninety-two percent of Head Teachers reported that the training had made a difference to their school. All of the respondents agreed that the training had helped to raise the status of music in the school. 68% indicated that teachers' confidence had improved, 32% that teachers had more skills for teaching music. All said they would continue to invest in music. 90% reported that the new ideas implemented after the training had been successfully integrated with previous musical activities in their schools.

Twenty-six percent of the Head Teachers reported that it had been difficult to implement the training because of time constraints, indicating that it was often not possible to fit music into the school day. 11% indicated that music was typically sidelined when teachers were under pressure.

Fifty eight percent of Head Teachers responded that without the resources supplied by the EMI Music Sound Foundation the training would not have been successfully implemented. 16% reported that their Reception classes now had access to musical instruments, 13% reported that their Key stage 1 teachers now had a percussion box in each classroom,

All but one of the Heads of Music from the Secondary Arts Colleges attended the training and found it to be useful. The majority reported that the training had raised the status of music amongst their feeder primary schools, that the training would have a long-term impact, and had helped Key Stage 1 teachers to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The main benefits cited were enhanced confidence, investment in resources, and new ideas for effective delivery of music.

Conclusions

The findings reported here elucidate and add depth to those reported in the pilot project (Hallam, Creech, & Papageorgi, 2007). There seems little likelihood of the time allocated to music in Initial Teacher Training increasing. There is a clear need for more specialist support for music in primary schools and also further training for classroom teachers. The training had an impact on teachers, particularly in terms of their confidence and sense of their own effectiveness as music teachers. However, analysis of the video recordings suggested that there was much scope for further development. Three possible strands for future development were indicated, the first focussed on training in basic musical skills for classroom teachers who have little or no experience, the second providing training for music specialists in relation to how to successfully apply their musical knowledge and skills at Key Stage 1 and the third

focussing on opportunities for classroom teachers to work alongside specialists. The evidence also suggests that the issue of planning for progression through the Key Stages as well as the issue of integrating in-school with out-of-school music needs to be incorporated into both of these types of training.