Measuring What Matters in Music

A Reference Guide for Primary Music Leads

SoMi Academy CPD Webinar Summary

(December 2025)

Contents

1. Why This Conversation Matters Now

With the **renewed Education Inspection Framework (EIF)** now in use, many schools are reviewing how subjects like music support:

- curriculum quality
- inclusion and entitlement
- staff confidence
- personal development and wellbeing
- pupils' wider experience of school life

Across the sector, leadership teams are looking for **clear, manageable and musically meaningful approaches** to curriculum, assessment and musical culture. This handout summarises the key ideas explored in the webinar, offering practical guidance you can refer back to throughout the year.

2. Understanding the Renewed EIF: What It Means for Music

The renewed EIF represents a shift towards a **broader, more holistic evaluation of education**, via multiple evaluation areas rather than a single overall judgement. For music leads, three areas are especially relevant:

Curriculum and Teaching

Inspectors consider how well the curriculum is designed and implemented, and how effectively teachers support pupils to learn and progress. For music, this means ensuring learning builds over time, with clarity about the knowledge and skills pupils should develop.

Inclusion

Schools are expected to ensure **equitable access** to the full curriculum. This includes musical opportunity for all pupils, regardless of background, SEND or prior experience.

Personal Development & Wellbeing

Music contributes significantly to pupils' confidence, creativity, belonging and cultural development. Schools should be able to demonstrate how music enriches pupils' wider experience of school.

Important clarity

Inspectors draw on the **evidence schools naturally use** to understand their curriculum. There is **no requirement to produce additional data solely for inspection**.

3. What 'Progress in Music' Actually Means

Music is an inherently rich, expressive and subjective subject. Progress does not look like a linear accumulation of facts, but rather a child becoming **more musical** over time.

Sector guidance - including the **National Plan for Music Education (NPME)** and the **Ofsted Music Subject Report (Striking the Right Note)** - highlights three core ideas:

a) Pupils make more music, think more musically and become more musical

This reflects growth in:

- fluency
- confidence
- understanding
- creative and expressive capability

b) Knowledge is both procedural and declarative

- **Procedural knowledge:** the *doing* (technique, singing, playing, using instruments, using technology)
- **Declarative knowledge:** the *knowing* (notation, terminology, repertoire, structure, cultural context)

Both types of knowledge support each other in musical development.

c) The three pillars of progression

The Ofsted Research Review describes three interconnected pillars:

1. **Technical** - control of sound; vocal/instrumental technique; accurate rhythm and pitch
2. **Constructive** - understanding how music is organised; composing, arranging, improvising
3. **Expressive** - communication, interpretation, stylistic awareness; shaping musical ideas

Clear progression means identifying what these pillars look like from Early Years to Year 6.

4. The Realities of the Primary Context

Music leads repeatedly identify the same challenges:

Limited curriculum time

Short weekly lessons make it hard to develop fluency, embed learning and build a consistent culture.

Variation in staff confidence

Many class teachers feel unsure about their own musicianship and benefit from support, modelling and clear resources.

The risk of a "mile wide, inch deep" curriculum

Disconnected activities or plug-and-play lessons often create a fragmented experience.

A strong curriculum is **focused, sequenced and deep**, revisiting core concepts over time.

5. Showing Musical Progress in Practice

Clear end points

Schools need clarity about what pupils should be able to do and understand at key points.

End points support:

- planning
- teacher confidence
- formative assessment
- reporting to leaders

Incremental steps

Progress builds gradually. Small, repeatable, purposeful activities help pupils develop fluency.

Useful approaches include:

- regular performance opportunities
- short musical tasks during lessons
- revisiting core repertoire
- rhythm and singing games

Depth over variety

High-quality music education is not about covering as many genres as possible.

Depth creates stronger long-term musical development.

6. Assessment That Supports Teaching (Not Additional Workload)

Sector bodies such as **Music Mark** emphasise that assessment in music should primarily serve teachers and pupils, not inspection.

Good assessment is:

- musical
- practical
- responsive
- light-touch
- meaningful to the teacher
- embedded in lessons
- aligned with curriculum sequencing

Formative assessment examples

- real-time feedback
- modelling and demonstration
- class and small-group listening
- short performance tasks
- simple observation notes
- quick reflection questions

Summative assessment

Summative approaches should help leaders understand:

- whether the curriculum is effective
- whether pupils are progressing as expected
- where support or adjustment is needed

There is **no expectation** to produce written evidence beyond what supports teaching and leadership understanding.

7. Supporting Non-Specialist Teachers

Non-specialists often need:

- clarity about expectations
- manageable steps
- practical tools and routines
- simple musical structures to follow
- modelling from specialists
- encouragement to build confidence through regular music making

Useful techniques include:

- 10-15 minute daily musical routines
- singing and rhythm games
- partner and group activities
- clear, structured warmups
- shared vocabulary aligned to the curriculum

8. Developing a Strong Musical Culture

Research and inspection commentary highlight that strong music cultures contribute to:

- wellbeing
- improved class cohesion
- emotional expression
- behaviour and self-regulation
- attendance and motivation
- inclusion and belonging
- community identity
- performance opportunities that celebrate pupils' strengths

This aligns with inspection focus areas around **personal development**, **inclusion**, and **cultural participation**.

What inspectors consider

Schools should be able to show how they:

- broaden pupils' experiences through enrichment
- support talents and interests equitably
- provide cultural and musical participation
- strengthen community through shared events
- ensure all pupils can access musical opportunities

A strong music culture makes these visible and meaningful.

9. Using Technology to Strengthen Provision

Emerging technologies can help schools:

- model musical ideas
- support planning
- capture short clips of classroom performance
- notice technical development
- reduce workload
- support consistent teaching among non specialists

Technology should:

- keep evidence light
- support teacher judgement
- grow out of real classroom activity
- never replace musical experience or pedagogy

These tools complement, not replace, teacher expertise.

10. Partnerships and External Support

The **Ofsted Music Subject Report** and the **National Plan for Music Education** both highlight the value of:

- drawing on external expertise
- working with music hubs and specialist partners
- enriching the curriculum and pupil experience
- supporting staff development
- enhancing progression and inclusion

Partnerships can help schools build sustainable, high-quality provision that complements their internal capacity.

11. Key Principles to Take Forward

1. **Progress means becoming more musical.**
2. **Curriculum should be focused, sequenced and deep.**
3. **Assessment serves teaching first.**
4. **Evidence should grow naturally from teaching.**
5. **Staff confidence matters - and can be developed.**
6. **Musical culture strengthens wellbeing, inclusion and behaviour.**
7. **Technology and external partners can enhance, not replace, your work.**
8. **Consistency, clarity and shared language make music stronger across the school.**

12. Further Support

SoMi Academy works with schools to support classroom teachers, strengthen staff confidence and deliver meaningful musical experiences across classroom, co-curricular and home learning contexts.

If you would like follow-up guidance or support, please get in touch.