

The Music Partnership Progression Strategy

Progression Strategy

Musical ‘Progression’ is a broad concept often covering the ‘means’ (pathways) through to the ‘ends’ (outcomes). Many different organisations and reports have focused on musical progression from different angles, whether from the viewpoint of the learner, the curriculum, or the structures.

This strategy sets out how The Music Partnership defines *Musical Progression*, how the Music Hub will support it, and the current challenges and risks for young people and their musical journeys. It is also important to note that progress and achievement may not always be centred around a musical outcome, as gaining self-esteem, improving wellbeing, increasing school attendance or encouraging better behaviour are all considerations for where Music may have impact.

Where possible, the strategy highlights existing thinking, good practice, studies, reviews, and reports.

“What it means to make progress in music is many faceted. No two journeys, in and through musical learning, are the same. Nevertheless, everyone starts from an initial inspiring experience of music, either hearing or performing it” – *The Music Commission. What does it take to make progress in music? 2019.*

Definitions

For the purpose of this strategy, the following definitions will be used:

- **Progression** – long term musical development over time.
- **Progression Routes** – the pathways available to young people.
- **Progress** – the small steps in the journey over time (e.g. movement from A to B).
- **Continuation** – doing something initially and then continuing to do so, in that, or in another, relevant format.
- **Achievement** – completing something successfully.
- **Attainment** – a specific standard being reached.

The Aim

To provide the environment, structure, and opportunity for pupils to start learning an instrument and to develop musically over time. Learning to play an instrument or to sing involves developing a broad range of skills, knowledge and understanding in addition to making progress with specific techniques. This will require collaboration between teachers, schools, communities, parents and young people over many years, and many hundreds and thousands of hours.

The Landscape and Data

A recent data collection (Nov 24, reporting on the 2023-24 academic year, below) shows that the majority of pupils learning with hub partners participate at ‘entry level’ and there are far fewer pupils who continue to higher levels of attainment. In fact, 90% of pupils working regularly with hub partners are learning at initial level due to the high proportion of Whole Class Ensemble Teaching (WCET) and

Curriculum teaching where the majority of pupils are instrumental beginners. The retention % improves the longer that pupils stay with hub partners - 9% of learners working at Initial stage continue to Foundation level with a further 11% of that cohort then moving to Intermediate and 38% of the intermediate learners continuing through to Advanced level. Partners review this information regularly, and many strategies have been implemented, such as bespoke bursary schemes or initiatives to improve continuation from WCET.

However, the barriers to continuation for many pupils and families are significant and there remain too few options to support pupils beyond the initial stages of learning with pathways, costs and consistency of teaching. Much of this is out of the hub's control, where pyramids of schools all take different approaches to music education and the hub spends considerable effort trying to reconstruct or provide alternative pathways if the school will not / cannot.

There is also an underlying culture where music has not been the priority of many schools for more than a decade and too many schools and young people view 'having a go' as good enough rather than focusing on progression over an extended period. Hub partners will not solve many of these problems in isolation, but this strategy can aim to ensure the right approach is in place from the partnership so more pupils can benefit from quality music education for longer.

a) Entry: Pre-level 1 RQF / Initial / Prep	29,264	90%
b) Foundation: Level 1 RQF / Grade 1-3	2,533	8%
c) Intermediate: Level 2 RQF / Grade 4-5	282	1%
d) Advanced: Level 3 RQF / Grade 6 and above	108	0%
e) Pupils for which the standard achieved is unknown	315	1%

(Source, combined data for TMP and SMH, Nov 24)

The Concept

Children and young people, adults and organisations **collaborate** to create progression environments for all children and young people:

- Coordination and Communication.
- Opportunities.
- Empowerment and Support for Teachers and Adults.
- Children and young people leading their learning.
- Empowerment and Support for the Young Person.
- Harnessing Technology.
- Bringing together external forces (e.g., the music industry and venues).

Source: Ben Sandbrook, Musical Progression Roundtable, 2012

The Music Commission has an 8-point approach for children to be **supported** to realise their musical potential. The points below are a summarised:

1. Leaders in school are confident and enabled to put music at the heart of learning.
2. Schools are supported to provide an effective curriculum.
3. Training is available for a diverse and skilled workforce of specialist and generalist teachers.
4. Financial support is universally available to support all musical learners beyond 'first access'.
5. Collaboration between schools and partners helps students to progress.
6. Parental engagement is prioritised.
7. Young people are informed, engaged, and shape their own learning pathways.
8. New, integrated approaches to teaching and assessment of learning are developed.

The Music Partnership's Approach

Prioritise the learner and their needs wherever possible.

1. Involve schools in high-quality instrumental and vocal work across a diverse range of musical genres.
2. Provide high-quality teaching with a consistent set of expectations across curriculum approaches, progression models and defined assessment frameworks.
3. Run a high-quality 'Whole Class Ensemble Teaching' programme, for young people to start their musical journey.
4. Support the improvement of Curriculum Music in schools across Key Stages.
5. Provide training, CPD, support, and quality resources for practitioners, schools, and families to support progression.
6. Prioritise local transition pathways where schools and teachers collaborate to support the musician.
7. Draw together partners, funding, and bursaries to provide more options for remissions and support.
8. Organise and facilitate a progressive ensemble offer across the region alongside schools and partners.
9. Organise and involve pupils in a range of quality performance opportunities provided by partners and the community.
10. Regularly monitor pupil attainment data sets across The Music Partnership to assess impact and success.

Key Challenges

This is not an exhaustive list and will be developed further as the strategy is delivered and impact measured.

Funding	Funding levels continue to be a significant risk with more young people needing financial support alongside a widening brief, and actual reductions in funding levels for Music Hubs. As schools pass increasing costs of provision to parents (who themselves are facing a tough economic climate) music lessons can become unaffordable without further support.
Local Management of Schools (LMS)	Starting in the early 1990s, LMS has seen schools become increasingly individual in approach, priority, and education. This often challenges natural musical pathways and can be a significant blocker to progression routes.
Data	There are many thousands of young people involved in weekly activities. Where the school organises provision, data sharing is very difficult at the scales involved (727 schools). This means opportunities to celebrate progress and to signpost progression routes are reliant on schools and their own channels.
Recruitment and Resourcing	Securing the employee with the right skillset, across specialisms and genres, and at the right time is a key operational challenge. This is particularly the case in the current climate with low numbers of music graduates, a national shortage of teachers and an often-expected minimum standard of qualification from schools.
Geography	The region is vast with pockets of significant rural and cultural isolation.
Young People and Distractions	Long term progression takes commitment, graft, and determination. Alongside this, young people have more distractions in life than ever before making it harder to focus and work on long-term attainment.
School Curriculum (e.g. Ebacc)	Many school settings are not able to prioritise delivery of music beyond Key Stage 3. This can be a contributing factor to the decline of KS4 and KS5 exam entries.

Actions

Action	Owner	Timescale
Continue to work on or develop charitable partnerships to improve the resource available for bursaries.	Steering Group.	Through 2024-25
Highlight the importance of pyramid working through school support and via the Lead Schools.	All partners and lead schools.	Through 2024-25
Use 'Assessing Musical Progress Framework', or equivalent, across all relevant activities.	All partners	From September 2024
Share resource across organisations to widen performance opportunities using established good practice (e.g. widening of recorder festivals, young musician events).	Music Services	Through 2025-26
Share bursary schemes more widely and where places are available (e.g. Young Sounds UK, Future Talent).	Music Services	Through 2024-25
Raise awareness of 'progression' and the risk for young people of pathways breaking down with all stakeholders.	Steering Group Marketing and Comms	Through 2024-25

Actions

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The Music Partnership
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