

Inclusion

Music



Everybody learning!

When we use the phrase 'Quality First Teaching', we refer to key principles that underpin best practice. In this section, we will focus on the principle of **inclusive pedagogy**, addressing the values, attitudes and approaches that ensure mainstream classrooms are geared towards supporting those who find learning difficult.

Inclusive pedagogy is an approach to whole-class teaching that is accessible to **all learners**. It should enable learners to keep up, feel included, progress and be successful. This approach should foster an open-ended view of each individual's potential to learn and recognises the difference between individuals as a given and a strength. It challenges deterministic approaches that exclude certain learners from a positive classroom experience because of adverse labelling by ability, or by diagnosis.

As teachers we can feel disempowered by the expectation to teach learners with such a variety of needs.

However, we do not need to become experts in every SEND diagnosis to succeed. We do need to seek to know each learner, to find out how they learn best, and then seek to create classroom strategies that maximise their learning. By thinking about quality in this way, mainstream classrooms can become environments where teachers can plan, teach and assess for **all** their learners with equal confidence.

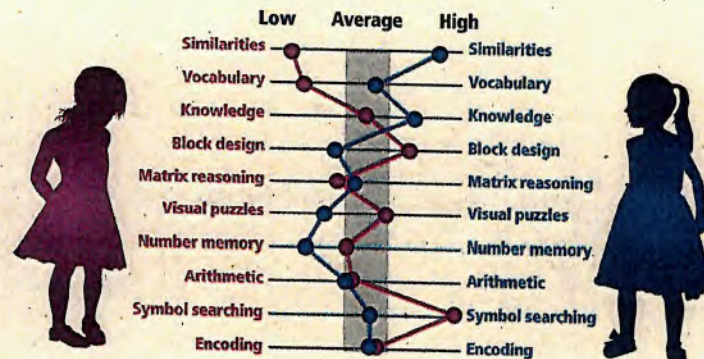
The notion of inclusive pedagogy is not a call for a return to a model of whole-class teaching where equality is notionally addressed by providing identical experiences for all. Instead, it advocates an approach whereby the teacher provides a range of options which are available to everybody. Human diversity is seen within the model of inclusive pedagogy as a strength, rather than a problem, as children work together, sharing ideas and learning from their interactions with each other. The inclusive pedagogical approach fosters an open-ended view of each child's potential to learn.¹

Why Inclusive Pedagogy is prerequisite for Quality First Teaching

We are moving away from an approach that views learners with SEND as outliers that always need to be catered for and taught differently. Separating learners with SEND out for numerous interventions or over-relying on teaching assistants to deliver teaching to a group of learners with identified SEND, can in fact be detrimental. Evidence tells us the most important contribution to improved outcomes for learners with SEND is quality teaching.²

We are also seeing an increase in the co-occurrence of needs exhibited by children and young people. Research tells us there are increasing numbers of learners in mainstream who demonstrate complex SEND profiles due to a number of factors (e.g., better neonatal care and more complex conditions affecting neurodevelopment).³ More and more learners have what might have been described as spiky or jagged-learning profiles.

The new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) reflects this shift too. It no longer looks at SEND as a department or additional provision within the school, but reviews teaching of learners with identified SEND within each subject area and every classroom. It requires evidence of SEND teaching that permeates curriculum delivery, 'built in' not bolted on.



There is a new generation of children with complex learning needs, who do not fit neatly into an understandable category.⁴

Professor Barry Carpenter

What do we need to change?

We need to focus on academic engagement for learners with SEND to achieve genuine inclusion and strengthen learner achievement. Learners with SEND need access to the best teachers and the strongest teaching. Currently, many mainstream school processes focus on the social and emotional aspects of inclusivity rather than zooming in on the teaching and learning process.

Inclusive pedagogy can improve this. Responsibility for effective teaching and assessment of learners with SEND should not be the isolated preserve of the SENCO. Teachers are the key to progress. Teachers are generally supportive of the principles of inclusion, yet anxious about working with an increasingly diverse range of learners. Adopting an inclusive pedagogy offers a way of thinking about effective whole class teaching and meeting the needs of individual learners. Research has helped highlight the reliance on planning and teaching for the majority of learners who learn typically, and then doing something slightly different for the outliers: those at the top or bottom of the distribution curve (who are sometimes described as lower or higher attainers). Inclusive pedagogy highlights the flaws in this teaching, that default thinking of planning for most of the class and then doing something additional or different for some. 'Most' and 'some' thinking risks limiting our belief in what young people can achieve. Inclusive pedagogies encourage us to build in, not bolt on.

Inclusive teaching and learning approaches

Let's move away from stereotyping and fixed-ability thinking about what learners with SEND can achieve. Where differentiated lesson planning leads to learners recognising, they are forever stuck on the red table for low prior attainers, or consistently given the bronze activities for in-class completion never the gold, (or the 'mild' never the 'spicy' or the 'hot') then we limit expectations of what these learners can achieve. Consideration of learners with SEND who find learning tricky must be core to planning and teaching, not peripheral.

It is tempting to talk about the challenge of SEND as a specific and distinct issue. Yet, far from creating new programmes, the evidence tells us that teachers should instead prioritise familiar but powerful strategies, like scaffolding and explicit instruction, to support their pupils with SEND. This means understanding the needs of individual pupils and weaving specific approaches into every-day, high-quality classroom teaching – being inclusive by design not as an after-thought.⁵

1. Ban the average

Banning the idea of 'average' is an important step towards adopting a more inclusive approach to teaching. Instead of quickly categorising learners with SEND as 'below average', the successfully inclusive teacher realises the notion of an average, above average or below average learner is **not helpful**. The inclusive teacher challenges that mindset that seeks to predetermine the capacity of each learner, replacing it instead with a **curiosity** about what the learner can achieve.

As teachers we should approach teaching with a sense of openness, looking to be surprised by our learners and what they can achieve. We cannot develop quality teaching unless (and until) we challenge this oversimplification.

2. Think about transforming learners' lives as the job

Reframe how you approach your role as teacher. It is one that transforms lives, rather than simply 'topping up' knowledge. Plan and teach based on the belief that futures are not predetermined by innate ability, and that every learner can make progress given the opportunity. Work with learners as co-agents in learning. Commit to nurturing trust between you as the teacher and your learners.

'Success for all ...depends in large part on a belief that children learn to high levels'.⁶

3. Difficulties in pupil learning are a professional challenge

As teachers we can be influential change agents in transforming schools if we regularly reflect on our pedagogical practices. Look for improvements that will help all learners reach their full potential. Barriers to learning simply present an opportunity to develop new ways of working, rather than a 'problem with the learner'. A complex learner presents a professional opportunity to learn!

4. Learners are pilots, not passengers

A study of 4000 fighter pilots to identify the 'average size' for cockpit design discovered that on a ten-point criteria, not a single one was the same on every dimension. These 'jagged profiles' are applicable to learners in the classroom. Difficulty with maths does not mean a struggle in literacy; poor working memory might not mean poor articulation. When you recognise these spikey or jagged profiles, there is less risk of labelling and a greater opportunity to identify learner potential.

5. Less deficit labelling, more ability profiling

Good teaching requires adopting an individual, holistic view of each learner. Be wary of labelling learners with their diagnosis or behaviour trait, or by assumptions of what they cannot do, particularly learners with SEND. Such labels reinforce stereotypes and lower expectations of what they can achieve. Instead of describing learners with autism as having difficulties making friends, or dyslexic learners as reluctant writers, profile learners by what they **can achieve** and how they **can learn**.

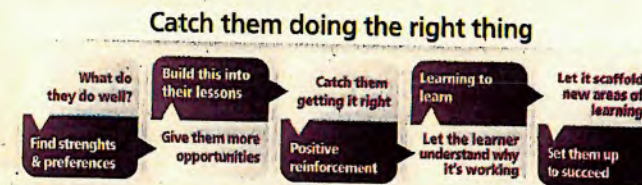
Catch yourself quietly if you label or limit a learner by the language you use, but positively reinforce yourself and your colleagues when remarks are made about what a learner can do (rather than what they cannot).

6. Ask better questions (be a detective in classroom)

Adopt an inquiry mind-set. This is about asking investigative questions around the learner. What do I know about how this particular child or young person learns? What are their strengths in maths and how do they differ in geography? What are successful hooks to get them interested? What motivates them to learn? What aspects of their learning behaviours need to be developed? This helps break the cycle of starting with questions about what we know about a learner's diagnosis or condition.

7. Catch your learners doing the right thing

Notice a learner's strengths and build on these, however small.



Planning Inclusive Lessons

Music is a unique and powerful form of communication that can change the way people feel, think and act. It combines creativity with emotion, enabling personal expression, reflection and development. As well as creating a sense of group identity and togetherness, music enables personal expression, encourages emotional development, and can foster links with the wider world.

Through the primary phase, music teaching and learning should offer a progression of skills and include opportunities to appraise, compose and perform. In order for music education to be accessible and inclusive for all, teachers need to anticipate potential barriers for individual learners and consider ways of minimising these to ensure participation.

For some learners, music can be a medium to break down barriers that may exist in other curriculum subjects. The nature of the subject allows freedom and flexibility in musical expression, preferences and performance. This is beneficial, not only for musical development, but for the growth of self-confidence and for the fostering of creative flair in all learners.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Where possible, music should form part of the culture of a learner's primary school experience. Beyond discrete music lessons, assemblies, performances, and other curriculum areas can provide opportunities for exposure to a wealth of musical experiences.

Considering this, ensuring that all aspects of learners' involvement in music education is as inclusive as possible, is paramount. Music can form an effective method of communication, so including it as part of repetitive routines such as the attendance register, number and phonics learning, as well as other daily routines, can provide predictable, reassuring and memorable experiences for learners.

At times, music can create challenges for learners with sensory issues. This needs to be considered when creating an effective learning environment. Consider the practical layout of the room and the position of the learners. Will they be working with a large class or a smaller group? Although music-making opportunities, such as playing instruments together or singing, lend themselves to groups, some learners may benefit from working individually, with or without the support of an adult and/or ICT.

Consider the physical layout of the workspace. Will all learners, especially those with physical disabilities, be able to access resources and have the space to play an active part in the lesson? If there is the opportunity to alter visual and/or auditory stimuli to respond to individual needs, then this should be considered.

Music and ICT

- [Chrome Music Lab](#)
- [BBC – Bring the Noise](#) – free interactive musical games to support learners
- [BBC Ten Pieces](#)
- [Soundbeam](#) – software for learners with physical disabilities
- [AudioMulch](#) and [Garage Band](#) – interactive composition tools

Curriculum Considerations

Across both key stages, learners should be encouraged to perform, listen to, review, and evaluate a wide range of music from different genres. This is a key part of their primary experience as it supports the development of personal preferences, respect for the opinions of others and appreciation of the impact that music can have on mood.

All learners should have the opportunity to sing, to learn an instrument and compose their own music with or without the use of ICT.¹ Understanding and exploring how music is created, considering inter-related dimensions, is something that can be achievable and is adaptable to all learners, regardless of individual needs.

Key Stage 1

Singing, chanting and rhyming form significant parts of the Key Stage 1 curriculum, as does the playing of tuned and untuned instruments, musically. Carefully selecting instruments ensures that all learners can access this element of the curriculum and be successful at it. They will begin to develop the foundational knowledge and skills to enable them to explore sound. Correct terminology can be used, but there are ways of simplifying this, using pictorial or visual aids to support understanding. Learners should be regularly listening to and appreciating a range of live and recorded music, e.g., [Classical 100](#). This can be incorporated into other areas of school life, including assemblies.

Key Stage 2

The skills previously acquired in Key Stage 1 will be developed further to encourage singing and playing musically with increased confidence and control. There is a greater emphasis on composition, including improvisation, for a range of purposes. Although the National Curriculum mentions using and understanding musical notation, this can be represented in different ways to meet the needs of all learners. Regular exposure to a range of high-quality live and recorded music will help to build a familiar and recognisable repertoire for learners.



Planning Inclusive Lessons

Music is a unique and powerful form of communication that can change the way people feel, think and act. It combines creativity with emotion, enabling personal expression, reflection and development. As well as creating a sense of group identity and togetherness, music enables personal expression, encourages emotional development, and can foster links with the wider world.

Through the primary phase, music teaching and learning should offer a progression of skills and include opportunities to appraise, compose and perform. In order for music education to be accessible and inclusive for all, teachers need to anticipate potential barriers for individual learners and consider ways of minimising these to ensure participation.

For some learners, music can be a medium to break down barriers that may exist in other curriculum subjects. The nature of the subject allows freedom and flexibility in musical expression, preferences and performance. This is beneficial, not only for musical development, but for the growth of self-confidence and for the fostering of creative flair in all learners.



Creating an Inclusive Environment

Where possible, music should form part of the culture of a learner's primary school experience. Beyond discrete music lessons, assemblies, performances, and other curriculum areas can provide opportunities for exposure to a wealth of musical experiences.

Considering this, ensuring that all aspects of learners' involvement in music education is as inclusive as possible, is paramount. Music can form an effective method of communication, so including it as part of repetitive routines such as the attendance register, number and phonics learning, as well as other daily routines, can provide predictable, reassuring and memorable experiences for learners.

At times, music can create challenges for learners with sensory issues. This needs to be considered when creating an effective learning environment. Consider the practical layout of the room and the position of the learners. Will they be working with a large class or a smaller group? Although music-making opportunities, such as playing instruments together or singing, lend themselves to groups, some learners may benefit from working individually, with or without the support of an adult and/or ICT.

Consider the physical layout of the workspace. Will all learners, especially those with physical disabilities, be able to access resources and have the space to play an active part in the lesson? If there is the opportunity to alter visual and/or auditory stimuli to respond to individual needs, then this should be considered.

Music and ICT

- [Chrome Music Lab](#)
- [BBC – Bring the Noise](#) – free interactive musical games to support learners
- [BBC Ten Pieces](#)
- [Soundbeam](#) – software for learners with physical disabilities
- [AudioMulch](#) and [Garage Band](#) – interactive composition tools

Curriculum Considerations

Across both key stages, learners should be encouraged to perform, listen to, review, and evaluate a wide range of music from different genres. This is a key part of their primary experience as it supports the development of personal preferences, respect for the opinions of others and appreciation of the impact that music can have on mood.

All learners should have the opportunity to sing, to learn an instrument and compose their own music with or without the use of ICT.¹ Understanding and exploring how music is created, considering inter-related dimensions, is something that can be achievable and is adaptable to all learners, regardless of individual needs.

Key Stage 1

Singing, chanting and rhyming form significant parts of the Key Stage 1 curriculum, as does the playing of tuned and untuned instruments, musically. Carefully selecting instruments ensures that all learners can access this element of the curriculum and be successful at it. They will begin to develop the foundational knowledge and skills to enable them to explore sound. Correct terminology can be used, but there are ways of simplifying this, using pictorial or visual aids to support understanding. Learners should be regularly listening to and appreciating a range of live and recorded music, e.g., [Classical 100](#). This can be incorporated into other areas of school life, including assemblies.

Key Stage 2

The skills previously acquired in Key Stage 1 will be developed further to encourage singing and playing musically with increased confidence and control. There is a greater emphasis on composition, including improvisation, for a range of purposes. Although the National Curriculum mentions using and understanding musical notation, this can be represented in different ways to meet the needs of all learners. Regular exposure to a range of high-quality live and recorded music will help to build a familiar and recognisable repertoire for learners.