



The Key Musical Elements

The musical elements are the building blocks of music. The skills and objectives outlined below seek to develop children's awareness of and sensitivity to each of these elements. The musical elements are interrelated and children's understanding of these concepts will deepen over time. Each element is present in most musical activity, but some lessons may focus on a single element.

Pulse: Can you feel the heartbeat?

Rhythm: Can you hear repeated patterns?

Pitch: Is the sound high or low?

Dynamics: Is the sound loud or soft?

Tempo: Is the sound fast or slow?

Timbre: How does the sound feel in your ears?

Structure: What can you hear first, next and after that?

Texture: How many sounds can you hear?

The vocabulary words for each year group are not exhaustive and are designed to build on previous years' learning. You may like to ensure your children are confident using words from the preceding year when discussing and appraising the music they hear and play.

Subject content	Objectives	Vocabulary	Key Musical Elements	NC Objectives
Listening and Re-responding	<p>Listen and describe familiar and unfamiliar sounds in their environment, including speaking, singing, body percussion and instruments.</p> <p>Listen to a diverse range of musical pieces or extracts in different genres.</p> <p>Respond imaginatively to music through movement and illustration.</p> <p>Talk about pieces of music and give preferences.</p> <p>Recognise the difference between fast/slow (tempo), loud/soft sounds (dynamics), high/low sounds (pitch)</p> <p>Listen and repeat simple call and response rhythms using body percussion and voice.</p>	<p>Loud, quiet, soft, fast, slow, high, low</p> <p>Repeat</p> <p>Verse, chorus</p> <p>Style, mood</p> <p>Similar, different</p>	<p>Pulse</p> <p>Rhythm</p> <p>Pitch</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to: use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes</p> <p>play tuned and untuned instruments musically</p> <p>listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music</p> <p>experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music (musical elements)</p>
Improvising and Composing	<p>Explore and use a range of sound effects (vocal, body percussion, tuned/untuned instruments, digital) to accompany other learning across the curriculum, e.g. rhythms to accompany poetry, soundscapes to tell stories or describe settings.</p> <p>Evaluate, select and repeat sounds that they have explored to compose appropriate accompaniment to the same learning, e.g. decide to use rustling paper for walking in the bushes</p>	<p>Body percussion words: clap, click, slap, tap, stamp, rub, etc.</p> <p>Instrument words: Hit, strike, brush, shake, rattle, tap, ring etc.</p>		
Performing + Recording	<p>Prepare and perform a song or dance for an audience, e.g. small groups performing in class or wider school opportunities like assemblies and shows</p> <p>Understand the difference between speaking, shouting and singing voices and use their singing voices expressively</p> <p>As part of improvising, composing and performing, describe and evaluate their own music-making and that of other children, e.g. how/why instruments were selected, how sounds were made, likes/dislikes, etc.</p>	<p>Hard, soft, loud, quiet, spiky, smooth etc.</p> <p>Singing voice</p> <p>Speaking voice</p>		

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Listening and Responding	<p>Listen and describe familiar and unfamiliar sounds in their environment, including speaking, singing, body percussion and instruments.</p> <p>Listen with attention and focus to a diverse range of musical pieces or extracts in different genres.</p> <p>Respond imaginatively to music through movement and illustration.</p> <p>Talk about pieces of music and give preferences, referring to the musical elements to explain their decisions</p> <p>Recognise the difference between fast/slow (tempo), loud/soft sounds (dynamics), high/low sounds (pitch)</p> <p>Listen and repeat simple call and response rhythms using body percussion and voice.</p>	<p>Loud, quiet, soft, fast, slow, high, low</p> <p>Repeat</p> <p>Verse, chorus</p> <p>Style, genre, mood</p> <p>Similar, different</p>	<p>Pulse</p> <p>Rhythm</p> <p>Pitch</p> <p>Dynamics</p> <p>Tempo</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <p>use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes</p> <p>play tuned and untuned instruments musically</p> <p>listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music</p> <p>experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music (musical elements)</p>
Improvising and Composing	<p>Explore and use a range of sound effects (vocal, body percussion, tuned/untuned instruments, digital) to accompany other learning across the curriculum, e.g. rhythms to accompany poetry, soundscapes to tell stories or describe settings.</p> <p>Evaluate, select and repeat sounds that they have explored to compose appropriate accompaniment to the same learning, e.g. decide to use rustling paper for walking in the bushes</p> <p>Based on known call and response rhythms, compose varied responses to an initial call</p> <p>Use tuned instruments or digital instruments to explore and compose simple and repeatable melodies</p> <p>Combine sounds, e.g. singing and percussion; percussion and tuned instruments, to develop their music-making in a group (ensemble).</p>	<p>Accompany, appropriate</p> <p>Ensemble (a group playing together)</p> <p>Melody</p> <p>Singing voice</p> <p>Speaking voice</p>		
Performing and Recording	<p>As a class group, begin to record compositions using graphic scores or visual organisers, so that they can be used to repeat and perform music-making</p> <p>Prepare and perform a song or dance for an audience, e.g. small groups performing in class or wider school opportunities like assemblies and shows</p> <p>Understand the difference between speaking, shouting and singing voices and begin to use their singing voices expressively, trying to listen to one another and have an awareness of volume (dynamics) and mood</p> <p>Describe and evaluate their own music-making and performance, e.g. how sounds were made, likes/dislikes etc, showing respect for each other's musical ideas and efforts</p>			

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Listening and Re-sponding	<p>Listen to and discuss a broad and diverse range of musical styles, periods and traditions</p> <p>Explore the sounds of different musical instruments and discuss basic features of key musical styles e.g. pop, reggae, Motown, musical theatre</p> <p>Encourage discussion using more accurate musical language when appraising and evaluating a piece of music</p> <p>Build on understanding of tempo, pitch, and dynamics and begin to be aware of timbre</p> <p>Respond imaginatively to music in a variety of ways, e.g. movement, dance, mime, poetry, writing, art</p> <p>Reproduce simple rhythmic and melodic sequences based on familiar songs and rhythms</p>	<p>Loud, quiet, soft, fast, slow,</p> <p>high, low</p> <p>Repeat</p> <p>Verse, chorus</p> <p>Style, genre, mood</p>	<p>Pulse</p> <p>Rhythm</p> <p>Pitch</p> <p>Dynamics</p> <p>Tempo</p> <p>Timbre</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <p>play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression</p> <p>improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music</p> <p>listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory</p> <p>use and understand staff and other musical notations</p> <p>appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians</p> <p>develop an understanding of the history of music.</p>
Improvising and Com-posing	<p>Explore what improvisation means (making up your own simple rhythm and melody)</p> <p>Begin to improvise with very simple patterns using voice and instrument in the context of a song being learned</p> <p>Begin to explore and use a range of simple sounds, patterns and melodies (vocal, body percussion, tuned/untuned instruments, digital) to accompany other learning across the curriculum, e.g. a melody played to represent a character or event in a story; sounds inspired by a picture</p> <p>Discover different ways of playing instruments, showing some awareness and control of tempo, dynamics and timbre</p> <p>Begin to recognize the relationship between staff notation and sounds when listening to and playing simple rhythms and 2 or 3-note melodies</p>	<p>Similar, different</p> <p>Accompany, appropriate</p> <p>Ensemble (a group playing together)</p> <p>Melody</p> <p>Singing voice</p> <p>Speaking voice</p>		
Performing and Sharing	<p>Understand the importance of warming up the voice using a range of sounds that the singing voice and the speaking voice can make</p> <p>Explore different ways to record their own compositions, including graphic scores, video and digital resources</p> <p>Prepare and perform musical pieces for an audience, e.g. small groups performing in class or wider school opportunities like assemblies and shows</p> <p>Continue to use their singing voices expressively and with an awareness of the musical elements</p> <p>Describe and evaluate their own music-making and performance, showing respect for each other's musical ideas and efforts</p>	<p>Timbre words:</p> <p>Bright, dark, brassy, reedy, harsh, noisy, thin, buzzy, pure, raspy, shrill, mellow, strained etc</p>		

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Listening and Re-responding	<p>Listen to and discuss a broad and diverse range of musical styles, periods and traditions</p> <p>Continue to recognize the sound of musical instruments and basic features of key musical styles e.g. pop, gospel, bhangra, classical</p> <p>Understand and discuss the musical elements when appraising and evaluating a piece of music with increasing accuracy when referring to tempo, pitch, dynamics and timbre, and an increasing awareness of structure and texture.</p> <p>Respond imaginatively to music in a variety of ways, e.g. movement, dance, mime, poetry, writing, art</p> <p>Reproduce simple rhythmic and melodic sequences based on familiar songs and rhythms</p>	<p>Loud, quiet, soft, fast, slow,</p> <p>high, low</p> <p>Repeat</p> <p>Verse, chorus</p> <p>Style, genre, mood</p>	<p>Pulse</p> <p>Rhythm</p> <p>Pitch</p> <p>Dynamics</p> <p>Tempo</p> <p>Timbre</p> <p>Structure</p> <p>Texture</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <p>play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression</p>
Improvising and Composing	<p>Deepen understanding of the concept of improvisation (making up your own simple rhythm and melody)</p> <p>Continue to improvise using very simple patterns using voice and instrument in the context of a song being learned</p> <p>Continue to explore and use a range of appropriate sounds, patterns and melodies (vocal, body percussion, tuned/untuned instruments, digital) to accompany other learning across the curriculum, e.g. a melody played to represent a character or event in a story; sounds inspired by a picture</p> <p>Select appropriate instruments and how to play them, showing increasing awareness and control of tempo, dynamics and timbre</p> <p>Begin to recognise and use staff notation to read and play simple rhythms and 2 or 3-note melodies</p>	<p>Similar, different</p> <p>Accompany, appropriate</p> <p>Ensemble (a group playing together)</p> <p>Melody</p> <p>Singing voice</p> <p>Speaking voice</p>		<p>improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music</p> <p>listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory</p> <p>use and understand staff and other musical notations</p> <p>appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians</p>
Performing and Sharing	<p>Understand the importance of warming up the voice using a range of sounds that the singing voice and the speaking voice can make</p> <p>Record their own compositions in any way appropriate, including graphic scores, video and digital resources, identifying links between graphic notation and the musical elements</p> <p>Prepare and perform musical pieces for an audience, e.g. small groups performing in class or wider school opportunities like assemblies and shows</p> <p>Continue to use their singing voices expressively in an ensemble context, listening to each other and showing an increasing awareness of the musical elements</p> <p>Describe and evaluate their own music-making and performance, showing respect for each other's musical ideas and efforts</p>	<p>Timbre words:</p> <p>Bright, dark, brassy, reedy, harsh, noisy, thin, buzzy, pure, raspy, shrill, mellow, strained etc</p> <p>Major key (happy-sounding music)</p> <p>Minor key (sad-sounding music)</p>		<p>develop an understanding of the history of music.</p>

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Listening and Re-sponding	<p>Listen to and discuss a broad and diverse range of musical styles and traditions and begin to place the music in its historical context</p> <p>Start to identify musical style indicators for a range of styles, e.g. rock, jazz, pop, hip-hop, Mo-town</p> <p>Understand and discuss the musical elements when appraising and evaluating a piece of music, with increasing focus on timbre, structure and texture. Begin to use formal musical terms to describe dynamics and tempo.</p> <p>Discuss families of instruments, e.g. brass, woodwind, strings, and begin to distinguish the main instrument heard in a piece</p> <p>Respond imaginatively to music in a variety of ways, e.g. movement, dance, mime, poetry, writing, art</p> <p>Reproduce simple and more detailed rhythmic and melodic sequences based on familiar songs and rhythms</p>	<p>Brass</p> <p>Woodwind</p> <p>Strings</p> <p>Percussion</p> <p>Ensemble</p> <p>Ostinato (repeated pattern)</p> <p>Unison (all together)</p> <p>Canon / round (one after another)</p> <p>Harmony (two or more melodies played together)</p> <p>Chord (two or more notes played at the same time)</p> <p>Octave (higher or lower versions of the same note)</p> <p>Tempo: Allegro (fast), andante (slow), largo (very slow)</p> <p>Dynamics: Forte (loud), piano (soft)</p> <p>Crescendo (getting louder)</p> <p>Diminuendo (getting softer)</p> <p>Timbre: Staccato (spiky), legato (smooth)</p>	<p>Pulse</p> <p>Rhythm</p> <p>Pitch</p> <p>Dynamics</p> <p>Tempo</p> <p>Timbre</p> <p>Structure</p> <p>Texture</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to: play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression</p> <p>improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music</p> <p>listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory</p> <p>use and understand staff and other musical notations</p> <p>appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians</p> <p>develop an understanding of the history of music.</p>
Improvising and Com-posing	<p>Recall, answer and invent melodic and rhythmic patterns, using voices, body percussion and instruments</p> <p>Understand that musical improvisation means free play in the context of a piece, in contrast to composition (recording or writing pieces).</p> <p>Improvise and perform in solo and ensemble contexts; use quality not quantity of notes!</p> <p>Continue to explore and use a range of simple sounds, patterns and melodies (vocal, body percussion, tuned/untuned instruments, digital) to purposefully support other learning across the curriculum, e.g. a melody played to represent a character or event in a story; sounds inspired by a picture</p> <p>Select appropriate instruments and how to play them to show control of timbre</p> <p>Recognise and use staff notation to read and play rhythms and melodies with increasing confidence</p>			
Performing and Sharing	<p>Understand the importance of warming up the voice using a range of sounds that the singing voice and the speaking voice can make</p> <p>Record compositions using graphic scores or staff notation, so that they can be used to repeat and perform music-making</p> <p>Prepare and perform musical pieces with confidence and accuracy for an audience, e.g. small groups performing in class or wider school opportunities like assemblies and shows</p> <p>Use their singing voices expressively as an ensemble, showing a deeper understanding of how to improve their performance musically</p> <p>Perform, as part of an ensemble, songs that may include simple canons/rounds, rhythmic ostinatos (a repeated pattern) or harmony parts</p> <p>Describe and evaluate their own music-making and performance, showing respect for each other's musical ideas and efforts</p>			

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Listening and Responding	<p>Listen to and discuss a broad and diverse range of musical styles and traditions and place the music in its historical context</p> <p>Accurately identify musical style indicators for a range of styles, e.g. rock, jazz, 20th Century</p> <p>Explore the work and influence of a chosen musical artist e.g. Carole King</p> <p>Understand and discuss the musical elements when appraising and evaluating a piece of music, with increasing focus on timbre, structure and texture. Use formal musical terms to describe dynamics and tempo.</p> <p>Discuss families of instruments, e.g. brass, woodwind, strings, and distinguish the main instrument heard in a piece</p> <p>Respond imaginatively to music in a variety of ways, e.g. movement, dance, mime, poetry, writing, art</p> <p>Reproduce simple and more detailed rhythmic and melodic sequences based on familiar songs and rhythms</p>	<p>Brass</p> <p>Woodwind</p> <p>Strings</p> <p>Percussion</p> <p>Ensemble</p> <p>Ostinato (repeated pattern)</p> <p>Unison (all together)</p> <p>Canon / round (one after another)</p> <p>Harmony (two or more melodies together)</p> <p>Octave (higher or lower versions of the same note)</p> <p>Time signature</p> <p>Bar</p>	<p>Pulse</p> <p>Rhythm</p> <p>Pitch</p> <p>Dynamics</p> <p>Tempo</p> <p>Timbre</p> <p>Structure</p> <p>Texture</p>	<p>Pupils should be taught to:</p> <p>play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression</p> <p>improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music</p> <p>listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory</p> <p>use and understand staff and other musical notations</p> <p>appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians</p> <p>develop an understanding of the history of music.</p>
Improvising and Composing	<p>Recall, answer and invent melodic and rhythmic patterns, using voices, body percussion and instruments</p> <p>Deepen understanding of what musical improvisation means. Continue to improvise and perform confidently in solo and ensemble contexts; use quality not quantity of notes!</p> <p>Explore and use a range of rhythms and melodies (vocal, body percussion, tuned/untuned instruments, digital) to build musical pieces with a clear purpose, e.g. creating a sad piece to accompany a wartime piece of writing</p> <p>Select appropriate instruments and how to play them to show control of timbre</p> <p>Begin to compose extended pieces with clear musical sections (structure)</p> <p>Develop an increased awareness of texture when combining sounds for an ensemble piece, e.g. singing and percussion; percussion and melody</p> <p>Confidently recognise and use staff notation to read and play rhythms and melodies</p> <p>Recognise the shape (contour) of a melody written using staff notation</p>			
Performing and Sharing	<p>Understand the importance of warming up the voice using a range of sounds that the singing voice and the speaking voice can make</p> <p>Record compositions using graphic scores or staff notation, so that they can be used to repeat and perform music-making</p> <p>Prepare and perform musical pieces with confidence and accuracy for an audience, e.g. small groups performing in class or wider school opportunities like assemblies and shows</p> <p>Use their singing voices confidently and expressively as an ensemble, showing good musical awareness and control, and considering the needs of their audience</p> <p>Perform, as part of an ensemble, songs that may include simple canons/rounds, rhythmic ostinatos (a repeated pattern) or harmony parts</p> <p>Describe and evaluate their own music-making and performance, showing respect for each other's musical ideas and efforts</p>			