



to promote the *well being* and *development* of *every child* through a  
broad range of musical opportunities

- welb music service

## ***Education Authority, Western Region***

### **Musical Pathways to Learning (MPL)**

**2016/17**



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*I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy; but most importantly music, for the patterns in music and all the arts are the keys to learning.*

*Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul.*

*Plato*

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The Musical Pathways to Learning (MPL) programme is a scheme which enables children to develop through music. It is offered to children from nursery level through to KS2, that is, children from three to eleven years old. This is done using progressive programmes and stimulating activities, including rhymes, songs and games. There is considerable research evidence which demonstrates that the skills learned are transferable across all subjects in the primary curriculum, (FMS, 2012). It has also been shown that music plays a vital role in the development of a child's social, emotional and developmental skills, (Hodie, 2012).

The MPL programme has been in operation in the Education Authority (EA), Western Region, since September 2008. It has already been shown to be highly successful through yearly evaluation of activities, (Evaluation of MPL 2009/10: 2010/11: 2011/12: 2012/13 & 2014/15). These documents are available for inspection; this report is an outline of the services MPL provides.

The purpose of this document is to outline the MPL programme. It will show the considerable merits the project offers to children and schools in the EA western region. It is difficult to quantify something that is essentially qualitative; in the case of artistic and creative expression words can convey what cannot be expressed in numbers. However, this document presents information, both qualitative and quantitative, from a range of evidence gathered during the MPL programme from 2012 to 2015.



Performing rhythms in a primary school setting.

## **Overview**

Every class involved in the MPL project avails of a 30 week programme. The classroom teacher is actively involved in each music session and is given a copy of the lesson plan afterwards, so that they can reinforce the given activities during the week. An integral part of the MPL programme is the inclusion and development of the class teachers involved. For the project to be successful it is important to empower class teachers to teach music in their own classrooms, reinforcing the concepts and skills the MPL tutor introduces each week.

Therefore the MPL programme aims to improve music education for both the pupils involved and their class teachers. Teacher development is delivered primarily:

- By participating in an MPL session each week with their class.

Taking part in the weekly MPL sessions allows teachers to see music lessons being modelled by a specialist each week. Occasionally training sessions are offered to teachers, where a need has been identified. These workshops are designed to extend the skills modelled in a practical and enjoyable way for teachers. These meetings provide the opportunity for everyone to learn about the musical concepts being introduced, discuss how the programme is going and avail of MPL tutor expertise in a supportive environment.



Teachers take part in a highly practical MPL training session





Playing a musical game with the claves

The children involved in the project access fun and practical music sessions every week. Every child is able to take part in the rhymes, songs and musical stories which are delivered with great gusto by the MPL tutors. Regular evaluations of lessons take place, within the team and also with the class teachers involved. The students are also assessed, mostly informally through observations. Year 4 pupils however do receive a formal assessment. The aim is to focus on progression and development (rather than an end product). This enables an evaluation of progress. The emphasis is on improvement, raising achievement in pupils' learning and celebrating success.



Nursery teachers discuss how to integrate music into outdoor play

At the end of the programme, every class receiving MPL tuition is given the opportunity to present a **showcase** in their school. Parents and other family members are invited to attend this presentation to see their children perform. The active participation of the extended family raises awareness, improves involvement, enhances the benefits and leads to greater enjoyment and enthusiasm of the programme. These are very joyous and celebratory events for all involved.



Year 1 pupils learn about pitch (high sounds and low sounds) with lycra

There have been many highlights for the MPL programme since its inception in 2008. These include a visit from the Education Minister, John O'Dowd, an article featuring MPL in Times Educational Supplement (TES) online, broadcasts on BBC Newsline & Pure Culture and performances with the Ulster Orchestra and Royal Scottish Opera.

### **Links to Instrumental Learning.**

The MPL programme focuses on the main elements of music (beat, pulse and rhythm) but it also focuses on creativity and expression. Therefore the children involved in the project have access to consistent, high quality music provision which will provide an excellent foundation to instrumental learning or further studies in music.

## **What is the value of the MPL programme?**

The MPL programme has been shown to:

- help children find their singing voice.
- develop intellect and character
- develop imagination
- build self esteem
- help children acquire self-discipline, awareness and tolerance
- develop social and communication skills



Learning 'start and stop' in a nursery setting.



Nursery pupils perform for their parents

The table overleaf outlines the benefits of participation in the MPL programme:

### What is the value of MPL?

Benefit	Comments
All children can access and participate, in all educational settings (i.e. SEN, Integrated, Gaelscoil, Mainstream etc.)	MPL currently delivers in 48 schools within the EA Western Region, including mainstream, SEN, nursery, Gaelscoil, and pre-school settings.
MPL supports educational development and progression.	All activities support and enhance the NI curriculum delivery. The most notable impact is on literacy and language development.  During 2013 MPL collected evidence from participants which showed 95% of teachers (N=220)) agreed that the key areas of the NI curriculum were supported and enhanced by the MPL programme. <b>Ninety-seven percent of teachers agreed that the MPL sessions had a significant impact on language and literacy development</b>
MPL contributes to better health and well being	MPL activities will enhance pupil and teacher's confidence and self-esteem.  Children involved in weekly MPL sessions and are given the opportunity to perform as part of the programme. During 2013 Primary 4 children took part in a questionnaire, 81% of which stated 'I am good at music' (N=312). Additionally, <b>100% of teachers (N=220) agreed that their pupils' self-esteem was enhanced by the MPL experience. Teacher's confidence was also improved with 92% (N=226) saying they were more confident delivering music within the classroom.</b>
MPL provides training opportunities	Participating school staff will potentially be offered CPD training, facilitated by the Musical Pathways of Learning team.
MPL creates opportunities to participate in the Arts	Children participate in weekly music lessons consisting of songs, rhymes and games etc. As part of the programme, <b>every child has the opportunity to perform</b> in an MPL 'showcase.'
MPL provides improved opportunities for people with disabilities	The MPL programme is open to all children and currently delivers in 3 SEN schools in the Western Region.
MPL involves parents/carers	Parents and family members are invited to see their children perform in the MPL showcases.  Parents attended MPL showcases and responded in a very positive way to the programme. During 2013 testimonies were attained (N=876) and comments included: <i>this programme has helped my daughter within her growing development. It has made excellent progress towards her speech and is more able to express her own identity with confidence and music seems to have a positive effect on my child's mood – almost brings him to life at times.</i>



Benefit	Comments
MPL helps develop social and communication skills	All pupils benefit from doing music games which encourage friendship & interaction, e.g. being a leader or turn-taking etc. <b>One hundred percent of teachers surveyed in 2013 (N=220) agreed that listening and communication skills were enhanced by the MPL experience.</b> Ninety-nine percent of the teachers surveyed agreed that group coordination skills had also been enhanced.
MPL establishes and maintains partnerships	MPL strives to establish strategic links between other critical partners in this area.  The MPL programme has made links with various organisations through visits by representatives, for example the BBC Ten Pieces Team, a NHSCT speech therapist and the World Voice British Council.

Perhaps the programme can be best summarised by the people involved:

- *As a teacher I have thoroughly enjoyed being part of the Musical Pathways to Learning Programme. The variety of activities, songs and rhymes are tremendous and the overall structure of the programme ensures progression and development...In terms of children's general learning and development it is a wonderful programme, having great benefits throughout the curriculum. I have found the children's attention and listening skills have developed as well as their confidence and communication skills. This is evident in their willingness to participate in activities not only within the Nursery but also in performances for parents. (Nursery School Teacher)*
- *I love listening to stories, especially the one about Jack and the Beanstalk; my favourite song is 'High Low Chick-a-Low'; I love learning new songs because when I am on long journeys I teach my sister and we sing them. (Primary 4 pupil)*
- *I am delighted that our son has received such a fun introduction to music at this stage. He thoroughly enjoys all aspects of MPL. The teachers obviously interact with the children very well and make the learning so much fun for all of them. Many thanks to the MPL teachers for facilitating such a valuable programme. (Parent)*
- *A very worthwhile and enjoyable programme. Children have learned so much and benefitted greatly. They are able to connect what they have learned in MPL to other areas of the curriculum. (KS2 Teacher)*



- *For one community playgroup, it was their first experience of MPL. One little boy called Tom (name changed) joined the group a few weeks into term, and the pre-school leader Mary (name changed) expressed her concerns, as he was not interacting with the other children and had not spoken to any of the staff members. Over the weeks he began to come out of his shell and started to join in on activities. It was only really evident to me on the day of the parent showcase how much he had excelled - he took part whole-heartedly, singing out. After the performance, his parents came and thanked me profusely saying how worried they had been about their son's development, and believed MPL had had a big role in his improvement during the year. They told me that Tom would come home singing the songs and tell them all about the games and puppets. All four of Tom's grandparents were there to support him at the showcase. (MPL Tutor)*



Rhythm work in a Year 4 setting

- *I sometimes play the harp in my MPL sessions as teachers comment on the calming effect the instrument has on the children. By playing the harp it got children to express themselves and use their imaginations in all of my schools. After listening to the harp, one little boy who had never previously talked to me said, "when you played the harp, it sounded like everyone in the whole world was smiling". (MPL Tutor)*



Rhythm work in a primary school setting



Working together in a Year 2 setting

- *MPL is one of the most innovative and beneficial programmes to be brought into schools. It gives all children a level playing field ...as well as enhancing the effectiveness of connected learning across the curriculum. The involvement and training of teachers is an essential element but this can only be really effective through the use of peripatetic expertise in the school.(Classroom Teacher)*







Year 2 students with their MPL certificates

## Conclusion

Music is a content area of the curriculum that not only strives for the achievement of facts and skills, but provides all children with learning experiences that are basic to learning in other areas of the curriculum also. Because of its multisensory demands, music contributes to helping children learn how to both process and react to sensory stimulation. Since most music activities are perceptual motor by nature, these abilities are continually being developed in the music class and music lesson.

In a report published by Ofsted (2012), based on evidence collected from schools in England, it was noted that there was, *not enough music in music lessons*. In fact, the Ofsted inspectors observed that a good or outstanding music education was provided in only 33 of the 90 primary schools assessed. Inspectors noted that many children were being turned off the subject after spending hours reading text-books or listening to assessment procedures. Music was not good enough in almost two thirds of primary & secondary schools and almost a quarter had inadequate standards of music teaching. It was also noted that children with special educational needs and those on free school meals were considerably less likely to be involved.

In contrast to the Ofsted findings, the evidence presented in this document has shown that the MPL programme provides outstanding music education provision. The children involved are from all backgrounds and enjoy consistent music opportunities through high quality vocal work and activities. The evidence shown in this report from parents and teachers confirms and validates the excellent work achieved through the MPL programme.

In a more recent report published by Ofsted (2013) Michael Cladingbowl, Director of schools policy at Ofsted commented:





Parents enjoy a tickling rhyme with their children at an MPL nursery showcase

*Music is a demanding discipline, developed through exciting practical musical activity. However the vast majority of schools visited shied away from teaching pupils about fundamental aspects of music as they thought it too difficult. **All children, not just the privileged few, should enjoy a good music education.***

The MPL programme has ensured that all children can access high quality weekly music lessons. This document has shown how the programme has been a tremendous success and how it is valued by teachers, parents and pupils. Since September 2008, classrooms across the western region have been filled with music and song. Ofsted (2012) note that the most effective music education takes place over a consistent and lasting period. Therefore, it is vitally important the MPL programme not only continues, but be extended to a wider range of children.

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