

# “Wow, it’s music next”



Impact Evaluation of Wider Opportunities Programme in Music  
at Key Stage Two.

By Professor Anne Bamford and Paul Glinkowski



# Acknowledgements

This impact evaluation would not have been possible without the contribution of a large number of individuals and organisations. The FMS is particularly indebted to Professor Anne Bamford and Paul Glinkowski who led the research and to all those in the Engine Room who supported the process. We would like to thank everyone in schools and music services whose hospitality made the research team feel very welcome. The time and support afforded and honesty of responses given were crucial to the success of the project.

We thank sincerely all those involved in the field research, organising school visits, making arrangements for meetings and bringing people together. We are also indebted to everyone who took part in the focus groups and the panel of experts who contributed in the Research Board; their role in providing critical support has been invaluable.

Thanks are also extended to Jennifer Hopkins who co-ordinated the field work, provided contextual information and logistical support. As ever, we are grateful for the dedicated contributions of the FMS team and in particular Sarah and Douglas Adamson. The research has benefited greatly from their input. We must also mention the constant encouragement from Richard Hallam, National Music Participation Director.

Particular mention should be made to those organisations which have supported the project financially. We thank Barbara Tucker and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and Hester Cockcroft and Awards for Young Musicians. We also thank Yamaha Music UK whose financial support of the FMS this year has supported this research.

Last, but certainly not least, we thank all those who are directly involved in Wider Opportunities – headteachers, instrumental and class teachers, music service staff, trainers and providers of CPD and, most importantly the young people themselves. To everyone many thanks indeed – you are realising the national aspiration that every child should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument.

**John Wittchell**  
FMS Chief Executive

## **‘Wow, it’s music next’**

“We have issues with some children opting out of some lessons, but if you say, ‘it’s music next’, it readily engages them and motivates them. They are straight in there”.

Headteacher’s comment

## Executive summary

### INTRODUCTION

In 2000, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment announced that ‘over time, all pupils in primary schools who wish to will have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument’. In summer 2002, six local education authorities were invited by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to participate in pilot programmes to demonstrate how the specialist music instrumental tuition could be developed to involve all pupils in Key Stage Two (KS2). The policy that emerged became known as the ‘Wider Opportunities Pledge’.

As members of the Federation of Music Services (FMS), local authority music services throughout England have, since 2007<sup>1</sup>, been engaged in the strategic development and delivery of what subsequently became the Wider Opportunities Programme in Music at Key Stage Two<sup>2</sup> (WO). This programme, funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) through its Standards Fund Music Grant, addresses the government aim that every child should

have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument whilst at primary school.

It is intended that WO projects should provide pupils with ‘an authentic instrumental experience’, preferably for a whole year. The WO programme is usually based on large group or whole class instrumental lessons, though sometimes WO projects have focused exclusively on singing. WO projects are commonly, but not always, run by specialist instrumental tutors, usually working alongside class teachers. Underpinning the WO programme are two key government aspirations:

- **Nationally, by 2011, over 2 million pupils will have had the opportunity to learn a musical instrument for free, for at least one year<sup>3</sup>.**
- **By 2011, programmes will be in place that will result in every child having this opportunity during their time in primary school.**

<sup>1</sup> £3 million pounds was given to all local authorities in 2006 with an additional £23 million devolved to schools in 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Key Stage Two (KS2) is a collective term used to refer to children generally in years 3 – 6 in primary school. Children in KS2 are aged from around 7 – 11 years of age. Children with special educational needs may be operating at KS2 in terms of their development but be older or younger in terms of their chronological age or year group.

<sup>3</sup> This represents over 80% of the total Key Stage 2 school population.

## Impact Evaluation Method

**In March 2009, the Engine Room, a research unit based at the University of the Arts London (UAL), was commissioned by the FMS to provide objective evidence about the impact of the WO programme.**

The methods used for data collection included:

- Face-to-face interviews with pupils, class teachers, headteachers, school music coordinators, specialist music tutors and music service managers.
- Observation of WO sessions and performances in schools (n=56).
- A series of eight focus groups comprising different stakeholders who could give feedback on their own experiences and perceptions of the WO programme.
- An online survey that all headteachers and/or music coordinators at schools across all local authorities where the WO programme was offered were invited to complete (n=1354 completed or partially completed).



The field research was carried out in eight different local authority areas in England: Bolton, Coventry, Derbyshire, Haringey, Newcastle, Oxfordshire, Sheffield and Somerset. The authorities chosen represented the broad range of local authority areas, both geographically and demographically. The music services within the chosen authorities were at different stages of development and had different organisational characteristics and modus operandi, which influenced their delivery of the WO programme in their area. In each of the eight local authority areas, the research

team visited between six and eight KS2 schools. Through a matrix approach it was ensured that a diversity of types and situations of schools was covered.

The research commenced in March 2009 and the data gathering was completed in September 2009. In total, 56 schools were visited during the period 21st May to 8th July 2009 and 328 people were interviewed; a further 41 people participated in focus groups.

## Effect and impact tracking matrix

**There are a number of factors that have been identified through international research in arts education (Bamford, 2006) that are consistently associated with high level impact. These have combined to form an 'effect and impact tracking matrix' (EITM) which has been used in this report to organise the analysis of the data and report impact on the pupils, teachers, schools and wider systems affected by the WO programme under the following areas:**

- **Personal impact**, such as the development of confidence, aspiration, enjoyment, fun and happiness.
- **Social impact**, such as the fostering or development of networks, collaborations, partnerships and contact webs.
- **Cultural impact**, such as changes prompted at an organisational level, changes in external perceptions, changes in profile and influence.
- **Educational impact**, such as new knowledge, skills development, conceptual development, professional education, education of the broader field or community.
- **Ethical impact**, such as addressing social problems or minority issues or audiences, promoting changes in attitudes, or contributing to sustainability.
- **Economic impact**, such as value for money, changing spending patterns, income generation.
- **Innovation impact**, such as talent development, the development of new pedagogic techniques, processes or products and the instigation of debates or new discourse.
- **Catalytic impact**, such as flow-on effects, changes in direction, transformations and journeys.
- **Negative loss impact** described things that either had to be sacrificed or else created negative consequences of some other kind that arose as a consequence of WO programme. This includes opportunity costs, talent loss, personal loss, unhappiness, loss of enjoyment, loss of creativity.



## Summary of results

**The overall results of the impact evaluation indicate that the WO music programme is generally of high international standard and receives widespread positive support from pupils, parents, teachers, headteachers and local authorities. Children appeared genuinely happy in most of the lessons and effective lessons were characterised by innovative pedagogy and interesting approaches.**

### Best practice

Successful WO programmes built partnerships between the child, the family, the school and music services. Active partnerships where all stakeholders were involved in shared planning and decision making, were at the heart of best practice. In a number of instances, children could have been more actively involved in decision making with regard to their WO learning. The same could be said of family members, especially the importance of parents, grandparents and carers in supporting and encouraging musical learning.

### Interpretation of WO's aims

There is a diversity of espoused aims of the WO programme that are enacted in the classroom. There are those people who argue that WO is aimed at instrument learning and others who claim that WO is aimed at music learning through the instrument. Within WO practice there was a greater emphasis given in most cases to the enjoyment and experience of making music rather than a strong focus on musical and instrumental skill development. Having said that, the WO programme allowed talent to be identified, nurtured and developed. It is unlikely that these children would have been recognised without the WO programme.

### Talent and progression

While 'one off' arrangements are often made for children that show talent, it is not clear how these connect with broader programmes of talent development in music. In particular, more effort needs to be made to build continuous pathways for instrumental learning, especially between primary and secondary school. Further information could be made available to pupils and their teachers that highlight continuation options and provisions for talented children.

### Group lessons

WO has challenged the value of group lessons over individual lessons for beginner instrumental learning. The experience of the WO music teachers indicates that instrumental skills and knowledge were acquired by the children at approximately the same rate in the WO group lessons as in individual or small group

lessons with targeted students. Some music services offered both WO whole class group learning, combined with more intensive small group 'skill-based' learning, to achieve a balance between the aims of both participation and skill development.

### Celebrating success

Assessment of pupils' learning in WO tended to be based on involvement and interest rather than on knowledge or skills. In successful WO programmes, process and product were clearly linked. Celebratory events such as performances, exhibitions and presentations acted as powerful drivers of quality enhancement and were influential advocacy tools to promote music.

### Access

Accessibility for all is fundamental to the WO programme. There was considerable evidence that WO had successfully brought instrumental music lessons to groups of children who would not otherwise have experienced them. There was clear evidence that WO was both explicitly and implicitly aimed at inclusive practices. WO has allowed children from very diverse backgrounds to learn an instrument.

### Special education needs and technology

While there is excellent practice evident in catering for the needs of pupils with SEN, the WO programmes would benefit from giving greater consideration to diversity amongst WO teaching staff. The WO provisions for children with moderate to severe educational needs showed innovative use of technology, yet the survey results and research visits would suggest that more general WO provisions would be enhanced through greater access to technology and more widespread use of music technology in WO lessons.

### Improvements

The WO programme would be improved through being more open to input and decision making from children and broadening the range of musical styles/instruments covered. Similarly, more opportunities for the children to attend performances and appreciate instrumental music would enhance their active learning of the instrument.

# The impact of the WO music programme for children included:

## Increased motivation to learn the musical instrument

*"Sometimes we come in from playtime so we can start early" – Pupil*

## Acquisition of instrumental knowledge and skills

*"The large group progress has been very, very good" – Headteacher*

## Increased self-confidence

*"Music gives her confidence. She learns about other cultures, other things, has a better understanding" – Parent*

## Raised esteem

*"So often we have seen increased confidence and self esteem" – Headteacher*

## Increased musical confidence

*"Harry struggles to concentrate but music does his confidence a lot of good; he really shines" – Headteacher*

## Enjoyment

*"It's fun and you learn lots of things" – Pupil*

## Pride and achievement

*"She played it without a flaw; if you could have bottled the look on her face afterwards, it was worth millions" – Teaching Assistant*

## Enhanced aspirations

*"You are raising the aspirations of the children; they are experiencing success" – Headteacher*



## Increased empowerment and responsibility

*"Sometimes it's the children who end up leading the lesson. They take responsibility themselves" – Music Co-ordinator*

## Greater respect for their instruments and music

*"Looking after something precious has been a good learning curve for them" – Headteacher*

## Improved behaviour

*"The class is naughtier in normal class than in music lessons" – Class teacher*

## Improved discipline

*"The kids are more disciplined in that lesson than anywhere else" – Music Co-ordinator*

## Improved pupils' school attendance

*"I feel excited when I know it is music day. I more want to come to school" – Pupil*

## A more positive attitude to learning (especially in boys)

*"The impact WO has had on the boys is particularly marked; they all go for it" – Headteacher*



## More focused and longer during WO lessons

*"By Christmas they could clearly focus more in other lessons and that in my view is linked to WO" – Headteacher*

## Longer intervals of concentration and task perseverance in WO lessons

*"Learning to concentrate for that amount of time transfers across to other musical activities and outside of music" – Class teacher*

## A calming effect on the children, especially those with behavioural needs

*"A child with ADHD is in another world in music; it was a complete revelation" – Headteacher*

## Improved collaborative learning team and work skills

*"Other children tell us what they know but you don't know. We're quite good now; we were terrible when we started" – Pupil*

## Increased children's happiness

*"That was so fun" – Pupil*

## Enhanced instrumental learning

*"These kids have progressed quicker than some small groups in a nice area" – Music Service Tutor*

## In some pupils, their educational development had been accelerated by their involvement in WO

*"He is a very challenging boy, but the teacher has noticed a vast improvement in all areas since he took WO on, and he wouldn't be the only one" – Headteacher*



## The impact on the schools and teachers included:

### **Making music more valued in the school**

*"It's raised the profile of music here. It was way down the list prior to this; now we're really proud of the music"*  
– Headteacher

### **Building musical resources in the school**

*"There is much more music going on in schools now because of the WO resources available"* – Headteacher

### **A more supportive learning environment**

*"Arts and music have improved; other activities have started to matter. The school now wants to do more for our children"* – Parent

### **A more holistic and rounded curriculum**

*"Ofsted noticed it was going on. We received an 'Outstanding' for curriculum offer"* – Headteacher

### **Improving the profile of the school**

*"Parents are proud and they all turn up to concerts; we get good press coverage"* – Headteacher

### **Boosting recruitment**

*"Parents said it was something on the plus side that would make them want to send their children to this school"* – Headteacher

### **Greater parental and family involvement**

*"Music brings people together. It is as important as studying"* – Parent

### **Encouragement for schools to form networks and collaborations with other schools**

*"Three headteachers met yesterday to talk about doing a concert; it's a great chance to develop community profile and links"* – Headteacher

### **More involvement in community initiatives**

*"We performed at Victoria Hall... we never knew it would be so good. The mayor was there and all sorts of people. It was brilliant"* – Pupil





### **In some schools, WO projects were an important catalyst for change**

*“WO assisted struggling schools by providing a catalyst for the schools to change direction, turn around their performance and improve the profile and image of their school” – Anne Bamford*

### **New and enhanced perceptions of some pupils by their teachers**

*“I took up the saxophone. I was lost and they (pupils) were the experts” – Headteacher*

### **Assisting schools in special measures to improve school profile and performance**

*“We were Ofsteded last week – they could see the improvement and I think music has been important to that” – Headteacher*

### **Assisted schools to highlight their achievement**

*“The parents left the concert saying how wonderful it was in a jaw drop kind of way... they were absolutely amazed” – Headteacher*

### **Enhanced general music education**

*“96% of schools surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that WO had provided instrumental education for those children who would otherwise not receive it” – Schools’ Survey*



## Sustainability into the future

**Initial teacher education for primary teachers does not adequately prepare teachers to feel confident to teach music in the primary school. Despite the ambition that class teachers would receive considerable professional development by participating in WO lessons this has not occurred to the extent that it was initially envisaged.**

Concurrently, there is a shortage of WO music teachers, especially in contemporary guitar and percussion and certain areas have more acute music teacher shortages than other areas. Encouraging greater parity of training and pay and conditions across music services and continued targeted recruitment and training of WO music teachers, especially individuals from diverse backgrounds, would help to alleviate teacher shortages. Most music services offer a period of training and induction to new WO teachers and many services made good use of the national training programme offered by Trinity Guildhall and The Open University.

### Paired teaching

About 50% of the services visited used paired (team) teaching in WO lessons. Despite being considered as best practice in terms of professional learning, budget limitations and decisions meant that paired teaching was becoming less common. Some services have adopted the model of a 'music assistant' or practitioner approach as a lower cost way to support the music services' teachers.

### Funding concerns

While there are generally adequate resources for effective, high quality WO programmes, the financial arrangements vary considerably from one area to the next. It is argued that funding patterns are not always equitable and transparent. Despite the widespread view that WO represented good value for money, there was a major concern about the affordability of the service if the subsidies were removed or reduced.



Many of the teachers, tutors and headteachers interviewed expressed concern that if costs of WO were transferred to parents it would adversely impact on the underpinning principles of a universal offer with general inclusion and access.

There is considerable concern in schools, music services and amongst parents about the sustainability of the WO programme in terms of the ongoing financial commitment from government. Proactive initiatives are being developed to increase the sustainability of music provision in schools and for individual pupils on the back of WO projects, but not in all areas.

### Strengthening primary and secondary schools links

Whilst it was recognised that the target of a 50% continuation rate was challenging, the general consensus expressed in the survey and through the visits and interviews suggests that there were many complementary success indicators that were important. Concurrently, definitions of continuation and progression differ from one setting to the next making accurate measurement of progression rates difficult. In particular, better progression pathways of instrumental learning need to be forged between primary and secondary schools.



# Recommended areas for further development

## 1. Children and community involvement

- 1.1 While there have been some examples of WO leading to greater parental and community involvement, further development in this area would benefit the WO programme
- 1.2 Planning and programming of WO should be more open to input and decision making from children

## 2. Quality and sustainability

- 2.1 Partnership between the school and their music service should be strengthened through more collaborative planning and shared delivery
- 2.2 More opportunities should be made available for the children to attend performances and appreciate instrumental music linked to their active learning of the instrument
- 2.3 There should be clearer pathways for children in instrumental learning, especially between primary and secondary school
- 2.4 The range and choice of musical styles/instruments covered in WO instrumental learning should be broader
- 2.5 Continued financial and resource commitment to schools and music services is needed to meet the rapid growth in demand for WO music provisions

## 3. Teacher development

There should be:

- 3.1 More attention to recruiting and training WO music teachers from diverse backgrounds
- 3.2 Continued practice-focused professional development for both music services' teachers and tutors and class teachers
- 3.3 More direct engagement and participation from some class teachers in the WO programme
- 3.4 Strategic targeting towards broader improvement in initial teacher education for class teachers
- 3.5 Encouraging greater parity of training and pay and conditions across music services

*The full report is available as a PDF file on the FMS website: [www.thefms.org](http://www.thefms.org)*



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