



Music Skills Progression from Nursery to Year 2

Purpose: Every child develops a musical voice through singing, playing, listening, moving and creating. This progression builds from musical play in Nursery and Reception to the Key Stage 1 music programme of study. Sing Up Music provides planned learning; daily opportunities to revisit songs and sounds and Thursday whole year group singing with Mrs Loveday-Hope help children practise together.

Our music curriculum in practice

Sing Up Music. Teachers select and sequence Sing Up units across singing and playing, composing and improvising, and listening and appraising. Songs and games are revisited between lessons so children can hear, practise and remember musical ideas.

Thursday singing. Each year group sings together on Thursdays with Mrs Loveday-Hope. Shared repertoire, warm-ups, echo singing and performance opportunities support pitch matching, a steady pulse, clear words, expressive singing and confidence as an ensemble. Staff connect the session's learning to class music where appropriate.

Musical provision. Nursery and Reception provide songs, rhymes, movement and sound exploration indoors and outside. Year 1 retains planned opportunities to apply taught skills; Year 2 revisits them through purposeful composing, playing and listening. Adults model attentive listening and safe handling of instruments.

A wide musical world. Children encounter live and recorded music, songs and traditions from varied cultures and contexts. They learn to listen with curiosity, describe what they hear and value different responses.

The progression at a glance

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Singing and voice	Join songs and rhymes; play with voice and echo short sounds.	Sing familiar songs, copy phrases and begin to match pitch.	Sing songs and chants with others, keeping a shared pulse and clear words.	Sing with greater pitch accuracy, expression and awareness of the group.
Pulse and rhythm	Move, clap or tap to music and copy a short pattern.	Find a steady beat and echo a simple rhythm.	Keep a pulse while singing or playing; copy and make short rhythms.	Maintain a pulse, distinguish beat from rhythm and perform patterns together.
Playing	Explore how familiar objects and instruments make sounds.	Choose and play sounds, starting and stopping on a cue.	Play tuned and untuned percussion in a simple musical part.	Control a part with others, varying sounds for a planned effect.
Creating	Invent sound effects and take a turn in musical play.	Choose and sequence sounds for a story or idea.	Improvise a short response and select sounds for a simple composition.	Combine and refine sounds, explaining choices and remembering an arrangement.
Listening	Notice and respond to contrasting sounds and music.	Listen, move and say what changes in a piece.	Listen with attention and describe a musical feature or response.	Compare features in different pieces using taught musical language.

How to read the tables. Statements show increasing control, vocabulary and independence, not a requirement for solo performance. Teachers revisit earlier experiences as repertoire and listening widen. The chosen Sing Up units and Thursday songs are recorded in the school's yearly plan.

Singing, playing and musicianship

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Find a singing voice	Join repeated words, rhymes and call-and-response with an adult.	Use a singing rather than speaking voice in familiar songs; copy a short phrase.	Sing in a comfortable range with a group; remember lyrics and follow a leader.	Sing longer phrases more securely, adjusting voice to sing gently or strongly.
Pitch and melody	Explore high and low sounds through voice, movement and play.	Echo simple high and low patterns and follow a tune with movement.	Match short sung phrases and show whether a melody rises or falls.	Sing familiar melodies with growing accuracy; recognise and perform contrasting pitches.
Pulse and tempo	Bounce, walk, pat or clap along with music; notice fast and slow.	Keep a steady beat for a short song and respond when the speed changes.	Maintain a pulse during a song or chant; follow fast and slow changes.	Keep a pulse independently while another rhythm is heard; vary tempo deliberately.
Rhythm and pattern	Copy a short clap or tap pattern and join a repeated refrain.	Echo and invent simple patterns of long and short sounds.	Clap or play a short rhythm, including a pattern from words; repeat it accurately.	Create and perform a longer rhythmic pattern; distinguish it from the steady beat.
Instrument technique	Explore sounds safely by tapping, shaking or scraping with support.	Choose and use an instrument appropriately; start and stop together on a cue.	Play tuned and untuned percussion with control, following a simple cue or pattern.	Select and play a part within a group; control entries, endings and volume.
Ensemble habits	Take turns, listen for a cue and enjoy making music with others.	Join group songs and games; listen while someone else has a turn.	Watch a leader, begin and end together, and listen to a partner's part.	Rehearse and perform together, adjusting timing and balance to support the group.

Thursday whole year group singing

Nursery and Reception. Familiar songs, action rhymes, echo phrases and musical games build shared repertoire, confidence and attention to a leader. Children can join through voice, gesture or movement.

Years 1 and 2. Regular practice develops memory, pitch, pulse, diction and expression. Children learn to sing as part of a larger group, listen to one another and prepare songs for an audience when suitable.

Connection to lessons. Class teachers can revisit a warm-up, song or musical idea from Mrs Loveday-Hope’s session and notice how children apply it in Sing Up lessons and provision. A shared performance is one form of evidence alongside everyday musical participation.

Listening, creating and musical understanding

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Active listening	Pause, respond and move to familiar songs or environmental sounds.	Listen to a whole short piece and show a change through movement or talk.	Listen attentively to live or recorded music; describe one feature and a response.	Compare two pieces or sections and explain how musical choices create a different effect.
Sound qualities	Notice loud and quiet, fast and slow, high and low sounds.	Explore contrasting volume, speed and pitch in songs and instruments.	Use words such as pulse, rhythm, pitch, tempo and dynamics in context.	Describe changes in pitch, tempo, dynamics and timbre using taught vocabulary.
Timbre and texture	Recognise different voices and everyday sounds; try making them.	Compare sounds from voices, objects and instruments; notice one or many sounds.	Identify contrasting instrument or voice sounds and choose one for a purpose.	Explain how different sound sources or combined parts affect a piece.
Improvisation	Answer an adult’s sung phrase or make a sound in turn.	Invent a short vocal or instrumental response to a musical prompt.	Improvise a simple rhythm or sound pattern while keeping to a shared framework.	Vary a short idea and respond musically to another player within a group.
Composition	Arrange sounds in play to match an action, picture or story.	Choose and order a few sounds for a story, mood or movement.	Select, combine and repeat sounds to make a short piece for a purpose.	Develop, rehearse and refine a short arrangement; explain why sounds were chosen.
Remembering music	Recognise a repeated song or sound and join a refrain.	Recall a familiar song, sequence or repeated pattern with prompts.	Remember a short musical phrase and use pictures or marks to recall an order.	Use an agreed symbol or graphic score to remember, perform and change an arrangement.

Curriculum connections through Sing Up

- Singing and playing.** Songs, chants and instrumental responses help children practise expressive voices and musical use of tuned and untuned instruments.
- Composing and improvising.** Children experiment, select and combine sounds, then refine choices using musical dimensions such as pulse, pitch, tempo and dynamics.
- Listening and appraising.** Active listening to live and recorded music develops attention, understanding and ways to describe musical features and personal responses.
- Planning note.** Sing Up offers one-year sequences by year group and an alternative two-year cycle. Staff follow the school’s selected sequence and revisit key knowledge across lessons and Thursday singing.

Continuous provision and assessment

Skill	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Indoor and outdoor provision	Singing baskets, rhymes, sound objects, movement space and safe sound-making outdoors.	Accessible instruments, song prompts, sound stories and a place to perform or record ideas.	Provision linked to taught pulse, pitch or rhythm; children revisit a song or make a soundscape.	Small-group arrangements, listening stations, graphic scores and purposeful rehearsal.
Adult interaction	Sing often, echo a child's phrase, model turn-taking and name a sound.	Teach a song or pattern, invite an echo and ask what children notice or change.	Model musical vocabulary and a specific skill, then listen for its use in play.	Prompt children to compare, justify musical choices, rehearse and refine together.
Evidence of progress	Notice participation, response to sound, copying and musical curiosity.	Observe remembered songs, pitch attempts, steady beat and chosen sounds.	Listen to group singing, instrumental patterns, active listening and short compositions.	Use repeated snapshots, recordings and discussion to notice control, memory and musical choices.

Our values in music

- Kindness.** Listen when someone else performs, encourage others and make space for every voice.
- Resilience.** Practise an unfamiliar phrase, return to a rhythm and improve a group performance.
- Creativity.** Try a new sound, improvise an idea and shape music to express a mood or story.

Planning and inclusion checks

- Sequence selected Sing Up units so all Key Stage 1 children sing, play tuned and untuned instruments, listen to varied music and create with musical dimensions. Use Thursday sessions for additional shared practice and repertoire.
- Keep a repertoire that children revisit across the year. Teach pulse, rhythm and pitch through sound and movement before relying on symbols or written recording.
- Offer comfortable ways to participate, including gesture, movement, instruments or joining a small group. Consider hearing, language, sensory and physical access; avoid making a solo a condition for success.
- Assess musical learning through repeated observation, listening, discussion and short recordings. Notice progress in the child's own singing and playing as well as whole-group outcomes.

Source framework and scheme references

Department for Education, National curriculum in England: music programmes of study: gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-music-programmes-of-study

Department for Education, EYFS statutory framework, effective September 2026: gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2

Sing Up Music, primary music curriculum and guide to implementing: singup.org/music/sing-up-music-curriculum/sing-up-music

Cecil Gowing, Whole School Curriculum and Provision Map, Nursery to Year 2 (school document); Thursday year group singing with Mrs Loveday-Hope.