



# ACOUSTIC FUTURES



Scoping EYFS Sound & Music Provision  
in Barking & Dagenham Schools

# SUMMARY

This report has been commissioned by the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham's Community Music Service (CMS). Its primary research question is 'How can the CMS strengthen EYFS Music Provision locally?' The purpose of this report is to highlight the work carried out in Barking & Dagenham schools and offer recommendations for action. It presents findings from a consultation phase between November 2017 and January 2018 and is a tool to gauge the potential for future development of EYFS music provision across the borough.

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. THE ROLE OF THE CMS

The Community Music Service (CMS) is the lead partner for Barking and Dagenham's Music Education Hub (MEH) - the nationwide initiative set up in response to the 2011 National Plan for Music Education (NPME). It's core role as a strategic broker ensures that council services and local providers are joined up and are delivering the best possible opportunities for young people and schools in the borough.

Free instrument lessons, coordinating an annual Inspire Festival and curriculum advice are some of the valued offers the CMS continue to deliver. Looking forward, it is continually exploring how these can be built upon in a challenging funding environment and best reflecting the needs of young people, made up of an increasingly diverse multicultural demographic. For the service to remain agile, it is in regular and close consultation with schools, partners, the council and strategic music education organisations.



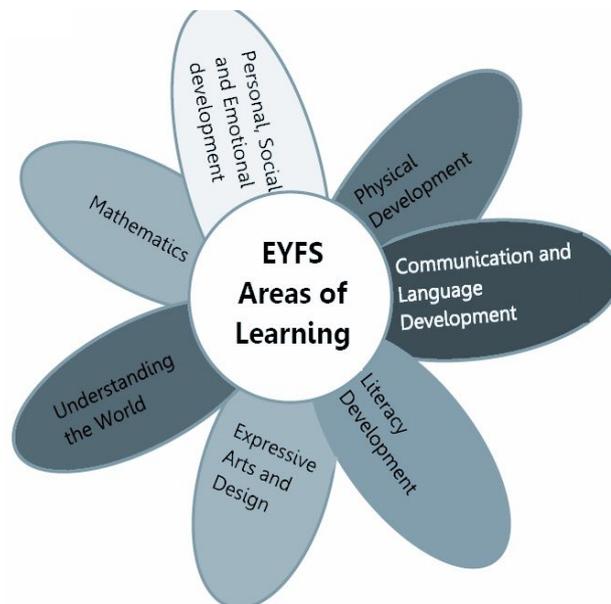
Photo credit: Monteagle Primary: Fantasy Lands Concert

# INTRODUCTION (cont.)

## 2. AIMS FOR EYFS MUSIC

Setting the scene, it's important to reflect on the objectives already in place for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) local music provision. It includes a range of activities that a child will have expected to have achieved by the time they are 5 years old; **taking part in music making by themselves and with professionals, visiting concert halls, performing to a range of audiences and signposting to relevant local activities and resources.** The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham (LBBD) 2017 Summer Seminar was a valuable review of MEH working and an opportunity to recast priorities until 2020. At EYFS stage, performance opportunities were still recognised as key as well as clear vocal progression routes for all pupils from EYFS to KS4. In addition, working with external providers and partner organisations was seen as a way of ensuring access to a diverse and high quality music provision.

Being able to respond to the nuances of varying settings within this framework is the ambition for a refreshed piece of research. This report outlines issues and opportunities from the research undertaken in Barking & Dagenham schools asking 'How can the CMS strengthen EYFS Music Provision locally?' It is an evidence base for the CMS as it maps its future service offer. It is also a valuable resource for schools in understanding the local EYFS music landscape and an opportunity to learn about new ways of working.



# METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 TOOLS

The start of the 2018 academic new year in September, was identified as a key moment for the CMS when potential new initiatives could be trialled. This meant the scoping work could spread over a 6 month period with a focused phase of **consultation**, assessment of findings in a **report** and time allocated for **partnerships and investment** to be put into place for any future provision. Online surveys and phone consultations were the methods of engaging with respondents.

## 2.2 CONSULTATION

Between November 2017 and January 2018, an online survey designed with EYFS specialists allowed for quick responses to capture key quantitative data. Surveys provided respondents with the chance to feed back at a suitable time within their busy schedules.

44 Barking & Dagenham schools were contacted by email about their EYFS music provision, with 22 responses within the allocated two week response period. This 50% response rate showed good level of engagement and 6 of these took up the offer for a more detailed phone consultation. These conversations were up to half an hour and offered a more quantitative detailed picture of their needs, prompts such as;

- Describe the plans you have for music in your early years setting
- Tell us about provision or help you are interested in from the CMS/your partners

The respondents were largely the Early Years Practitioners (EYP) leading sessions though 3 responses were from headteachers or deputies who had an overall view on the provision but were not in the classroom. EYP's were rarely teaching early years only or music only and their vision for music was often a whole school approach with an ambition to instill a lifelong love of music at this early stage.

# METHODOLOGY (cont.)

## 2.3 DATA SNAPSHOT

The survey data gives an overview of music activity taking place in schools and there is so much inspiring work to learn from. Many of the ideas and suggestions here have come from the experiences of those that are doing it well. We saw that most schools were running dedicated music sessions with singing being the main activity and overall pupil progress was consistently monitored. Using some form of technology for music teaching was already in place, with an interest in learning how best to harness these existing tools.

**100%** use singing within music provision

**81%** run music sessions 10-30 mins long

**40%** use an internal evaluation framework to monitor pupil progress/music provision

**31%** use some form of technology in music teaching

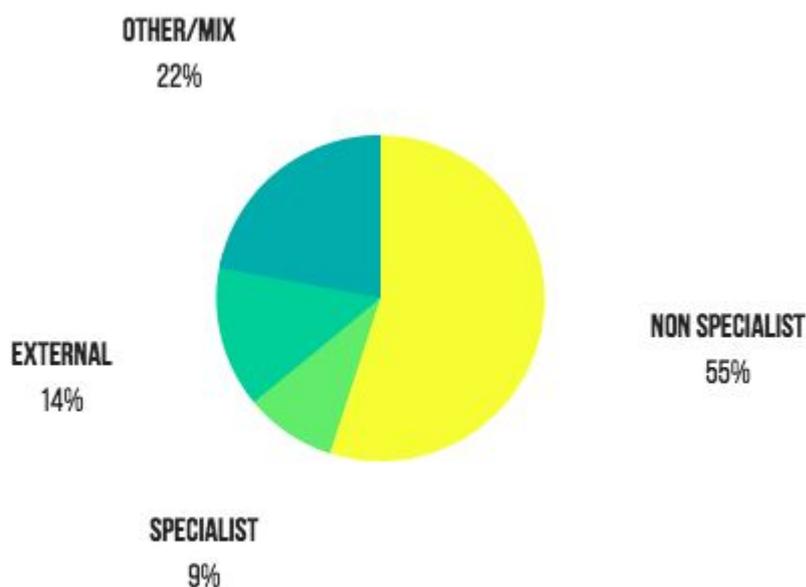
## METHODOLOGY (cont.)

On the flip side, we are seeing key areas where additional support could be provided to strengthen music provision in Barking and Dagenham schools. Ensuring that all schools are running formal music sessions at EYFS stage is a significant goal. 'Formal' meaning focused rather than part of another activity eg. tidying up. There are a number of schools with no monitoring framework for pupil progress - how might a 'resources exchange' look between those that are doing it well and those that need support?

Over half of EYP's do not have a music specialism although the quality of teaching is recognised internally, to be of a good standard. A Special Educational Needs (SEN) offer for music was seen as important and though a music box with instruments would be accessible by all, there were few dedicated spaces for music playing to unfold naturally.

Where support is needed

- 9% do not run formal music sessions
- 13% do not have a way of monitoring pupil progress/ music provision
- 27% do not have a SEN offer but need one
- 22% do not have a music area in the classroom
- 13.6% have a specialised music setting in the school



# INSIGHT AREAS

The research takes as a starting point that music can transform lives and that it can take you places. This understanding is also at the core of the responses, recognising the musical journey altering as a pupil progresses. At this early stage it's important to feel confident that right building blocks are in place to support later provision.

## 3.1 Class Activity: Listening & Discussion

The research brought up questions around how listening and discussion could be more deeply embedded into music provision. In particular as 'Listening & Attention' is one of the aspects of the 'Communication & Language' prime area of learning and development at EYFS.

One school offered listening meditations to pupils, providing valuable acoustic tuning time and another an outside sound area - both relaxing parts of the day. Discussion time following these types of activities were seen as key moments to develop a musical vocabulary which they would be able to apply in and outside of school. 'Active listening' requires a child to pay attention, follow instructions, and ask questions therefore giving them a greater sense of self and confidence in articulating their needs. A child-centered approach to music provision was at the heart of many consulted, but discussion time was often seen as an 'additional' or 'incidental' activity and a potentially challenging ask for this young age group.

On opportunities for pupils to feedback:

*"This is recorded informally"*

*"Not for music"*

*"Something I would like for the future"*

### Case Study: Minute of Listening

This is a digital tool which hosts an archive of sonic experiences - 60 seconds of creative sound and music for every day of the school year. The listening experience encourages a focused time of calm and listening. It then offers opportunities for creative responses and enquiry across a range of curriculum areas.

Interesting to note within this case study is placing music within a broader context of sound and acoustic learning. Identifying and discussing beats and rhythms alongside known musical scores and everyday ambient soundscapes offers a more accessible entry point into music exploration. Exploring the basic questions such as 'What is sound?' links into science study and beyond.

# INSIGHT AREAS (CONT.)

## 3.2 Environment: Music Setting & Music Progression

Creating the right environment for musical learning is an important starting point. Schools that had a separate space to explore music felt that children were able to focus more and enjoyed the freedom of a separate area. Some schools did have separate onsite music settings but struggled to mobilise pupils to make the journey there.

*“We just take them to the school hall but you can see the excitement in the change of atmosphere and they have more space which makes them more adventurous”*

*“We do have a music room but don’t take the Early Years classes as it’s logistically difficult to get them there”*

### Case Study: Passport to Music

Early Years Music Consultant Nicola Burke has established a training programme which allows EYP’s to think about what they already do in their music sessions and what they could change to encourage music and creativity. As well as involving parents more and inviting artists to collaborate, the majority of changes made by workshop participants were focused around simple ways to alter the classroom space and even making ‘music corridors’ to engage pupils in exciting areas for music learning. Tune into Listening is an action research project run by Nicola which explores auditory environments and builds on an earlier report she produced with Trish Power about enabling musical environments to deeply engage pupils.

Through phone consultations, we were able to understand in more depth how music was working well to lay the foundations for committed learning into KS1 and beyond. An area of interest for pupils was how music connected to other art forms eg. how it may sit within filmmaking. Schools spoke about successful workshops where music was integrated into the wider creative context. Simple techniques such as playing films on the interactive whiteboard (IWB) with sound off and then creating soundtracks live.

Musicians coming in to teach, perform but also talk broadly about their practice as a career, enabled pupils and their parents to engage with music as more than just a peripheral activity. This also reinforces one of the core aims of the work of the Barking and Dagenham Cultural Education Partnership in ‘Clarifying and strengthening pathways into the creative and cultural sector’.

**“Early awareness of music is not just about the skills but an appreciation and permission for students to belong to that artistic space”**

# INSIGHT AREAS (CONT.)

## 3.3 Continuous Professional Development: Resources & Networks

Respondents showed that online music resources are widely used in the classroom and were cited as valuable learning tools for both pupils and EYP's. With a majority of practitioners having a broad music understanding rather than a specialism, an empowered workforce is an essential basis for quality EYFS music provision. None of the respondents were members of any professional network for Early Years music education but did attend the CMS meetups.

*"I'm not very confident in singing in the class because I don't have the training but I encourage the children"*

*"It would be good to know what other schools are doing and to be able to meet up regularly, informally"*

### Case Study: LEYMN

The London Early Years Music Network (LEYMN) is hosted by Sound Connections and supports experienced music leaders. It is a safe place to debate issues, share best practice and runs an apprentice scheme. It is developing a wider associated membership of musicians, early years practitioners, music organisations, families.

London specific and UK wide networks such as LEYMN and MERYC are ways for EYP to feel more connected and informed though it feels there is still work to be done first at a local level particularly for EYP's new to music. Practical suggestions were made for the CMS to provide; a directory of local artists and performance opportunities, a way of sharing resources like evaluation frameworks and inter-school visits to see classes in action.

## 3.4 And also...

Our insights fell into the three core areas outlined but it's worth noting a few other opportunities which could make use of existing resources and infrastructure in schools.

- Instruments: Making instruments is a primary method of musical exploration, and there was interest in how these could be more robust and become permanent fixtures in the instrument boxes.
- Technology: With smart boards in almost every classroom, how could music exploration go beyond playing music videos and find ways of working holistically with live accompaniment.
- Parents: Great attendance at performances but how to harness further involvement - through an EYFS Music Day, encouraging musical parents to come and play, completing a questionnaire to ask how they want to be involved

# CONCLUSION

## 4.1. Recommendations for Action

The research highlighted the exciting range of work already being carried out in Barking & Dagenham schools and the dedication by Early Years Practitioners to continue providing quality music experiences. The recommendations made are not necessarily suited to all schools, they should be seen as a menu of options and some streams of activity may be interesting to trial in only a select number of settings. We have referenced case studies to show great examples of work that is already out there, that the CMS could make/reinforce connections with or model new initiatives around.

### 'How can the CMS strengthen EYFS Music Provision locally?'

1. Creating a space for youth voice in an early years setting leads to accelerated communication skills between educator, pupils and outside of the school setting. Providing dedicated time for **listening and discussion** ensures we are hearing what music provision is needed by those experiencing it.
2. Where the learning takes place enables musical experiences to flourish. Imagine Barking & Dagenham as an exemplar of the most creative, practical and long lasting **musical environments** in and out of the classroom.
3. How are we ensuring that our workforce are supported and feel they are part of a **EYP network** which offers genuine opportunities for exchange?

For young pupils and EYP's with basic music experience, it would be interesting to test a new music initiative that brings 'sound & music' together. This does not replace the singing and whole ensemble teaching objectives, instead it opens up the acoustic realm into more accessible language.

## 4.2 Suggestions for Further Work

This research invited responses from schools where EYFS refers to pupils aged 4 and 5 years old. The EYFS sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old and so comparative data with other settings such as Children Centres would be useful.

There were a number of schools who did not respond to the survey or phonecalls. We know that some of these were down to time constraints but also, some were schools that have been challenging to engage noted through other programmes of work. It would be valuable to conduct a handful of in person consultations with these using the report as a basis for discussion.

It is advisable that a period of time to assess findings from this report is set aside. It will inform possible partnerships and funding streams to be put into place for any future provision.

# APPENDICES

## 5.1 Participating Schools from a pool of 45

Dorothy Barley  
Furze  
Marks Gate  
Hunters Hall Primary School  
Beam  
Eastbury  
Gascoigne  
Henry Green  
John Perry  
Manor (Longbridge)  
Marsh Green  
Monteagle  
Ripple Primary (Suffolk Road)  
Roding (Cannington Road)  
St Teresa Catholic  
St Vincent's Catholic  
Valence (St George's Road) InF  
Valence (Bonham Road) JNR  
William Bellamy  
Eastbury Primary Community School

## 5.2 Survey Form

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdGoTCWe-8cg6fbBjXdHwTn\\_1MdpxFm-So\\_xlfsjznrU47CyA/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdGoTCWe-8cg6fbBjXdHwTn_1MdpxFm-So_xlfsjznrU47CyA/viewform?usp=sf_link)

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the research respondents for engaging in the consultation, reflecting on their work and offering suggestions for better music provision. Equally the CMS have been instrumental in providing essential literature for review and guidance from the Governing Body.

Olivia Bellas is a Cultural Researcher & Producer working to engage diverse communities across all art forms including sound and music. She has worked with the CMS for 5 years as a Development Consultant.

