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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# What contributes to successful whole-class Ensemble Tuition?

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**Abstract**
In 2001, the government in England pledged in the white paper Schools Achieving Success that all primary school pupils who wanted to should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. The research reported here aimed to establish what contributed to the success of the implementation of this policy. The findings showed that success depended on all school staff being committed to the programme; children having experience of high-quality provision; opportunities to participate in performance; and accessible progression routes.

**Keywords:** Music; inclusion; whole class tuition; linstruments; quality of provision

## Introduction

In 2001, the government in England pledged in the white paper *Schools Achieving Success* that over time all primary school pupils who wanted to should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. Focusing on pupils at Stage 2 (ages 7–11), this built on and extended the statutory entitlement to music education provided by the National Curriculum and became known as the 'Wider Opportunities' programme. A range of instrumental and vocal models were piloted and evaluated (Ofsted, 2004; Youth Music, 2004). Evaluation of the pilot projects was extremely positive (Ofsted, 2005). New musical traditions had been introduced into schools, and more children wished to learn instruments. The quality of teaching was judged to be better than that in conventional KS2 sessions. Lessons were planned and taught by a combination of freelance and community musicians, Music Service tutors, classroom teachers and teaching assistants (TAs). This provided opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) for all of those participating. Classroom teachers were able to learn instrumental skills from visiting musicians while the musicians developed an in-depth understanding of the school context, classroom management and the wider music curriculum.

A survey in 2007 (Hallam et al., 2007) showed that Music Services had made considerable progress in providing every child with the opportunity to play an instrument. Whole-class instrumental tuition was the most commonly reported strategy (72% of LAs) followed by whole-class vocal tuition (40% of LAs[1]). Factors supporting the initiative, in addition to the funding, were supportive head teachers and the high profile of music education in the school. An impact evaluation by Bamford and Glinkowski (2010) reported that the programme had received widespread positive support and in addition to enabling the children to acquire a range of musical skills had raised self-esteem and confidence, enhanced aspirations, and increased focus, empowerment and responsibility. Successful programmes built partnerships between the child, the family, the school and Music Services. The Ofsted report, *Wider Still and Wider* (2011), suggested that in too many schools, curriculum planning for the following years

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took little or no account of any learning that had taken place during the Wider Opportunities year. As a result, in these schools, pupils did not make good progress following the initial whole-class instrumental programmes. Some schools and groups of pupils were benefiting far more than others with pupils with special educational needs, those eligible for free school meals and looked after children considerably less likely to be involved in additional extracurricular or outside of school musical activities than others. Sharp (2015) in a key data report on Music Education Hubs (MEHs; Sharp, 2015) noted that just under a third of pupils continued to learn an instrument after receiving Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (WCET) in the previous year. This continuation rate was influenced by the willingness of schools and parents to encourage, support and pay for children's instrumental learning.

More recently, Fautley, Kinsella and Whittaker (2017) established two different conceptions of WCET, where music education started with the instrument (MSWI) and where music was taught via the instrument (MVI) (for further clarification see this edition). These conceptualisations led to subtle differences in the way that the quality of WCET was viewed. Common features included in successful programmes were:

— knowledge of music;
— a range of improvising activities using both the instrument and voices;
— a range of composing activities using both the instrument and voices;
— a range of music listened to including recordings made by others as well as recordings that learners made themselves;
— opportunities to perform using instruments and voices in a range of styles and genres and in a variety of venues;
— making progress on the instrument(s) concerned;
— opportunities for progress and progression in whatever way(s) learners deemed appropriate for them;
— opportunities in place for accreditation for musical attainment both collectively and singly.

Both approaches recognised the need to develop technical skills, but the MSWI approach related this to deepening understandings of music, while MVI related it to making good medium-longer-term progress. MSWI viewed success as learners having a basic knowledge of notation as appropriate to their stage of development possibly including but not restricted to staff notation, while MVI indicated that appropriate notation for the instrument should be learned. MSWI approaches saw success in terms of the realisation of the long-term nature of musical learning, while MVI included singing activities which supported musical learning. Overall, the quality of teaching was identified as important including the curriculum, the musical activities, the teaching and learning. The report also indicated that support from host schools was the most significant success feature.

The aim of the research reported here was to further contribute to establishing what contributes to the success of WCET. The specific research question was: what factors contribute towards successful outcomes of WCET?

## Methods

**Stage 1:** Providers of WCET, which were members of Music Mark (the professional body representing MEHs in England), were invited to submit proposals for individual instrumental teachers to be included in the research with a view to their teaching being observed and subsequently video-recorded. Providers were asked to set out the key elements of their programme which they believed contributed to its success and details about the length of the programme, whether it was part of a carousel, the length of lessons, whether whole or part classes were taught, the instruments taught and which

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**Table 1.** Summary of Submissions

| Geographical area | Providers submitting proposals representative of total member Music Services/Lead organisations of Music Education Hubs (%) | Providers submitting proposals | Number of teaching observations offered |
|---|---|---|---|
| Channel Islands | 100 | 1 | 1 |
| East of England | 22 | 2 | 6 |
| East Midlands | 33 | 2 | 3 |
| London | 55 | 16 | 16 |
| North East | 25 | 2 | 3 |
| North West | 26 | 6 | 12 |
| South East | 31 | 4 | 5 |
| South West | 40 | 4 | 3 |
| West Midlands | 21 | 3 | 3 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 13 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | | 42 | 54 |

teachers were involved in the teaching. Information was also requested about the opportunities that pupils had for performance.

**Submissions:** Table 1 sets out the number of providers making submissions and the number of submissions made by geographical area.

**Selection of teaching to be observed:** On the basis of the submitted information the research steering group (made up of members of Music Mark) proposed that visits be undertaken to 22 schools where the instrumental teaching would be observed. Submissions were graded by the steering group from 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest score based on the features of the programme which were perceived to make it successful and responses to questions about the programme. Grades were based on:

- how the programme took account of pupils' prior musical experience;
- whether musical expectations were high and beyond those normally achieved through good classroom music provision;
- the extent to which the programme offered differentiated learning;
- the extent to which the programme facilitated progression;
- how the programme supported pupils to make informed choices about their current and future music making; and
- the extent to which there were performance opportunities.

The final decision on which programmes to visit also took account of the balance of instruments, length of programme and how the programme was delivered.

**Stage 2:** Twenty-two visits were made to schools where the instrumental teaching was deemed to represent 'good' practice by their provider. The visits included:

- discussion with the head teacher or other member of the senior management team about how the programme contributed to the school in terms of the musical development of the children and staff and any challenges that they faced.
- discussion with the teacher(s) about the aims for the programme and for the session.

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— observation of the teaching session(s). Detailed notes were taken about the content of the session.
— follow-up discussion with the teacher(s).
— discussion or email contact with the lead provider to explore what they believed were the factors contributing to the success of the programme, how they assessed success and the challenges that they faced.

**Analysis of data:** The detailed accounts of the teaching were summarised and key exemplary features identified. The information gathered from MEH leaders, school senior managers and pupils was analysed by identifying emerging themes in a process set out by Cooper and McIntyre (1993).

## The findings

### *Criteria for success*

Overwhelmingly, providers assessed their success in terms of the musical progress of the children. Also important were feedback from schools and continuation rates. Some providers mentioned the level of pupil involvement in extracurricular activities in the school; schools wishing to continue with the WCET programme; children having fun, being involved and enjoying the lessons; feedback from parents; the number of children joining MEH ensembles; quality assurance of lesson feedback to each teacher; performance opportunities; and feedback from pupils.

A number of themes emerged as contributing to programme success. These were partnership working between providers and schools; the quality of the provision, including teaching and learning; opportunities for performance; and progression routes. Many of these are applicable to good music teaching generally, but these have emerged specifically from this WCET research.

### *Partnership working between providers and individual schools*

Several themes emerged in relation to partnership working. These are set out next.

**Support from the senior management team:** The evidence from the school visits and providers clearly showed the importance of the commitment of the school senior management team to the success of the music programme: 'It is essential that the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved are fully understood and that the aims of first access are clear. It is therefore vital that the programme has the full support of the head teacher who will oversee the delivery, ensuring that staff at every level are aware of the outcomes and the benefits that will be gained by their full involvement.'

**Involvement of school staff and professional development opportunities for them:** All of the programmes visited provided opportunities for teachers and TAs to learn to play the instruments. Some took up this opportunity. There were examples of school staff taking rehearsals or holding 'clinics' during the week. Most class teachers were present during the lessons and offered support to children who were experiencing difficulties. In some cases, they supported the teacher by dealing with minor issues with instruments, for instance, dealing with sticking valves.

**Flexibility to meet the needs of schools:** Providers had a wide range of programmes to offer schools. These varied in terms of the year groups taught, the length of lessons, the length of the programme as a whole and the size of groups. Many providers had negotiated with schools a programme that covered more than 1-year group (see Hallam (2016) for more details). Some programmes offered a carousel of instruments, some focused on an individual instrument, for example, cornet, violin, Djembe drumming, guitar, ukulele, while others combined a range of percussion instruments in samba groups or steel pan groups. Several offered a 'band' approach where there were a mix of instruments, strings, brass, woodwind and brass. Recorder, tin whistle,

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ocarina or fife tended to be offered in Year 3 in preparation for learning other instruments in later-school years. Overall, providers recognised that they needed to develop programmes that offered what schools wanted.

**Complementing existing provision and the musical life of schools:** All of the providers offered the opportunity for children to continue their musical education with small group or individual instrumental tuition. In some MEHs, extension or elective groups were offered where larger groups continued tuition. In some cases, children had already begun to play instruments through the provider's services or private tuition. This issue was addressed in different ways, for example, existing instrumentalists being encouraged to support other learners or having the opportunity to learn a different instrument. In most of the schools visited there were a range of musical groups on offer for the children to join. Sometimes these were directly related to the WCET programme. In other cases, they were complementary to it. Groups offered included choirs, bands, orchestras, ukulele clubs and recorder groups.

**Musical learning prior to the commencement of WCET:** Musical learning prior to learning to WCET was seen to be hugely important, including learning the recorder, ocarina or tin whistle. This allowed instrumental teachers to focus on practical instrumental skills as many of the core aspects of musicianship were already firmly embedded.

### *The quality of the provision*

The themes emerging in relation to the quality of provision are set out next.

**The development of general music skills:** There was variability in the extent to which the WCET programmes emphasised whether the tuition met the National Curriculum requirements for the key stage, or was more concerned with the development of general musical skills. At one extreme providers argued that the main purpose of the programme was to meet Key Stage 2 National Curriculum requirements for music, while others had broader aims. Some providers had developed very detailed curricula guidance for tutors including the sequence of lessons, suggested repertoire, suggested activities, performance/instrument skills, core musical skills and outcomes/assessment for each half-term. The classroom observations indicated that all of the programmes met the requirements of the National Curriculum for music, although the extent to which these were made explicit varied. In some classes, particular attention was given to children learning terminology and understanding the meaning of musical concepts, for example, pitch, pulse, rhythm, dynamics. One teacher had devised a song which illustrated them. Another teacher introduced 3/4, 4/4 and 5/4 time, contextualising the music the children were learning to play in musical history teaching about Mozart, Beethoven and Holst and the musical historical periods in which they were composing. Other children were taught and showed extensive knowledge of Italian musical terms. In some classes, teachers placed less overt emphasis on the learning of particular concepts but referred to them as they rehearsed the music to be performed. In all cases it was clear that the children had an understanding of basic musical concepts.

Much of the learning was based on playing by ear. Despite this there was huge variation in the extent to which the children were asked to listen and focus on what they were listening to.

There were many examples of the development of children's musical memory through the use of complex rhythm and pitch games.

There was extensive use of singing. In some cases, children had learned to sing songs which were not directly related to their learning of the instrument. In other cases, singing was used to assist in learning new music, sometimes with note names as the lyrics. There was little feedback about the quality of the singing per se. Teachers frequently accompanied the singing with movements some of which were complex. The place and purpose of singing varies between WCET contexts and also between teachers. It may prove fruitful to think more about what the teaching and learning points are that singing is being used to instance or underscore in WCET programmes.

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**Specific instrumental skills:** There was wide variation in the time spent on the teaching of specific instrumental skills and on particular activities. For instance, warm-up exercises were carried out in some cases for 2 or 3 min and in others for as long as 15 min. In some cases, most attention was focused on playing pieces of music, while in others the majority of time was spent on exercises.

Most teachers adopted highly effective rehearsal techniques, breaking the music into smaller sections, getting the children to play them slowly and then speed up, finally, joining the sections together. There was much constructive feedback and praise for the children as they improved. There was variability in the extent to which praise was based on the children simply having learned to sing or play a new piece of music or on improvement in the quality of their performance.

One of the key differences in teaching was in terms of expectations of what could be achieved; in many ways this relates to the MVI/MSWI categorisations described earlier. Expectations varied between those teaching the same instruments and were substantial, from children learning to play one or two notes to a whole octave in the same time period. In one intense programme, the expectation for all the Year 4 children was that after 6 weeks they would be able to play five pitch notes comfortably as a minimum. Repertoire for wind and brass players was developed to support this. In some programmes children were expected to achieve this only after a whole year. In one programme, trumpet and cornet-specific outcomes for half a year were that most pupils would be able to play up to eight notes from low C; read staff notation, for example, pitch (octave ascending beginning on low c) and rhythm (quavers, crotchets, minims, semibreves with corresponding rests), ties and slurs; and perform with appropriate levels of expression (i.e. dynamic contrasts).

In most of the schools visited the children were not allowed to take the instruments home to practise and there was no provision for them to practise at school. There were exceptions where children were encouraged to practice at home and use Charanga software (https://charanga.com/site/) for extension activities. In some cases, teachers gave pupils a few moments to carry out individual practice or work in pairs in lessons to learn a new technique. Some teachers also encouraged mental practice, silently rehearsing fingerings while others were playing.

**Creative skills:** There was evidence of creative music making. In one case, the children composed a piece in small group work with the teacher integrating the parts and notating them. In another, the children composed an accompaniment to a short set of lyrics presented by the teacher working in groups and then playing their composition to the rest of the class. In another example, the children had worked on composing a sound track to accompany a film with a recording studio created within the classroom.

There were many examples of improvisation. Some of these were framed in terms of each child playing his or her 'name' and some information about himself or herself, rhythmically, although there were some examples where pitch was also used. The most successful improvisations were where the teacher provided guidance and boundaries for the children. This supported the development of musically meaningful, rather than simply 'random notes' improvisations.

**Musical literacy:** All of the children learnt to play by ear with an emphasis in all lessons on the sound of the music being the basis for learning. The children imitated the teacher in warm ups, copying pitch and rhythm. There was variability in the focus on reading traditional musical notation. In the early stages of developing musical literacy there tended to be a focus on reading rhythmic notation rather than pitch. In most observations children were familiar with note values and names and rests and were able to play these in time with a backing track or within the group. In one Year 3 pre WCET class where the children were being taught basic music skills and to play the recorder, they read and sang rhythmic patterns from a moving white board presentation singing a single bar pattern while the next one which was different was displayed. They demonstrated considerable skill at reading one bar ahead remembering the previous rhythm while a new one was presented.

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**High-quality teaching:** The observations revealed a range of factors which affected the quality of teaching. Although made in the context of this research, these are points which can be readily transferred to high-quality music teaching in other settings too.

***Pace of teaching:*** The pace of teaching varied between teachers. A faster pace with activities linking swiftly one with another meant that the children remained focused. Sometimes when the pace was laboured the children lost focus, and although there was no poor behaviour they lost concentration. As one provider indicated, it is important 'to make the sessions as varied and as enjoyable as possible keeping the lesson moving on with good pace.'

***Quality of performance and constructive feedback:*** There was variability in the extent to which teachers attempted to improve the performance of particular exercises or pieces of music. Some provided extensive constructive feedback indicating how the children could improve, for instance, focusing on the length of notes, pitch, balance. There was less constructive feedback in relation to singing. This seemed to be used as a vehicle for learning the sounds of a new piece and its notation. Where the singing activity was unrelated to the learning of a new piece of music, constructive feedback was not given in relation to the quality of the singing per se.

***Balance between teacher talk and children making music*:** Teachers tended not to spend a major proportion of the lesson time talking. Question-and-answer sessions in most cases were short and to the point, and the children were focused. Where these episodes were long with little time for making music, the children became restless.

***Making music as opposed to doing exercises:*** The children clearly derived most enjoyment from playing pieces of music. Where exercises were deemed to be important, the most successful teachers gave them interesting labels and made them fun. Successful lessons typically included the playing of well-known music, pieces which required improvement and new pieces which offered challenge, although there was variation in relation to this depending on whether concerts were imminent.

***Teacher demonstration:*** Teachers used demonstration much of the time. This was in relation to clapping or doing other movements in relation to rhythm exercises, singing new pieces to be learned and demonstrating on their instruments.

***Rapport with the children:*** All of the staff had good rapport with the children. In some cases, there was evidence of shared jokes and a strong team spirit. At no point in the observations was there any evidence of poor behaviour.

**Enjoyment and engagement of the children:** The observations and the conversations with the children left no doubt as to their level of enjoyment. Many indicated that it was the thing that they most enjoyed at school. The feedback received by providers from school staff and parents supported this with children indicating that the lessons were 'the best part of their week.' This enjoyment did not detract from their engagement and concentration which for the most part was total. Lapses occurred infrequently when the pace of the lesson slowed down or the teacher spent too long talking. In the periods of making music and engaging with musical exercises the children's focus was total.

**Assessing the development of musical skills:** All providers indicated that assessing children's progress was important.[2] The extent to which this was formalised varied. In some cases, pupil learning was assessed throughout the year in partnership with the class teacher through a process of continuous assessment. Some services had developed evidence-based assessment processes which gave schools a detailed account of what pupils had attained based on instrumental learning, singing, understanding and engagement. Some providers adopted levels to be attained in each term, for instance, Bronze – autumn term, achievable by all; Silver – most will achieve by end of programme; Gold – some will achieve. Some providers had developed online systems to track progress, while others had worked with graded examination awarding bodies to develop assessment systems. Several providers made use of Arts Award Discover and found this useful as a baseline assessment of pupil prior experience and learning. Facilitators often adapted their teaching as a result of reading the responses written by the pupils in the first homework activity.

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**Transferable skills:** Teachers (school and instrumental) and members of the senior management teams of schools commented on the non-musical outcomes for pupils. These included the confidence the children had gained through performance which transferred to other kinds of activities. Teachers also commented on the improved behaviour of the children. One head teacher indicated, 'the music enhances self-esteem and the children's presentation skills. The children learn a range of transferable skills.' In another school staff reported that 'the behaviour, focus, concentration and listening abilities of the class have vastly improved as a result, meaning all round benefits to the other subjects taught'. The confidence of the children had improved, and there were cross curricular benefits.

**Differentiation:** Differentiation was approached in several ways. Some providers arranged parts to provide easy and more difficult tasks. This was observed to be a very effective way of differentiating. Sectional rehearsals in two programmes enabled more individual attention for pupils. One provider used band arrangements with multi levels of difficulty, while small-group sessions were viewed as particularly helpful to gauge ability and adapt approaches to support the children effectively. This applied whether the children had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and required extra help or were more advanced and need stretching. In most classes observed, TAs offered support to children with SEND. In one observed lesson, there was a child who was an elective mute. He had begun to sing with the other children in some sessions but when he did not wish to engage in this way he was given a percussion instrument to play. Other class teachers reported that elective mutes engaged with singing activities. In several schools, head teachers commented that WCET enabled all children to participate and achieve whatever their academic attainment. WCET also enabled children with English as an additional language (EAL) to fully participate in lessons. This was particularly important for children newly arrived in England who had not yet acquired English language skills.

**Pupil choice:** Pupil choice was catered for in a range of different ways. This was sometimes in terms of the instrument played but also in terms of repertoire and opportunities for improvisation and composition. In a small number of programmes children had the opportunity to try different instruments and then select what they wanted to learn. Where there was no choice of initial instrument, the range of instruments available for further tuition was either demonstrated by staff, through videos, or through performances given by children already playing.

**Ensemble experiences:** The nature of the WCET provided all with ensemble experience. The extent to which this provided an authentic musical experience varied. Where WCET was delivered in some form of orchestra or band, the ensemble activity was authentic. Where single instruments were taught, the experience was frequently enhanced musically by the use of backing tracks which provided accompaniment. In the observations there were only two instances of the teacher playing the piano to accompany the children's musical activities.

**High-quality materials:** Many teachers made use of white boards and backing tracks in their teaching. They were skilled in doing so. The quality of these materials varied. The most successful seemed to be where teachers had developed materials themselves, for instance, a tutor book and flash cards. All teachers had developed complex rhythm and pitch games to support children in developing their general musical skills. Most had developed exercises to support the learning of technical skills.

Some teachers had created their own backing tracks which enabled them to meet the specific needs of their pupils. Where backing tracks were played with children learning brass instruments they were sometimes difficult to hear when the children were playing unless they were played at very high volume. Some providers made Charanga available to their teachers. This had the advantage of children being able to use it at home.

Where WCET was based on brass or windbands, staff frequently made their own arrangements as there was perceived to be a lack of appropriate resources, these facilitated differentiation and enabled authentic performance. Overall, teachers spent considerable time in preparation for

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lessons not only in developing materials but also arriving in sufficient time to set up the teaching environment, prepare instruments and music stands.

**Appropriate instrumental resources:** The instruments used to teach were generally of good quality, although there were examples where children had to share instruments in an unsatisfactory way. A challenge for teachers was carrying out small repairs during lessons while maintaining the musical activities. In some cases, class teachers or TAs had learned how to carry out small-scale maintenance. This was extremely efficient in terms of supporting the pace of the lesson.

**Enthusiastic and inspiring teachers:** The observed teachers were enthusiastic and inspiring. Senior staff in schools indicated that the personal qualities and professional skills of the teacher were crucial to the success of the programme. Particularly important were the rapport that the teacher developed with the students and the expectations that they had of them which led to high standards of performance. One head teacher commented, 'The lessons are run with professionalism, rigor and joy. The children's high energy and concentration during lessons reflects the high quality of the teaching and learning. There is much enthusiasm about music in the school and children are keen to perform whenever they are able.'

**Quality assurance:** Several providers indicated that they had training programmes for new staff who were inducted into WCET through an apprenticeship model where they worked with an experienced teacher before teaching alone.

Several providers undertook monitoring visits to ensure the quality of teaching and providers indicated that they used feedback from schools in their evaluation processes.

## Opportunities for performance

All of the programmes recognised the importance of performance and almost all offered performance opportunities within the school where the programme was implemented. This was frequently in the context of school assemblies, concerts or specific festivals. However, there was variability in the extent of the opportunities available with some children performing very frequently, while for others performance was typically only once or twice a year. About a quarter of children were able to participate in ensembles with other local primary schools and sometimes secondary schools, while over half of the responding providers organised mass events, frequently in prestigious environments, for children participating in WCET.

## Progression routes following the WCET programme

The reporting of continuation rates following WCET was sensitive and contentious. The use of continuation rates has been a way in which centralised measures of success have reported via MEH data returns to Arts Council England. The percentage continuation rates that were reported varied from 15% to 100%. Where schools were paying for whole-class tuition to continue beyond WCET continuation rates could be reported as 100%. In some programmes, elective groups continued in schools beyond WCET and frequently included high numbers of students. Other providers reported assessing continuation by the number of children taking small-group lessons, which may have included children who might already have been playing prior to the WCET Programme. Informal learning, through the internet and children learning with peers, was not taken into account, even when high proportions of children had bought their own instruments following the programme. This has ramifications for the ways in which continuation rates are used as a success measure, and would point to this warranting possible revisiting centrally.

Some providers had recognised that continuation, in whatever form, required opportunities to be available which provided a smooth transition from what was essentially a school-based class activity to one where the children were developing an identity as a musician and music was becoming part of their social life. Provision for transition took several forms. In some cases, there

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were ensemble opportunities in provider music centres either run on Saturdays or after school. Ensembles had been set up for those who had limited expertise on their instruments, at the kind of levels expected at the end of the WCET experience. In some cases, these ensembles were free for the first term. In some cases, continuation ensembles were based on groups of local schools, mainly primary but sometimes with secondary schools. This provided a bridge between school-based activities and the wider music centre opportunities which were at a more advanced level. One provider, exploring why continuation rates for one instrument were lower than others, realised that there were no ensemble opportunities for this instrument. This was rectified and continuation rates improved.

Recognising the challenges of transition from primary to secondary school, some providers attempted to improve communication between schools and one allocated an adult mentor to each child to support them in their musical activities through the transition period.

Some providers arranged concerts where opportunities for progression were on display, for instance, high-level groups performing in the same concerts as WCET groups. This provided students with a clear view of what could be attained influencing aspirations. One provider held a weekend residential course immediately after the completion of WCET to encourage continuation. In other cases, groups of schools, located geographically near to each other, came together to play and perform. These groups sometimes consisted entirely of primary aged pupils, although sometimes secondary aged pupils were involved.

Providers and schools were aware of the financial constraints precluding some families from supporting their children to continue with small-group tuition. One school, in addition to using the Pupil Premium funding to support continuation, hired a class set of instruments (from the MEH) to make it more cost effective for children to continue. In another case instrument hire was free for the first 2 years. One provider gave a free trial of a term to beginner ensemble participants at music centres.

Some providers commented on the importance of children having the opportunity to see inspiring performances by professional musicians. In some cases, provider staff gave live performances or video recordings were provided to support pupils in selecting instruments. Children were also inspired by seeing and listening to more advanced children playing either within school or through large concerts arranged by the MEH. Teachers themselves were inspirational in terms of the demonstrations that they gave in class and by also playing with the children in solo roles in performances, sometimes improvising.

The issues faced by providers differed between rural and urban areas. Those in rural areas had to provide more local activities as music centres were often at some distance and difficult to access. All providers faced challenges in areas of social deprivation. Typically, schools with high numbers of parents from high socio-economic groups had high continuation rates. Where parents faced financial pressures ensuring continuation was more problematic and often relied on the school being prepared to finance it.

The support of parents in relation to continuation was stressed by providers. Those providers in areas of social deprivation faced particular challenges in this respect. In these areas, the most successful strategy for continuation was demonstrating the value of WCET in terms of the children's overall development and confidence. This encouraged schools to pay for WCET to be provided throughout the school.

## Challenges identified by providers and schools

Providers raised a number of challenges in relation to providing WCET. For the schools visited, the only challenge was finance. The concern about finance was shared by providers. Other concerns included:

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— the extent to which schools were committed to the programme;
— communication with schools;
— timetabling;
— cost of providing and maintaining instruments;
— the appropriateness of teaching accommodation;
— staffing issues (hourly paid contracts, self-employment, difficulty replacing staff, difficulty in delivering CPD, recruitment of staff with the skills to teach WCET); and
— maintaining high continuation rates.

## Discussion

Although there are limitations to this research, it was able to illustrate that WCET can be successful in engaging children with music making, enhancing their musical skills and promoting their personal development. The most common success criterion against which providers assessed their performance was the musical progress of the children. Feedback from schools and continuation rates (whether through tuition or ensemble participation) were also taken into account. The themes which emerged from the research reflected these criteria: partnership working between providers and schools; the quality of the provision; opportunities for performance; and progression routes.

A key element for success was the partnership developed with the senior management team and staff in the school. Since the instigation of the programme, there have been many changes in education policy more generally. More schools have become academies, the role of local authorities has diminished and the pressures on schools to deliver challenging attainment targets and meet Ofsted requirements have increased. What were then in the main Local Authority Music Services have become parts of or leaders of MEHs and providers rely on funding from schools, parents and that provided by the Department for Education which is managed by the Arts Council England. Schools now have increased levels of autonomy which can present challenges for the delivery of WCET. Providers have recognised that in this new climate they need to be more flexible in their offer to schools to meet their needs. Alongside this, they have recognised that it is crucial to have good relationships with schools. Without the support of senior staff any initiative, musical or otherwise, is doomed to failure. Ensuring this support was seen to be the greatest challenge by providers.

WCET provides the starting point for many children to learn to play an instrument. To motivate and inspire them to continue engaging with music beyond what is offered in school the quality of teaching needs to be high. WCET was more successful where pupils had prior experience of high-quality generalist music lessons prior to participation, frequently delivered by WCET teachers. All of the teachers observed were enthusiastic and committed to what they were doing spending much time in preparation of materials. They had excellent rehearsal techniques, good rapport with students and praised improvement. They offered opportunities for improvisation and composition. The areas which differentiated between teachers were their expectations of what the children could achieve and the overt emphasis they gave to meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. While teachers' levels of expectation clearly had an impact on the musical progress of the children, there was no evidence that meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum overtly was any more effective than them being integrated into the teaching covertly. These differences, as those identified by Fautley, Kinsella and Whittaker (2017), require further research.

Raising teacher's expectations of what can be achieved requires ongoing CPD. This presented challenges for some providers where staff were hourly paid or self-employed. Some providers reported difficulties in recruiting staff that were predisposed to engage with WCET and had the right qualities to do so. Some providers reported offering training, while others reported monitoring teaching quality. The latter was undertaken within the framework set by providers for the WCET curriculum which in some cases was focused on meeting the requirements of the

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National Curriculum rather than the development of broader musical and instrumental skills. There were also challenges in terms of the development of differentiated materials and other resources, for instance, backing tracks, although the teachers demonstrated considerable confidence in the use of technology.

Many of the benefits of WCET came from the opportunities that the children had for performance. All of the programmes recognised the value of performance, but there were considerable differences in the extent to which pupils had opportunities for performing in and out of school. Some hubs organised joint performances in prestigious venues for WCET programme participants where other more advanced ensembles also performed. These served to inspire pupils and broaden their horizons more generally. Performance was particularly important in engendering the support of parents. When the quality of performance was high, parents, even those not normally interested in their children's education, became engaged making it more likely that the children would continue playing. The importance of support from parents in the early stages of learning to play an instrument cannot be underestimated (Hallam et al., 2016). Massed events where many schools participate, perhaps in singing in a massed choir, offer opportunities for providers to demonstrate to school senior management teams what can be achieved. This can change attitudes and lead to greater commitment, which in turn, in some cases, can lead to more sympathetic resolutions to issues of timetabling, accommodation and communication.

For children to be able to continue playing an instrument accessible progression routes need to be available. While what constitutes continuation remains a contentious and sensitive issue, it is clear that high rates of continuation are possible where appropriate systems are in place. These include opportunities to continue tuition in whole, large, small or individual classes and a range of ensemble provision which children can engage with while participating in WCET or immediately after which seamlessly link with other higher-level ensembles. Issues of finance also need to be addressed for parents who cannot afford to pay.

To conclude, the findings of this research demonstrated that it is possible to implement WCET in ways that lead to high standards of instrumental playing and high continuation rates. To raise standards across the sector requires teachers to have high expectations of what can be achieved, while enhancing rates of continuation requires providers to have planned progression routes, with no gaps, which support children in making the transition from a class-based activity to one where they identify themselves as musicians and musical activities become a part of their social life outside school. The importance of high-quality performances in this process in ensuring the support of parents and schools cannot be overestimated.

## Notes

**1** LAs could offer both; hence total exceeds 100%.

**2** See also Fautley et al. this edition.

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