

Year 2, Unit 6 Overview

How Does Music Teach Us About Looking After Our Planet?

Exploring Improvisation

Introduction

In each unit, children are asked a question, intended as an entry point for exploring one of six broad **Social Themes**. These six themes are overlapping.

The exploration of each theme accompanies them on their musical journey throughout this Scheme, and hopefully beyond! As the learners grow, the questions and entry points for the Social Themes evolve. All the while, they are encouraged to be responsible and kind citizens of the world and constructive but critical thinkers. The unit question can be discussed throughout each unit up to and including the final unit performance.

Musically, students are constantly touching upon all key musical elements and skills, building upon these as they progress through each lesson, unit and year. As well as this, there is also a **Musical Spotlight** to each unit. This by no means indicates that there is only one musical aspect or concept being considered and developed – it just allows one chosen musical element, aspect or skill to come to the fore for contemplation, discussion and development, for the duration of that unit.

Unit 6 Social Theme

In this unit, we ask '**How Does Music Teach Us About Looking After Our Planet?**' as an entry point for the broad Social Theme of '**Music Is a Nature Lover and Guardian of the Earth**'. This is relevant to learning topics such as nature, environment, animals, geography, biology, art, outdoor education, the Forest School, climate change, environmental justice and other topics as you, the teacher, see fit.

More detail on this Social Theme and how it might be explored in the classroom can be found in the Social Themes Overview document, where you can find more description on:

- How music is a very natural aspect of humanity. As described in the texts introducing the other Social Themes of our curriculum, music is a primordial ancient characteristic of what it means to be human. Music is a natural phenomenon – it comes from nature: a natural resource!
- How, physically, all our instruments have come from the resources we have around us. The sound of musical instruments is the sound of human creativity manipulating and engaging with the materials and properties of the world around it.

- How, throughout the ages, musicians and music often copy or are inspired by the natural sounds around us.
- How nature can be considered as having other 'musics' (not just human music). Birdsong is one example. Recent research has shown that being able to hear and recognise more than around 20 bird calls is equivalent to a significant increase in salary, in terms of the increased sense of wellbeing it delivers. People are increasingly recognising the value of these other 'musics'.
- How music can play an active role in protecting our planet, either directly (eg in calling for change through song lyrics) or indirectly (eg in encouraging a love of nature by using instruments to copy natural sounds in a musical composition).
- How music, particularly the music industry, has some challenges to face itself, in terms of its own environmental and social impact. For example, streaming music has been shown to be at times the most environmentally damaging form of listening to music.

Social Theme: Cross-Curricular Links and Further Exploration and Inquiry

The descriptions above – on music and its relationship to nature and the earth – are intended to give teachers some ideas and direction as to potential cross-curricular opportunities and avenues for further thematic exploration beyond the songs, music and content encountered in this unit. Just as music is all-pervasive in society and our daily lives, we hope you find ways to tie it into all your learning, beyond the purely musical education offered by our curriculum.

The six Social Themes of the Charanga curriculum are all overlapping, but Unit 6 might overlap particularly well with discussions and learning at other times in the year during **Unit 3: How Does Music Make the World a Better Place? (Music Is a Changemaker)**.

Unit 6 Musical Spotlight

In this unit, the Musical Spotlight is '**Exploring Improvisation**'. You will be doing this in your classroom activities and discussions, while continuing to work implicitly with all the other Foundational Elements of Music as you go through the steps of the unit.

What is Improvisation?

Improvisation is a great way to create music that belongs to YOU, and to express your feelings and ideas.

When someone improvises, they make up their own tune that has never been heard before. It is not written down and therefore will never be heard again. If you write your improvisation down in any way, it becomes a composition and you can play it again with your friends. The music comes from inside the performer and belongs to them; it's not a question of doing it 'right' or 'wrong'. If the activity is set up properly within correct musical boundaries, children can only succeed.

One of the great things about improvising is that it is unplanned, unscripted and – as long as you stick to one or two rules – there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to go about it. In addition, it is something that belongs to NOW (not to tomorrow, not to yesterday), which means your playing can reflect exactly how you feel right now. In this way, it allows you to explore and express how you are feeling TODAY. Being in touch with your feelings in this creative way can be an important part of reacting to your day.

It is worth mentioning in the classroom that there are other ways to improvise, such as in drama/theatre/acting.

Connections Between the Musical Spotlight and the Social Theme

Many sounds in nature appear to be unplanned, a bit like improvisation. Some sounds that animals make can seem particularly musical to us. Try listening to some birdsong or whalesong recordings as a reminder. Do you think we can call this kind of sound ‘music’ or not? This is an interesting discussion to have in class.

Listen to a longer recording (a few minutes ideally) of a blackbird, robin or nightingale singing. Do the different birds sing the same kind of song? Can we call that music? What do you think the bird feels it is doing? If we can call it music, is it composed or improvised music? Or is it a bit of both?

If a bird might be musically improvising, what do you think that tells us about how intelligent it is? What does it tell us about its life or state of mind? Might it have feelings? Might it be expressing them in its singing? Many endangered species are protected and given extra attention by governments and people, to try to help them become more numerous again. If you think birds like these are playing or improvising music based on their feelings, is that another good reason to protect them, and to care for them and our natural environment?

Discussing such questions are useful for many reasons and can provoke interesting debates in class. They also link this unit’s highlighted topic for musical learning with its environmental Social Theme.

Further Exploration

It should be noted that improvisation does not come easily to all people, especially at first. Some feel more comfortable being able to plan and/or practise what they need to play, often working very hard to get it to a level at which they are happy to perform publicly. For others, improvisation might come more naturally, perhaps because they prefer spontaneity to premeditated creativity and action. This is one of the many ways in which music is different for each person, and an important factor to consider when thinking about differentiation in the music classroom. It is not unusual for a child who is very advanced on an instrument they learn individually at home to find improvisation as challenging as (or even more challenging than) children in the class who do not learn an instrument.

Song-Centred Entry Points of Learning

The entry point for both the Musical Spotlight and Social Theme of each unit is a collection of new weekly songs. The songs are the heart of each lesson's learning. The Musical Spotlight is 'lived and breathed' through the musical resources and activities; the Social Theme is provoked by a question which teachers can use to venture into lively inquiry, discussion, debate and learning, and also to link to any cross-thematic or cross-curricular educational opportunities that might arise.

Lessons and Learning in a Spiral Curriculum

As lessons progress through the units and year groups, the key learning is repeated, musical skills are reinforced and the learning deepens. Children quickly become familiar with the musical activities, through which they acquire new, or reinforce previous, musical knowledge and understanding.

To support intense and rapid learning, the musical activities are designed in one of two ways:

1. The activities can be a repeat of the previous week, in order to embed and rehearse key musical skills.
2. The activities can be a repeat of previous musical skills but have different content, in order to strengthen and apply previous musical learning.

As the children move through the Scheme, they acquire new knowledge and skills and deepen their understanding and application of previous learning. This spiral approach leads to deeper, more secure learning and musical mastery.

Differentiation

Music education is extremely relevant to multiple aspects of differentiation for learning.

This Scheme is developed with the express intention of supporting each educator to cater for the variety of individual learner-types as they normally would like to, but through a music education lens.

Throughout the Units of Work, you will find that the guidance, supporting documentation and structure of the lessons in the Charanga resources take care of many of the more musical details, while empowering you to think about and adapt to the needs of the students you are teaching. In most cases, these will be students you probably already know very well from a holistic, learning perspective. Therefore, with these supporting materials and your existing teaching skills, you should be able to deliver any Charanga music lesson in a way that caters appropriately for the diversity in your classroom.

More detail and guidance on differentiation in music education and in our curricula can be found in the **Curriculum Overview** documents.

Teaching the Lessons of This Unit

This six-week Unit of Work is aligned with the official National Curriculum for Music and the non-statutory Model Music Curriculum Guidance published by the DfE in 2021. It is clearly sequenced with high musical expectations that give all children the opportunity to learn about, enjoy and explore music.

It meets all the required standards, skills and knowledge needed for a full, holistic music education.

This unit sets out sequences of learning around a song in key musical areas which, over time, all contribute towards the steadily increasing development of musicianship:

- Listening
- Singing
- Playing
- Improvising and Composing
- Performing

Supporting Documentation for This Unit

Lesson Documentation:

1. A full lesson plan including:
 - The musical features to be learnt
 - A summary of each activity
 - A learning focus for each activity
 - Knowledge and skills for each activity

A brief lesson plan including:

- The lesson structure
- A learning focus for each activity

2. A Listen and Respond Guide for each lesson

Unit Documentation:

1. An Understanding Music Guide
2. Assessment documentation including:
 - Teacher Assessment
 - Knowledge Organisers
 - Music Passports

Year Documentation:

1. A Key Stage 1 Guide
2. Year 2 Musical Progression
3. Year 2 Theory Guide
4. Glossary

The Unit Structure

Activity 1: Musicianship Options

Activity 2: Listening

Activity 3: Singing

Activity 4: Playing

Activity 5: Composing and Improvising

Activity 6: Performing

The Unit Structure Explained

- Steps 1–6 feature different songs with accompanying musical activities.
- Steps 1–6 include a Listen and Respond activity related to the song being learnt, and in Step 6 an extra Listen and Respond activity is included for assessment purposes.
- Step 6 is an ‘Assessment Checkpoint’ week. Teachers have the option of delivering a standard music lesson, or having the children complete some, or all, of the assessment tasks. Please refer to the **Assessment** documentation provided.

Activity Descriptions

Activity 1: Musicianship Options

As a class, complete the Understanding Music activity in each step. The musical learning in Understanding Music is central to each unit, so please use Improvise Together as an optional activity for variation and enrichment.

Understanding Music

This activity supports students in their understanding of duration, pulse, rhythm and pitch. It is designed to bring everyone together at the beginning of the lesson to learn, embed or revisit the music theory required for the year. The musical content and progression of each Understanding Music Activity can also be viewed in your **Understanding Music Guide**.

The Musical Features in the Understanding Music Activity for This Unit:

Tempo: 100 bpm (beats per minute = tempo)

Time signature: 3/4 (three crotchet beats in every bar)

Key signature: C major

Rhythmic patterns using: Minims, crotchets and quavers

Melodic patterns using: C and G

Improvise Together

This activity gives the children an opportunity to practise improvising together. There isn't an improvise activity connected to every song, so this can be used as an option. Here, they can practise their ideas together over a backing track. You can take it in turns to play when looping the track.

The Musical Features in the Improvise Together Activity for This Unit:

Time signature: 2/4 (two crotchet beats in every bar)

Key signature: G major

The children can use the notes: G, A and B or G, A, B, C and D

Activity 2: Listening

Listen and Respond

In this Unit, the children will listen and respond to the following:

- Step 1:** The Sunshine Song by Joanna Mangona and Pete Readman
- Step 2:** No More Dinosaur by Chris Madin
- Step 3:** Four White Horses by Unknown
- Step 4:** Que Llueva, Que Llueva by Unknown
- Step 5:** Down By The Bay by Unknown

This content-rich, interactive activity explores the impact that music can have on us, its design and cultural place; contextualising the music your students will listen to. Accompanying each lesson plan is a **Listen and Respond Guide**, with all the research and information that is needed for the children to complete the tasks and activities you and they will see on-screen.

Each subsequent musical activity that follows Listen and Respond reinforces the learning for musical knowledge and skills that culminate in a performance.

The Listen and Respond Activity has three on-screen interactive tabs to work through:

1. Listen

This section introduces the music. Let the children listen and make an immediate response to the questions provided. A second listening will enable the class to talk about their answers and make the same or different responses.

2. Respond

The questions in this section begin to draw attention to expressive concepts: dynamics, tempo, texture and articulation. The questions require the children to listen with care to the music and identify the expressive qualities, and how these are being used by the composer and performers to communicate what they intended. It is important to talk to the children about the opportunities they have to use expressive qualities, eg when they sing or play loudly and quietly, or when the steady beat gets faster and slower.

3. Did You Know?

This question provides some further information about the music or its composer, or how the song connects with another subject in the curriculum.

Teachers should encourage the children to listen, move, dance, march and enjoy the music. You can use the on-screen prompts to encourage them to talk about the music, how it makes them feel and why, and musical concepts such as beat, tempo and dynamics. 'Did You Know?' will enable you to explore the song's musical, cross-curricular, historical or cultural connections with them.

Activity 3: Singing

Learn to Sing the Song

You will have warmed up your voices in Understanding Music.

On the screen, you will have the option to break the song down into manageable learning sections. Add clapping and movement in the relevant sections and have fun!

There is an option to follow the score if you wish to see the notated version.

Unit 6 Songs to Be Learnt:

- **Song 1** – The Sunshine Song by Joanna Mangona and Pete Readman
- **Song 2** – Four White Horses by Unknown
- **Song 3** – Down By The Bay by Unknown

Activity 4: Playing

Play Your Instruments with the Song

Use the **Musical Progression** document for guidance as to which notes to use.

On the screen, you will see animated glockenspiels playing differentiated parts. The sheet music is available, but learning by ear at this stage is important – a ‘sound before symbol’ approach.

Instrumental parts are available for the following songs in this unit ([this colour denotes deeper learning](#)):

- **Step 1** – The Sunshine Song by Joanna Mangona and Pete Readman
- **Step 3** – Four White Horses by Unknown

These are the notes you will be using on glockenspiel or recorder. There are two differentiated parts; Part 1 is the hardest:

| Songs | Instrumental Notes | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| | Part 1 | Part 2 |
| The Sunshine Song (Glockenspiel) 4/4, C major, 124 bpm | C, D, E, F (Crotchets, quavers) | C, D, E, F (Crotchets) |
| (Recorder) | G, A, B, C (Crotchets, quavers) | G, A, B, C (Crotchets) |
| Four White Horses (Glockenspiel) 4/4, G major, 138 bpm | G, A, B, D, E, F# (Minims, crotchets, quavers) | G, A, D, E, F# (Minims, crotchets) |
| (Recorder) | G, A, B (Crotchets) | G, A, B (Crotchets) |

Children learn a differentiated instrumental part by ear or from notation. The **Musical Progression** document for Year 2 outlines which songs include instrumental parts, the note ranges and their progression.

There are two differentiated parts available for each instrument; Part 1 is the harder part. Some of these parts are challenging, so choose the parts suitable for your class – their skills will build over time.

Activity 5: Improvising

Use the **Musical Progression** document for guidance as to which notes to use.

Think about the differences between improvising and composing.

When someone improvises, they make up their own tune that has never been heard before. It is not written down and therefore will never be heard again. If you write your improvisation down in any way, it becomes a composition and you can play it again with your friends. The music comes from inside the performer and belongs to them; it's not a question of doing it 'right' or 'wrong'. If the activity is set up properly within correct musical boundaries, children can only succeed.

There are two songs in this unit to improvise with, plus an additional opportunity in the *Improvise Together* app. As the Musical Spotlight for this unit is '**Exploring Improvisation**', the usual additional composition activities have been omitted, so that the children can focus all of their creative energies on improvisation.

Improvisation

In every unit, there is an opportunity for improvisation and for the children to express themselves. Each week, there is an option within 'Musicianship' to 'Improvise Together' (see above), and with some songs, the children will also 'Improvise with the Song.'

You can improvise all together, in groups or as a solo – you decide. If the children are complete beginners to improvisation, they can use their voices or clap (rhythmic improvisation). Then, they can use one note and progress to two and three notes only when they are ready. Always start the improvisation with note one of the given sequence.

You will be improvising with three notes (see the relevant **Musical Progression** documents) ([this colour denotes deeper learning](#)):

| Songs | Improvising |
|--|-------------|
| | 3 notes |
| The Sunshine Song 4/4, C major, 124 bpm | C, D, E |
| Four White Horses 4/4, G major, 138 bpm | C, G, A |

Activity 6: Performing

Perform with the Song

Perform and share the learning that has taken place in each lesson and at the end of the unit.

Here, you have the opportunity to share the fun you had in the lesson. You can sing and add any of the musical activities you have practised with the song/s. Create and present a holistic performance. This will be a short performance for sharing at the end of the lesson. As a class, you can perform at any time to an audience. You might decide to organise a special concert at a different time. Talk together with the children about each element of the lesson/s and what they would like to perform. Share thoughts and feelings.

It's a good idea to record your 'end of lesson' sharing as part of the **formative assessment** process. You will have the option to revisit and perform a song/songs of your choice in Step 6 as part of the **summative assessment** process. Talk about the progress that has been made.

Performing is and should be a wonderful and joyful experience for everyone. It is important for children to learn how to behave when performing and when they are part of an audience. Both are important, and both have a history of custom and practice in different venues, and for different occasions. For some, performing music will become a key part of musicianship. For everyone, regular performance experience and attention to basic performing etiquette enable children to become happy, confident performers who feel at ease participating as part of an audience for other performers.

Activity 7: Quiz (Step 6)

Theory Quiz (Step 6 only, end of each unit)

This theory quiz summarises all of the musical learning that has taken place in the unit. There is also a more summative, general quiz for the entire year at the end of Unit 6. Each quiz has a different number of questions and can be used to suit lesson pacing and scheduling appropriately. Each question is multiple-choice and allows you to select the correct answer before moving on.

End of Year Quiz (Unit 6, Step 6 only, end of each year)

This theory quiz summarises all of the musical learning that has taken place in the year. Each quiz has a different number of questions and can be used to suit lesson pacing and scheduling appropriately. Each question is multiple-choice and allows you to select the correct answer before moving on.

Unit Summary

| Step | Activity 1: Musicianship Options | Activity 2: Listen and Respond | Activity 3: Singing | Activity 4: Playing | Activity 5: Improvising | Activity 6: Performing |
|------|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|--|
| 1 | Option 1 Understanding Music Option 2 Improvise Together | The Sunshine Song | The Sunshine Song | Play instrumental parts | N/A | Perform and share what has taken place in the lesson |
| 2 | Option 1 Understanding Music Option 2 Improvise Together | No More Dinosaur | The Sunshine Song | N/A | Options: - Improvise Together - Improvise with the Song | Perform and share what has taken place in the lesson |
| 3 | Option 1 Understanding Music Option 2 Improvise Together | Four White Horses | Four White Horses | Play instrumental parts | N/A | Perform and share what has taken place in the lesson |
| 4 | Option 1 Understanding Music Option 2 Improvise Together | Que Llueva, Que Llueva | Four White Horses | N/A | Options: - Improvise Together - Improvise with the Song | Perform and share what has taken place in the lesson |
| 5 | Option 1 Understanding Music Option 2 Improvise Together | Down By The Bay | Down By The Bay | N/A | N/A | Perform and share what has taken place in the lesson |
| 6 | Option 1 Understanding Music Option 2 Improvise Together Option 3 Theory Quiz (End of Unit and End of Year) | No More Dinosaur | Revisit a song of your choice | Play instrumental parts with your chosen song, if available | Option to revisit Improvise activities | Perform and share what has taken place in the lesson and prepare for a concert |