

# THE INCLUSIVE MUSIC LESSON: A POCKET GUIDE

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

**Inclusion** is all about removing barriers, taking steps to create equality, harness diversity and produce safe, welcoming communities and cultures that encourage innovative and fresh ways of thinking.

**Diversity** is about recognising, respecting, and valuing the differences between people and groups of people which makes them unique.

Diversity is a part of inclusion. In a safe, welcoming community or space everyone should feel valued, recognised and included.

### WHY DOES INCLUSION MATTER?

- Students feel seen, more relaxed, and comfortable in their lessons
- Promotes higher retention rates
- Creates opportunities for greater creativity and exchange of ideas



## HOW TO BRING INCLUSION INTO THE MUSIC LESSON:

**Don't make assumptions and be aware of microaggressions.**

**Interrogate your resources.**

When teaching music or material from another culture, respect it, do your research, and avoid tokenism. Just because a piece is in a well-known book or in the exam syllabus, doesn't mean that it is free of harmful stereotypes or a history of prejudice and discrimination.

**Be representative with resources and repertoire.**

Get creative, incorporate music from different genres and cultures. Can you suggest listening examples by artists from a range of diverse identities and backgrounds?

**Be aware of bias.**

In a group lesson are you calling on all children and genders equally? Keep records or use popsicle sticks to make sure that everyone has a chance to participate as well as lead.

**Make space for Youth Voice in the lesson.**

Give choices about the order in which you cover musical activities. Allow students to choose their own repertoire at least some of the time. Ask the student to lead their learning in the lesson. Often the best teaching strategies are already the most inclusive!

## Engage with students' pre-existing musical identities.

It is likely that each student has a personal relationship with music before they learn to play their first note. Discover who a student is as an individual. Find out how they identify, their interests and cultural background if they are willing to share. Ask what music they listen to at home and enquire about favourite pieces. Other top tips: share your musical identity and exchange favourite pieces to build relationships with students. Blue Peter Music Badges are a great place to start with younger learners

## INCLUSION AND ADDITIONAL NEEDS

**Additional Needs** is person centred positive language that broadly covers a wide range of disability, special educational needs and neurodivergence.

**Special Educational Need** is a legal definition that refers to children with learning challenges that make it more difficult for them to learn than most children their age. They may have challenges with schoolwork, communication or behaviour.



**A Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)** is the person in a school whose job it is to ensure that students at risk of being left behind academically have the necessary support to continue learning at a similar pace to their peers. Every school will have a SENCO, find out who it is where you teach.

MMF will let you know if we have information about a student's additional needs. However, MMF might not hold this information in some contexts: if the lesson is taking place in a school or the parent has failed to inform us of existing needs or a new diagnosis.



## TIPS FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO HAVE ADDITIONAL NEEDS:

Contact a new student's parents prior to the first lesson. Introduce yourself and ask if the student has additional needs. Are there any strategies that you should know about or things you can do to make the lesson more comfortable? This strategy has the bonus of helping students who are anxious.

If you teach in a school, ask at the office if any of your students are registered as having Special Educational Needs. If they do, make time to speak by phone or in person with the school's SENCO. The SENCO is there to help!

Focusing on a diagnosis, as a label, can sometimes get in the way of seeing what a student is capable of. Try and focus on what a student can do!



**Remember:**

**Inclusion isn't a destination, it's a journey and state of mind. Interrogate your assumptions, resources, and repertoire.**

Join the discussion: [inclusion@mmf.org.uk](mailto:inclusion@mmf.org.uk)