

‘SOUND IDEAS’

MMF Primary Music Programme

Teachers’ Tips KS1 & 2 – Developing general musical skills through teaching a song

The 7 musical elements (or ‘dimensions’) are:

- Duration (incorporating rhythm and pulse)
- Tempo
- Pitch
- Dynamics
- Timbre
- Texture
- Structure

Use of the strategies below will help to develop pupils’ general musicianship skills and understanding in addition to supporting vocal development.

- Use **Kodaly hand signs** and **pitch names** to denote **degrees of pitch** and reinforce aurally the relationship between one pitch and another within a pitch group.
- Use the sung phrase ‘**Off we go**’ to set both the desired **starting pitch** and **speed of the pulse (tempo)**. Use your thinking voice or sing quietly to set the pitch of ‘doh’, then sing up the scale (d-r-m-f-s-l etc) to find the correct starting pitch – the note on which the song begins.
- Sing certain phrases of the song and mark the others using hand signs and internal ‘**thinking**’ voice. This helps greatly in improving **pitch-matching**.
e.g. Teacher sings Phrase A, pupils sign Phrase B
All sing Phrase A, then sign Phrase B
All sing and sign Phrase A, mark Phrase B with thinking voice
- Use an **arch movement** with the lower arm to mark the **number of phrases** within a song. Hold right elbow with left hand. Move right hand up and across in an arch-shape (like a rainbow) towards the right to mark Phrase 1, then back towards the left for Phrase 2 etc. This helps to highlight **structure**, to sing with a sense of musical ‘direction’, with some phrases ‘setting out’ and others ‘returning’. It also promotes the use of 1 breath per melodic phrase.
- Compare **phrase lengths** – are some longer than others or are they all of equal length? Do this by tapping knees to count the number of pulse beats in each phrase. This also has a link with **structure**.

- **Marking pulse and rhythm differently** offers pupils both a visual and aural clue to help them **distinguish pulse from rhythm** and understand the relationship between them. **Tap knees** to mark the **pulse** beat - the steady, regular 'heartbeat' of the music. Use two fingers tapped on palm of hand to denote the **rhythm** (rhythm of a song is the pattern of sound and silence organised according to the word syllables).
- **Walk the pulse**, changing direction each time a new phrase starts. This can help to resolve difficulties in determining the **length of phrases** and **identifying the pulse**.
- **Compare the rhythm and melody of each phrase** – look for identical/different phrases. This helps to determine the **structure** of the song and demonstrates that the rhythmic and melodic structure of a piece is not necessarily the same.
- Split a song into phrases and **divide it** amongst the group. Sing in the correct order, with each group singing only their own designated phrase, then sing again, with the phrases in a different order. This also helps with **pitch-matching** and identifying **structure**, where phrases are the same or different.
- Ask pupils to **echo back sung phrases**, matching your sound exactly. Use this to explore **timbre** and **dynamics** and reflect on how the elements are used expressively to enhance meaning.
- Use **ostinato** (a repeated rhythmic or melodic phrase) and **cannon** to help develop confident **part-singing**.
- Be aware of basic techniques which will improve **vocal tone quality and control**.
 - e.g. **Correct posture** – back straight, shoulders/arms/hands relaxed and floppy, knees 'soft', feet same distance apart as hips. If sitting, use the edge of the seat – no leaning back!
 - Use of diaphragm** to support the voice.
 - Support from breath** - breathe deeply from the bottom of the lungs – watch shoulders don't rise!
 - Clean articulation**, resulting in clear diction and focused tone.