

Statement of Intent: September 2024 MR MUDGE

Ridgeway Music Department

Supporting Children to Become Better Musicians

Introduction

In June 2024, an evaluation of the Ridgeway music department revealed several significant challenges that needed to be addressed to enhance the quality of music education and foster a thriving musical culture within the school. The department was experiencing a low level of respect and engagement for music among pupils, with many showing limited musical ability across various areas, including rhythmic accuracy in drumming, confidence in singing, and proficiency in keyboard and guitar skills. There were no peripatetic (peri) music lessons or a school band, no access to music technology, and minimal singing activities outside of a small, optional pop choir. Additionally, the music room was poorly resourced, further hindering the development of a strong and inclusive music culture.

Goals

The primary goals for the music department are to raise the profile of music within the school, increase pupil engagement and enjoyment in music lessons, and develop a comprehensive, inclusive curriculum that enables all pupils to become better musicians, performers, composers, and listeners. By progressively building the curriculum and focusing on foundational and sequential skills, the aim is to provide every pupil with equitable opportunities to learn and appreciate music. A new PC-based suite will be introduced, providing a computer and MIDI keyboard per pair of students, enhancing access to digital music tools and fostering digital literacy in music education.

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Over time, the department aims to establish dynamic extracurricular activities such as a school rock band and choir, introduce peri music lessons, and improve the school's music facilities to include a recording studio and an upgraded iMac music IT suite. These steps will help create a vibrant, inclusive musical environment where all students can thrive.

Curriculum Design and Rationale

The music curriculum at Ridgeway has been designed with guidance from Ofsted and is informed by principles highlighted by Chris Stevens, who emphasizes that effective assessment in music should be used purposefully to support pupils' musical development, embedding knowledge and skills in a student's long-term memory and fostering each child's ability to become more musical.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8mwnQ_livQ

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Purposeful assessment focuses on providing ongoing, developmental feedback that enhances pupils' technical, constructive, and expressive skills, rather than solely generating data or conducting frequent summative evaluations. To support this, students will have their learning journeys documented on 365 OneNote, where they can upload videos of their performances and complete quizzes to demonstrate their knowledge and track their progress. This approach aligns with the goals of the National Curriculum for music, which aims to develop pupils into well-rounded musicians through structured and progressive learning.

The curriculum at Ridgeway aims to build a solid foundation in music education by focusing on the accumulation of essential skills and knowledge, mirroring the building blocks concept discussed in Chris Stevens' webinar. These building blocks include developing technical skills such as instrument control and vocal ability, constructive knowledge such as understanding musical elements and composition techniques, and expressive skills like critical listening and interpreting music's context and meaning. These foundational components are essential for pupils to progress on their musical journey and become proficient musicians, composers, and listeners.

Time Constraints in Key Stage 3

Pupils in Key Stage 3 at Ridgeway receive approximately 39 hours of music instruction per year, totaling around 117 hours over the three years in Years 7, 8, and 9. Given this limited time allocation, it is crucial to maximize the effectiveness of each lesson to ensure that pupils build the necessary skills and knowledge to become more musical. This constraint necessitates a focused and strategic approach to curriculum design, where each lesson is carefully planned to build on previous knowledge and skills, ensuring a cohesive and cumulative learning experience.

Curriculum Development Over Several Years

To address the current low skill levels and ensure all pupils receive a comprehensive musical education, a phased approach to curriculum development will be implemented. This approach is specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of our school, where there is a significant need to rebuild foundational music skills. In the first year, all students will follow a unified curriculum focused on fundamental music skills to establish a strong foundation. In the second year, the Year 7 curriculum will continue for new Year 7 pupils, while Year 8 will transition to a more advanced curriculum, introducing more complex concepts and techniques. By the third year, each year group will have its own distinct curriculum, progressing from foundational skills to more advanced musical knowledge and practices.

This phased and flexible approach ensures gradual and manageable development for all pupils, allowing them to build confidence and competence before moving on to more specialised content. It is designed to be adaptable, allowing adjustments based on the evolving needs of the school and its students. The approach also supports regular assessment and curriculum refinement according to pupils' progress, ensuring every pupil has the opportunity to fully develop their musical abilities. By gradually introducing more complex content, pupils are less likely to feel overwhelmed, fostering an environment where they can steadily build their skills, knowledge and confidence in music.

Long-Term Vision

In the long term, the goal is to offer a GCSE or BTEC music curriculum and develop the music facilities to include a recording studio and an upgraded IT suite with iMac computers. There is also an aim to establish a robust extracurricular programme, including a school rock band, choir, and various music clubs. These initiatives will help create a dynamic and inclusive music culture at Ridgeway, engaging all pupils and supporting their individual musical journeys.

Conclusion

By aligning the music curriculum with the key principles highlighted by Ofsted and the National Curriculum, and adopting a phased approach to development, the Ridgeway music department is committed to significantly enhancing music education. The ultimate aim is for all pupils to actively engage in making music, whether through playing instruments, singing, or using music technology, and to develop a deep and lasting appreciation for the subject. Through careful planning and continuous assessment, the department aims to ensure that each pupil's musical education is dynamic, personalised, and effective.