

# **Creative Scotland, Youth Music Initiative**

## **Case Study – The Primary Music Programme in East Renfrewshire**



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

**“Rhythm, pitch and melody for all young people in East Renfrewshire”**



### **About this case study**

This case study was developed as part of Creative Scotland’s evaluation of the Youth Music Initiative in 2014/15. The Youth Music Initiative is a national programme which is in its 12<sup>th</sup> year of operation. These case studies demonstrate the approaches used by organisations funded by the Youth Music Initiative, and highlight the impacts of this work.

This case study is about the Primary Music programme in East Renfrewshire. The Programme is based on Kodaly; a method of teaching musicianship that is practiced worldwide. It features songs, rhymes and games that are designed to teach young people about rhythm, pitch and melody.

Creative Scotland has provided East Renfrewshire Council with funding through the Youth Music Initiative for every year of its operation. The Primary Music programme has been running in East Renfrewshire since 2003. It currently delivers to children from Primary 3 to Primary 7 but in previous years has covered all year groups. This case study was developed through discussions with six pupils, four Primary Music Specialists, four primary teachers and one council officer.

### **The approach in East Renfrewshire**

The Primary Music programme is the only programme run by East Renfrewshire Council through the Youth Music Initiative. It aims to give every pupil in East Renfrewshire an introduction to music, ensuring that the opportunity to take part is available to all. It aims to:

- give children an introduction to rhythm, pitch and melody;
- teach children basic skills which they can build on throughout primary and into secondary school; and
- develop partnership working with teachers through continuing professional development.

Before the Primary Music programme was introduced in 2003, music tuition was on an informal basis. Some schools chose to bring in music specialists, but some did not. It was estimated that in eight or nine schools, there was no music provision at all.

The programme costs £140,000 to run, and of this £8,500 is funded by East Renfrewshire Council with the remainder coming from Creative Scotland's Youth Music Initiative Formula Fund. The contribution from East Renfrewshire Council has declined significantly in recent years, due to budget pressures.

## Activities

The Primary Music programme provides weekly music lessons for Primary 4, 5 and 6 children during term time. Children in Primary 3 and in Primary 7 also receive the programme for one block in the year.

For younger pupils, the lessons involve a number of short activities, designed to hold the pupils' attention and to gradually build up their skills. The activities involve both individual learning as well as group work and include elements of peer-to-peer learning. Lessons are highly structured but pupils are often given options of which song or game they would prefer.

**“The idea is to develop these skills in pitch and rhythm so that when they go to secondary school they have a good grounding and are ready and prepared, particularly for instrumental lessons.”**

The project is designed to contribute to the Curriculum for Excellence. It has clear intended outcomes linked to developing successful learners, confident individuals and effective contributors. It also involves cross curricular learning, with maths, history and languages often incorporated into lessons. For example, one lesson involved learning Tam o'Shanter to link with Scottish history lessons.

**“We are always happy to adapt to schools' projects and it keeps the programme fun and interesting for us too.”**



## Support and training

The Primary Music programme is delivered by four Primary Music Specialists, working in partnership with class teachers. Primary Music Specialists teach the programme fortnightly with involvement from the class teacher, and the alternate weeks lesson is taught by the class teacher. All of the Primary Music Specialists tutors are registered with the General Teaching Council. They have received a wide range of training, including:

- musicianship training from the National Youth Choir of Scotland;
- in-service training days with the British Kodaly Society; and
- more specialist training, where required, such as courses on autism, dyspraxia and working with children with additional support needs.

New specialists receive training and support and are expected to spend time observing a class before taking on a lesson themselves.

The Primary Music Specialists also train the class teachers. This is an important element of the Primary Music programme. Teachers are expected to observe, learn and participate in the lessons taken by the Primary Music Specialists in order to be prepared to teach the class the following week. As a result, the programme features a high level of Continuing Professional Development for teachers.

**“We’re given a music pack and structured lesson plans...and [Primary Music Specialist] shows us all the songs and games.”**

Initially, there was a period of trial and error in order to pitch the programme at the right level for class teachers to feel involved, but not overwhelmed or patronised. Class teachers are supported through:

- a structured lesson plan for each unaccompanied lesson;
- an extensive resource pack and access to the full range of music resources;
- a CD for teachers who are less confident singing (although use of voice is actively encouraged);
- Continuing professional development sessions for teachers during in-service days; and
- regular contact with the Primary Music Specialists before and after sessions.

Teachers felt that the presence of Primary Music Specialists within the school, providing ongoing support, was essential.

**“You’ve got to have the Primary Music Specialists in school.”**

## Impact on children

The Primary Music programme reaches all primary school pupils from Primary 3 to Primary 7 – almost 6,000 pupils. It is estimated that by the time they reach Primary 6, all pupils will have received nearly three years of music tuition. The programme is also offered to pupils with additional support needs, at the local authority special school.

The impact of the programme is measured through:

- informal feedback during class from the pupils;
- feedback from parents during open evenings and interactive parents' nights where parents can view their children's daily activities in action;
- a survey of all Primary 7 pupils; and
- a survey of all class teachers.

Feedback is generally very positive. Any issues raised are acted upon, to improve the programme. For example, feedback from teachers suggested that the Primary 7 programme was too intensive to cover in one year. The Primary Music Specialists liaised with music teachers in secondary schools to discuss which areas should be covered within Primary 7, and which could be taught in S1 instead.

Feedback gathered as part of this case study highlighted that the Primary Music programme helps with:

- learning musical skills – including rhythm, pitch and melody;
- learning co-operation, teambuilding, social, listening and communication skills;
- learning about wider topics through music;
- inspiring a longer term interest in music; and
- increasing confidence.

**“It's fun. You sing songs to help you learn rhythm.”**

**“This year we're doing Tam o'Shanter. It's really long, but really good.”**

Five of the six pupils we spoke to as part of this case study had plans to learn the guitar and one wanted to learn the clarinet. Some of the pupils discussed setting up a band together in the future. One other pupil said that he had been inspired to write his own songs. He would not have considered this before attending the Primary Music programme classes.

The pupils indicated that they felt happier since attending the Primary Music programme lessons, and had developed their musical skills and their interest in music “a lot”. They also indicated that they felt more confident since taking part.

Class teachers also recognised an increase in confidence and an increased take-up of musical instruments. Pupils liked the approach of learning alongside their teachers – encouraging them to take part fully and see that everyone made mistakes.

**“At that age children are particularly socially conscious of what is acceptable in their peer group. Seeing me made them join in; they want to take part.”**

**“The class tends to pick it up quite quickly...sometimes I feel that they’re more knowledgeable than us!”**

## **Impact on the youth music sector**

The programme is giving more pupils an interest in music. Primary pupils are taking their music out to the community and performing in retirement homes and at charity events. One school choir will be competing in the Glasgow Music Festival.

Many young people are forming their own bands or going out to recording studios, then returning and playing at the school or at local charity events. A number of former pupils have started bands, and there is currently a former pupil jazz band and former pupil orchestra. Increasingly pupils leaving school are working towards a career in music or music teaching.

## **Impact on deliverers**

Primary Music Specialists have enjoyed the experience of delivering the programme, particularly through working in areas of deprivation and seeing the confidence and skills of children increase.

**“Just getting the young people to communicate and seeing the success and progression of the young people is rewarding.”**

**“I was interested and excited at the thought of primary teaching. This was my first job out of University and I love it.”**

The Primary Music programme has also drawn in a lot of teachers who could have been apprehensive about teaching music. Because the programme includes a great deal of continuing professional development and tandem teaching it has really increased the confidence of teachers. It has also been able to introduce teachers to new teaching methods that they can use in other areas of their work, beyond music.

**“[Primary Music Specialist] uses a lot of different ways to get their attention, and sometimes I pick up on them and use them later.”**

**“The follow-up lesson brings up our competency levels...and having someone show you how to do it gives you confidence.”**

## Successes

Key successes of this programme include:

- increased interest from non-musical class teachers because of the level of continuing professional development training;
- increased interest in music among pupils and increased levels of confidence;
- successful partnership working between Primary Music Specialists and class teachers to deliver the programme; and
- increased standard of musicianship for pupils entering secondary schools.

It was felt that the single best thing about the Primary Music programme was its sheer scale and ability to cover every primary school in the area. It is inclusive for all, and ensures all pupils have the same level of basic grounding in music. This means it has reached pupils who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to take part in music activities, particularly in areas of deprivation.



**“It touches so many pupils – every single pupil gets a chance to experience it and it is totally across the board.”**

## Lessons learned

The programme has worked well. Those involved in planning and delivering the programme have learned that:

- The delivery of the Primary Music programme in a school setting means that pupils know how to behave and what is expected of them.
- It is important to pilot programmes like this, and learn from these.
- It can be challenging for teachers who move to teach older age groups to keep up with the increased level of complexity in the programme, while also learning a new general curriculum.
- There is a need to be flexible and versatile, to fit with the needs of the pupils and the school environment.

**“Don’t do too much to begin with. Pilot it and build up incrementally. Start with the lower stages and work up towards more complex material.”**



## **What's next**

The Primary Music Specialist team are planning to undertake a detailed evaluation of the Primary Music programme.

In the near future they plan to incorporate more technology such as iPad apps for composition and learning. They also intend to make some changes to the programme in order to make it more creative after being inspired by a BBC 'Ten Pieces' project. This will involve more extensive cross curricular linking and additional multidisciplinary elements to the current programme.

The Council and the Primary Music Specialist team aspire to be able to extend the programme to encompass pupils from early years to P7 on a weekly basis, with music specialists attending weekly rather than fortnightly.