

# Musical Development Matters in the Early Years

By Nicola Burke



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# About this guidance

The overall purpose of this guidance is to support practitioners, teachers and parents/carers to see the musical attributes of young children and to offer ideas as to how they can support and nurture children's musical development by offering broad musical experiences. The guidance is presented in the format of the non-statutory guidance document *Development Matters* because it is a familiar and popular format with practitioners. However, since it relates only to musical development, this guidance is not structured in terms of the EYFS areas of learning or the early learning goals. **Suggestions listed in "Positive Relationships" and "Enabling Environments" should not be limited to the age group they appear in. They should be used from birth and continued to be used through to age five plus.**

Music interweaves through all areas of learning and development which can be seen throughout this guidance. Music making can be challenging to provide for in early years settings as it is noisy, and it can be difficult to document as it is live, invisible and once it has been created in that moment it disappears, unless we capture it. Music should not be quantified by performer-listener and should not only be judged by how music is perceived in western culture.

As Nancy Stewart (2016) pointed out, "the statements in *Development Matters* are common examples of how children might develop and give a general picture of progression, but they are by no means the whole story." The same can be said of this document. This guidance has not been written to ensure that children are doing what they "ought" to be doing, it has been written to offer examples and possibilities of what children often naturally do and how this can be recognised, valued and nurtured.

It can be seen within the four aspects in this guidance how music threads through all areas of learning and development. Music can be a way of exploring, communicating and responding to experience. Making music with others can be a **social** experience whether this be parent-baby/carer-baby exchanging coos, or two or more children making music with pots, pans or traditional instruments. This interaction with others, whether this be with one other person or a group, is **personal** to each individual and is often an expression of **feelings**.

All vocal **communication** is comprised of musical elements such as pitch, rhythm and timbre, demonstrating that musicality is an intrinsic part of being human. Music should be seen as a core component of children's learning and should be shared with young children to ensure they have broad, balanced and rounded experiences in early childhood and beyond.

## Aspects of musical learning and development

Hearing and Listening

Vocalising and Singing

Moving and Dancing

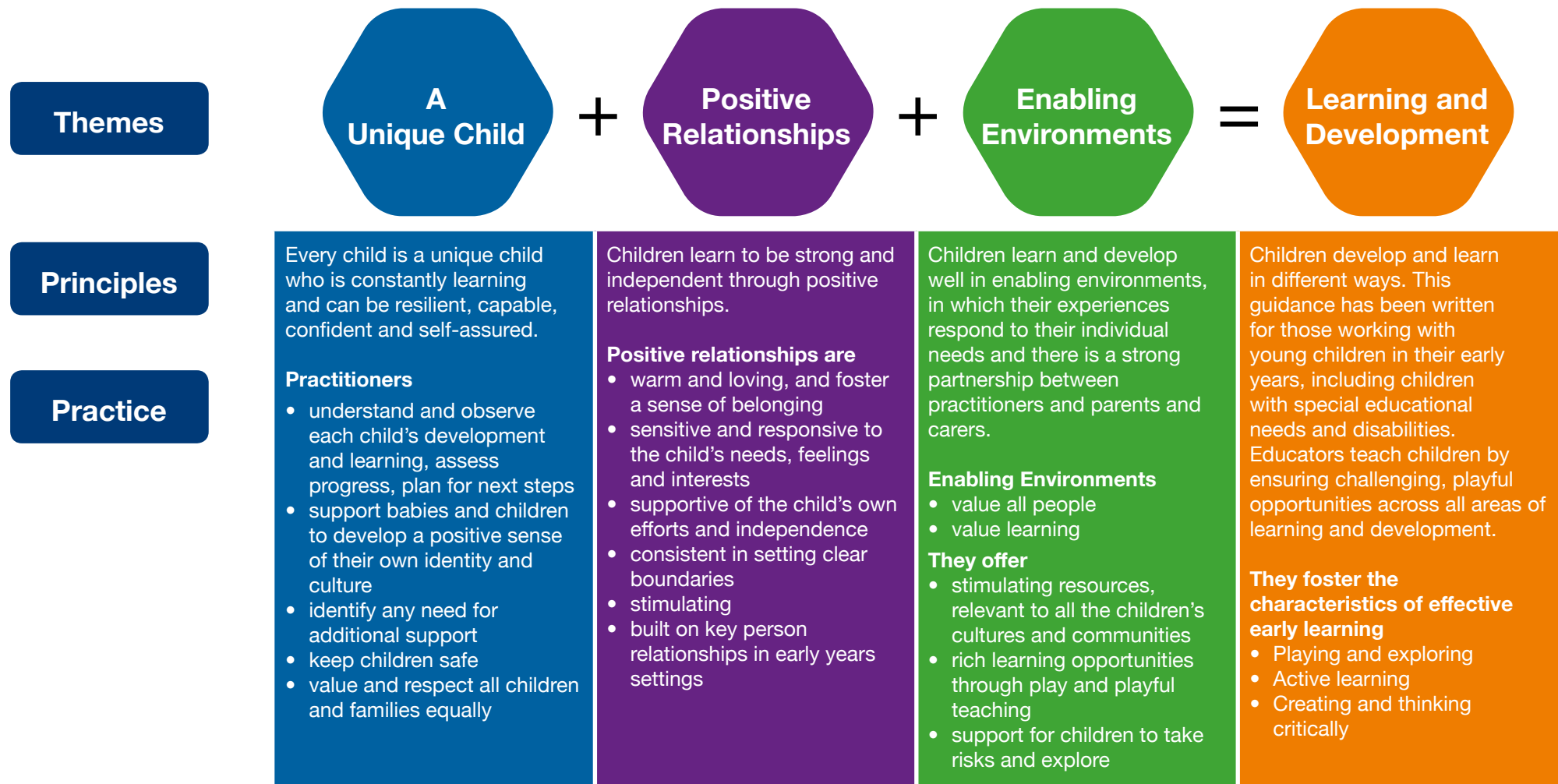
Exploring and Playing

Free supporting materials to accompany this guidance can be found at:

[network.youthmusic.org.uk/musical-development-matters](https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/musical-development-matters)

# A Unique Child + Positive Relationships + Enabling Environments = Learning and Development

Children are born ready, able and eager to learn. They actively reach out to interact with other people, and in the world around them. Development is not an automatic process, however. It depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments. The following four themes underpin the EYFS. *Development Matters* shows how these themes, and the principles that inform them, work together for children in the EYFS. They have also been used to structure *Musical Development Matters*.



## Musical terms

- **Pulse/beat:** like a heartbeat, a steady beat underlying the music
- **Rhythm:** pattern of sound
- **Pitch:** high sounds, low sounds
- **Structure:** how a piece of music/song is built up, eg verse-chorus-verse-chorus
- **Dynamics:** loud, quiet, getting louder, getting quieter
- **Timbre:** the character of a sound, eg smooth sound, spikey sound, scratchy sound
- **Texture:** layers in the music, eg one sound or several sounds
- **Tempo:** speed
- **Melodic shape:** this is a little like the outline of the song or piece of music, picture a line that goes up steeply when the **melody** suddenly jumps to a much higher sound, or that goes down slowly when the **melody** gently falls. This “line” gives the **contour** or **shape** of the **melodic** line
- **Genre:** the type of music, eg pop, jazz, folk, classical

## Instruments

The word “instrument” is used throughout the entire guidance. This word refers to all resources which have sound-making possibilities, eg pans and wooden spoons should be considered to be instruments. All instruments should be treated with care and respect. By modelling respect and care for instruments in the environment and valuing instruments, adults can offer clear and positive messages about music making.

## Devices

Children’s use of mobile devices such as tablets and handheld computers is now commonplace. There is an enormous range of ways that devices can be used to support and enable music making. Effective use of devices can positively contribute to children’s music making and musical development. Devices, applications and interaction styles vary greatly, making it impossible to suggest how they are “typically” used and how they can be specifically used within this guidance.

## Musical Development: Hearing and Listening

**A Unique Child:**  
Observing what a child is learning

**Positive Relationships:**  
What adults could do

**Enabling Environments:**  
What adults could provide

### Hearing in the womb

Research suggests that the human fetal auditory system is functional around the 25th week of gestational age and that a fetus has the ability to respond to sound, eg may jump or kick in response to a very loud noise. As the auditory system continues to develop, responsiveness to sound becomes more sophisticated and research indicates that in the latter stages of the third trimester babies are familiar with and respond to the maternal voice. Hearing is an integral aspect of musical development, it is therefore important to consider that musical development may begin in the womb.



**Birth - 11 months**

- May recognise voices, sounds and music heard whilst in the womb.
- Turns head towards sounds.
- Proficient listener and can be sensitive to the smallest changes in music.
- Listens attentively when sung to and can anticipate phrases and actions of familiar rhymes/songs, eg round and round the garden.
- Responds emotionally to music (live or recorded).
- Enjoys play-songs eg, peepo songs, lap songs.
- Associates music with routines.







**8-20 months**



- Expresses musical preferences; including songs, instruments and recorded music.
- Associates music with multimedia (eg TV programmes, apps, adverts, toys).
- Controls his or her listening choices – eg selects songs from electronic resources, chooses instruments, indicates which recorded music he or she wants to listen to.

- Seek out songs sung and music played in utero.
- Use musical interactions such as infant directed speech and songs to tune in to babies.
- Encourage turn taking and early conversation by allowing time for babies to listen and respond to vocalisations.
- Allow time for babies to anticipate phrases and actions within familiar songs.
- Sing a range of songs.
- Move with babies to music.
- Observe children's responses to music played from home, does the music comfort them, encourage them to move? Music from home could be used to help settle children.

- Play a wide range of genres of music and music from the home environment.
- Discuss what is appropriate/inappropriate music with staff and parents/carers. This is a subjective area. Ensure it is clearly understood what is appropriate and inappropriate within the provision.
- Plan time to sing with babies and children as well as singing spontaneously to support children's needs.
- Create a listening space to play music at certain times in a day or if daily isn't possible then within the week.
- Plan time to play music and observe children carefully; do not limit recorded music to background music, think carefully about what music is played in the environment and when.
- Create rich musical environments that involve a range of accessible sound-making objects.
- Play instruments to offer opportunities for babies to listen to a range of sounds.
- Invite musicians to perform for children: parents/carers who play instruments, students from local colleges/universities, bands/groups from the local community.
- Create playlists to reflect children's preferences.




 <p>8-20 months cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to changes in music such as loud/quiet, (<b>dynamics</b>) fast/slow (<b>tempo</b>), high/low (<b>pitch</b>).</li> <li>• Gestures to indicate what songs and music he or she would like to hear, eg points to the art work of an album or circles his or her hands around one another to gesture for “Roly Poly” to be sung.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although children may not have a wide vocal <b>pitch</b> (high/low) range it is important for children to hear and respond to a wide range of songs; eg “Hot Cross Buns” has a wide range of pitch which children may struggle to sing, listening to these songs is an important musical experience that may contribute to their musical development.</li> </ul>
 <p>16-26 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Musical preferences are further developed; often has firm favourites (live &amp; recorded) and is able to express this.</li> <li>• Anticipates changes in familiar music eg recognises and remembers when music is going to get louder, quieter or stop.</li> </ul>		
 <p>22-36 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes music, eg “scary music, angry music, happy music”.</li> <li>• Can identify specific sounds in the environment eg sounds of cars, running water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore ways of encouraging active listening; moving with music or painting/drawing with music may support children to listen; listening in large groups/small groups/individually.</li> <li>• Encourage children to use verbal and physical language to describe sounds and music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiar music may support children to listen and be open to new material; when introducing new music to children, explore playing familiar music followed by new music. Familiar music may help engage children in active listening.</li> <li>• Provide a song/piece of music per week that is played once per day and encourage children to listen. Create a listening sheet for staff to write on: “Today we have been listening to...” this will enable all staff to know about the music.</li> </ul>
 <p>30-50 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can identify and match an instrumental sound, eg hear a shaker and indicate that they understand it is a shaker.</li> <li>• Many influences may encourage children to associate music with “types” of people and places, eg stereotypes such as rock music with bikers. They may feel pressure to like and dislike certain genres of music, eg children may associate music as “music for boys”, “music for girls”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play sound-matching games, eg play instruments that children can’t see and invite children to play a matching instrument or describe the instrument.</li> <li>• Show pictures of instruments, bands, ensembles to accompany music played.</li> <li>• Encourage children to listen to a wide range of music so that music is not limited to music for “types” of people.</li> <li>• Listen with children to a variety of sounds, talking about favourite sounds, songs and music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a small range of genres of music is played within provision children may associate certain genres of music with settings and/or people. Use a wide range to support children to keep their ears open.</li> <li>• Provide recording devices and invite children to be musical detectives to capture sounds into their recording devices, play them back as part of sound distinguishing games.</li> <li>• Offer information about music played/songs sung; eg children may be interested to learn who wrote the music, where the music is from.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matches music to pictures/visual resources.</li> <li>• Describes the sound of instruments eg scratchy sound, soft sound.</li> <li>• Creates visual representation of sounds, instruments and pieces of music, eg mark making to specific sounds or pieces of music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite children to play instruments and ask them and/or other children to describe the sound, verbally or physically.</li> <li>• Encourage children to listen carefully by guiding them to listen, play music and invite children to respond at specific times, eg shake your hands when you hear the loud part.</li> <li>• Offer a range of visual resources/pictures and invite children to match pictures to music.</li> <li>• Ask children questions about the music, eg what do you like about the music? What can you hear?</li> <li>• Invite children to create marks/symbols/ pictures to pieces of music and instrumental sounds.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinks abstractly about music and expresses this physically or verbally eg “This music sounds like floating on a boat.” “This music sounds like dinosaurs.”</li> <li>• Distinguishes and describes changes in music and compares pieces of music, eg “this music started fast and then became slow.” “This music had lots of instruments but this music only had voices.” “This music was spiky and this music was smooth.”</li> <li>• Associates genres of music with characters and stories.</li> <li>• Accurately anticipates changes in music, eg when music is going to get faster, louder, slower.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the music with children, invite them to describe the music and seek out their opinions and thoughts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a listening area and create a library of music that the children can choose from.</li> <li>• Invite children to select music to play at certain times in the day, eg a track to play at snack time.</li> <li>• Children may respond differently to how we may expect them to. Responses to music are individual, what one considers to be relaxing may not be to another. Allow and encourage children to respond individually.</li> </ul>





## Musical Development: Vocalising and Singing

	A Unique Child: Observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: What adults could do	Enabling Environments: What adults could provide
 <b>Birth - 11 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocalises through crying, this contains many aspects of singing - eg high/low (<b>pitch</b>), patterns of sound (<b>rhythm</b>), and phrasing.</li> <li>Imitates the <b>melodic shape</b> (moving melody, eg up and down, down &amp; up) of a caregiver's voice.</li> <li>Vocalises using vowel-like sounds, eg cooing, squealing, playing with pitch and different types of sounds (<b>timbre</b>).</li> <li>Vocalises using syllable-like sounds, eg babbling, playing with <b>pitch, timbre and rhythm</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen carefully to the sounds of babies' vocalising.</li> <li>Respond sensitively by turn taking, making eye contact and allowing time for babies to vocalise and listen to your responses.</li> <li>Early conversation between adults and babies is often described as "sing song". Use a lively voice with lots of high/low (<b>pitch</b>) and play with different types of sounds (<b>timbre</b>).</li> <li>Play with your own vocal utterances and sounds and observe the babies' responses. Use animal sounds, eg squeaky mouse, roaring lion.</li> <li>Sing regularly and use a wide range of songs and rhymes.</li> <li>Sing during routines that take place throughout the day.</li> <li>Use other words to familiar tunes.</li> <li>Repeat songs, children learn songs through repetition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create an environment which invites vocal responses from babies by listening and responding to them.</li> <li>Provide an auditory environment that encourages vocal play, keep background music to a minimum.</li> <li>Be spontaneous with your own vocal play.</li> <li>Use songs and rhymes from all cultures and find out what songs, rhymes and music babies hear at home.</li> <li>Plan times when you can sing with young babies, encouraging them to join in.</li> <li>Observe the babies' vocalisations whilst they play with instruments, particular instruments may encourage them to vocalise.</li> </ul>
 <b>8-20 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May vocalise whilst listening to familiar music, eg join in with the music they are listening to.</li> <li>Makes utterances and vocalises snippets of songs.</li> <li>Vocalises whilst moving, including long non-syllabic sounds eg "aaaaah" and syllable sounds eg "da, da".</li> <li>Vocalises whilst playing with instruments, including long non-syllabic sounds and syllable sounds.</li> <li>Creates sound effects of animals, eg "baa baa", roaring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sing with children, extend their repertoire of songs to offer them a range of melodies and lyrics to experience and play with.</li> <li>Model vocal play and create sound effects with toys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe and document children's vocal play. Particular environments and resources may encourage children to vocalise both indoors and outdoors.</li> <li>Provide resources in the environment and within group singing sessions that may encourage singing, eg song bags, puppets, visual resources that represent songs.</li> </ul>
 <b>16-26 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipates &amp; sings certain words in songs.</li> <li>Joins in with action songs by singing some words and creating some or all actions.</li> <li>Vocalises whilst moving, sings phrases of songs whilst moving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sing with children, extend their repertoire of songs to offer them a range of melodies and lyrics to experience and play with.</li> <li>Model vocal play and create sound effects with toys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe and document children's vocal play. Particular environments and resources may encourage children to vocalise both indoors and outdoors.</li> <li>Provide resources in the environment and within group singing sessions that may encourage singing, eg song bags, puppets, visual resources that represent songs.</li> </ul>



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 <p>16-26 months cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocalises and sings whilst playing with instruments.</li> <li>• Creates sound effects for toys in their pretend play, eg creates the sounds of a train, car, animals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept wholeheartedly young children's vocal creations and help them to see them as something unique and valuable.</li> <li>• Show genuine interest and be willing to play along with a young child who is beginning to create sound effects and vocalise.</li> <li>• Repeat songs, children learn songs through repetition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore signing to accompany songs, particularly if signing is used within the setting.</li> </ul>
 <p>22-36 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocalises in a free-flowing way within their play, eg whilst painting or playing with clay.</li> <li>• Sings and chants with and to others.</li> <li>• Reproduces songs in individual ways.</li> <li>• Plays with familiar songs, often piecing together parts of different songs.</li> <li>• Sings to and with toys, props, resources.</li> <li>• Sings in their dramatic role play, eg singing phrases such as "dinner's ready" or "let's go".</li> <li>• Repeats phrases of songs.</li> <li>• May sing an entire song.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy children's vocalisations to show that you hear and value them.</li> <li>• Encourage and support the inventive ways in which children vocally improvise and merge songs together.</li> <li>• Use your voice in a range of ways and play with the way you sing songs, eg sing quietly, slowly, sadly, joyfully.</li> <li>• Be interested in the children's individual songs and talk to them about what they mean to them.</li> <li>• Repeat songs, children learn songs through repetition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children may have songs that they associate with certain environments, eg songs they sing/hear in settings, songs they sing/hear at home or with family. Talk to parents/carers to seek information about songs that are significant to children.</li> <li>• Record children's songs, share them with parents/carers and play them in the setting.</li> <li>• Play a range of songs that involve different styles of singing eg opera, rap, scat.</li> <li>• Provide resources in the environment that encourage singing and vocal play eg cardboard tubing that children can vocalise into, microphones.</li> <li>• Provide song boxes filled with interesting items to spark children's imaginative song ideas.</li> </ul>
 <p>30-50 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates his or her own songs, often with a real sense of structure, eg a beginning and an end.</li> <li>• Can often sing an entire song; songs could be nursery rhymes, pop songs, songs from TV programmes, songs from home.</li> <li>• Merges elements of familiar songs with improvised singing.</li> <li>• Creates sounds in vocal sound games.</li> <li>• Changes some or all of the words of a song.</li> <li>• Has strong preferences for songs he or she likes to sing and/or listen to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When teaching songs to children be aware of your own <b>pitch</b> (high/low), children are smaller than adults and their voices are therefore higher than adult voices. Try to lift your voice so that you are not singing in your speaking voice.</li> <li>• Play mouth exercise games and vocal warm up games before singing.</li> <li>• When supporting children to develop their singing voice use a limited pitch range, eg "Rain rain" uses a small <b>pitch</b> (high/low) range compared to "Hot Cross Buns".</li> <li>• Children are developing their ability to control their voices, encourage them to use their "singing" voice, when asked to sing loudly children often shout.</li> <li>• Copy children's vocal sounds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include children's favourite songs within singing times, whether this be songs from home or songs learnt at the setting.</li> <li>• Create song stories with children, eg offer them a first line of a song and ask them to continue the song.</li> <li>• Invite children to suggest songs to sing in groups and value their ideas, whether this be nursery rhymes, pop songs, songs from home or their own creations.</li> <li>• Play circle song games and group games, eg songs with parachutes, partnering songs eg "Row, Row".</li> <li>• Invent a singing puppet that sings; invite children to be the puppet's singing voice.</li> </ul>




 <p><b>30-50 months cont'd</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware and value that children may use a varied range of tones in their home language and within their singing and vocal play.</li> <li>• Lower the volume of your own singing voice or stop singing so that you can listen carefully to how children are singing.</li> <li>• Play with rhyming words, encourage children to sing words that rhyme with others.</li> <li>• Repeat songs: children learn songs through repetition.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>40-60+ months</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitch matches, ie reproduces with his or her voice the pitch of a tone sung by another.</li> <li>• Able to sing the <b>melodic shape</b> (moving melody, eg up and down, down &amp; up) of familiar songs.</li> <li>• Sings entire songs.</li> <li>• May enjoy performing, solo and or in groups.</li> <li>• Internalises music, eg sings songs inside his or her head.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play pitch matching games, eg hum or sing short phrases and invite children to copy you.</li> <li>• Use songs with and without words - children may pitch match more easily without words, eg use one-syllable sounds such as “ba”.</li> <li>• Sing call and response songs so that children can echo phrases of songs you sing.</li> <li>• Introduce new songs gradually and repeat them.</li> <li>• Sing slowly, children are likely to be listening to the words and the melody of the song.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for both large and small group singing sessions; hearing individual voices in large group singing activities can be challenging; it may also be challenging for children to hear their own voices in a group context.</li> <li>• Some children enjoy singing in a group, some prefer to sing individually outside of a group. Listen carefully and respectfully to children in their free play, the silent observers in group activities are often able to sing songs that they did not sing during group time.</li> <li>• Offer opportunities for children to sing solo.</li> <li>• Invite children to share their songs with other children, whether this is their own creations or songs from home.</li> <li>• Provide recording devices to allow children to record their own and other children’s songs.</li> </ul>


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## Musical Development: Moving and Dancing




	A Unique Child: Observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: What adults could do	Enabling Environments: What adults could provide
 <b>Birth - 11 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moves his or her head towards sounds.</li> <li>Responds physically to music (live or recorded), eg facial expressions, mouth movements, moving arms or legs, bouncing, shuffling, often moving to the pulse of the music.</li> <li>Enjoys finger rhymes and songs that involve touch.</li> <li>Enjoys being tapped gently to the pulse of music (live or recorded).</li> <li>Enjoys being moved gently to the pulse of music (live or recorded) eg being rocked, bounced.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play a wide range of genres of music for active listening.</li> <li>Sing a range of songs and finger rhymes, ask parents/carers about favourite songs and rhymes.</li> <li>Move and/or tap babies gently to music, observe their responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devote uninterrupted time to babies when you can sing with them, be attentive and fully focused.</li> <li>Provide space for infants to enable them to physically respond to music either physically supported or unsupported.</li> <li>Create space to allow for movement with instruments.</li> </ul>
 <b>8-20 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gestures to indicate what songs and music he or she would like to hear, eg opens and closes hands to communicate a desire to hear "Twinkle, Twinkle"</li> <li>Claps hands.</li> <li>Joins in physically with action songs.</li> <li>Moves whilst singing.</li> <li>Moves whilst listening to music and can often feel and move to the pulse.</li> <li>Moves toys/objects/materials with the sound effects they create to accompany the movement, eg moves a car and creates the sound effects such as "brrrrm" to accompany the movement, paints whilst moving to music, plays with foam whilst moving with music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch out for subtle physical signals that indicate children's musical preferences.</li> <li>Join in with babies' movement to music; some babies may need support and encouragement.</li> <li>Don't rely upon recorded action songs, sing them so that you can vary the speed to suit the needs of the child.</li> <li>Do not limit music and movement to babies re-enacting actions or movements.</li> <li>Give opportunities for babies to have choice.</li> <li>Observe children's responses to music played from home, does the music encourage them to move?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer choices, eg different instruments, a range of genres of music.</li> <li>Respond to what babies show you they are interested in and want to do, by providing a variety of songs, music and instruments.</li> <li>Ensure that instruments are accessible so that babies can independently play them. Experiment with levels to support babies to play instruments.</li> <li>Offer pom poms, scarves, ribbons; resources can support children to move.</li> <li>Invite parents/carers to share music from home, observe how children physically respond.</li> <li>Invite musicians to perform for children: parents/carers who play instruments, students from local colleges/universities, bands/groups from the local community. Observe children's physical response to live music.</li> </ul>

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 <p><b>16-26 months</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically interprets different genres of music - children often move and express themselves differently to different genres.</li> <li>• May enjoy dancing to music.</li> <li>• Moves whilst playing instruments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge their movements to show that you value their physical response to music. This can be through copying movements, observing.</li> <li>• Model moving to music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place instruments on different levels and in different spaces, observe the movements that children create whilst making music.</li> <li>• Provide instruments for movement possibilities, eg offer portable instruments which lend themselves to movement.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>22-36 months</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moves in response to rhythms heard played on instruments eg a drum. This could be small movements eg moving fingers in response to sounds or large movements such as jumping.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play instrument and movement games; invite children to move to the sounds of different instruments.</li> <li>• Encourage children to take the lead in music and movement games by inviting children one by one to play an instrument and inviting other children to move in response.</li> <li>• Swap this around so that one child leads with their movement whilst other children play instruments in response to the movement.</li> <li>• Observe children and how they physically respond to different genres.</li> <li>• Observe children's physical play, eg jumping, running, look out for vocalisations that accompany it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place instruments in different formations, eg drums in a line, in a circle. Observe how the children move and play.</li> <li>• Offer a range of instruments that will support children to develop their physical control of instruments, eg tapping a drum with hands or tapping rhythm sticks together require different physical skills.</li> <li>• Introduce games that encourage children to play instruments in different ways, eg passing a tambourine quietly around a circle will encourage children to control the tambourine carefully.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>30-50 months</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claps or taps to the pulse of the music he or she is listening to.</li> <li>• Claps or taps to the pulse of the song he or she is singing.</li> <li>• Physically interprets the sound of instruments, eg tiptoes to the sound of a xylophone.</li> <li>• Physically imitates the actions of musicians, eg pretends to play the trumpet, piano, guitar.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage children to move whilst playing instruments.</li> <li>• Encourage children to listen carefully to the sound of an instrument and move in response.</li> <li>• Join in with the clapping or tapping to the song they are singing or music they are listening to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make available a range of music so that children have opportunities to physically respond to different genres.</li> <li>• Vary the instruments that you offer in the environment, observe how the children move whilst playing with different instruments.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>40-60+ months</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moves to the sound of instruments, eg walks, jumps, hops to the sound of a beating drum.</li> <li>• Combines moving, singing and playing instruments, eg marching, tapping a drum whilst singing.</li> <li>• Moves in time to the pulse of the music being listened to and physically responds to changes in the music, eg jumps in response to loud/sudden changes in the music.</li> <li>• Replicates familiar choreographed dances eg imitates dance and movements associated with pop songs.</li> <li>• Choreographs his or her own dances to familiar music, individually, in pairs/small groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage children to sway, walk or play instruments whilst listening to music.</li> <li>• Play movement and listening games that use different sounds for different movements, eg march to the sound of the drum, creep to the sound of the maraca, ask for the children's ideas.</li> <li>• Invite children to share their dance routines that they create either at home or in the setting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If space is limited, try to create space for movement and music as often as possible and plan for this in the environment.</li> <li>• Present instruments in the environment; don't limit them to being in cupboards, boxes, baskets. Experiment with the use of levels.</li> <li>• Observe children's movement responses to sounds (pieces of music, songs and instruments).</li> </ul>
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## Musical Development: Exploring and Playing

	A Unique Child: Observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: What adults could do	Enabling Environments: What adults could provide
 <b>Birth - 11 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explores the environment around him or her through sound exploration eg tapping surfaces, shaking objects, tapping drums, scratching drums, pressing buttons on musical toys.</li> <li>• Shakes instruments with one hand and in both hands simultaneously.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage young children to explore the environment around them, model ways of creating sounds using surfaces and different materials, eg scrunching paper.</li> <li>• Copy the sounds that babies create. Tune into them by mimicking and having strong eye contact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an environment which invites babies to explore sound, eg offer instruments and resources that create sounds.</li> <li>• Create treasure baskets that have a range of resources that create sound, eg items that can be shaken, materials to scrunch, resources that can be used to tap.</li> </ul>
 <b>8-20 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to “my turn, your turn” games during one-to-one moments with instruments.</li> <li>• Holds small instruments in each hand and brings them together to tap.</li> <li>• Holds a beater in each hand and taps them eg taps the beaters on drums, chime bars.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond sensitively by turn taking, making eye contact and allowing time for children to play.</li> <li>• Listen respectfully and value the sounds that they create.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer children instruments that can be tapped together such as claves.</li> <li>• Offer pairs of beaters for use on eg chime bars, xylophones. Children can create more with two beaters as opposed to one.</li> <li>• Where possible offer children a range of sizes of instruments, eg large and small drums to tap and a range of hand-held instruments to shake.</li> <li>• The length of beaters impacts how children play with them, eg short beaters are easier to control and may enable refined movements and music making and long beaters may encourage larger sweeping movements.</li> </ul>
 <b>16-26 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plays instruments rhythmically and repetitively.</li> <li>• Plays with both hands simultaneously and alternately whilst using beaters.</li> <li>• Uses instruments in a range of ways, eg tapping, rubbing, sweeping, uses either ends of beaters, strikes instruments both vertically and horizontally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy children’s musical ideas and ways of playing instruments.</li> <li>• Model ways of playing instruments.</li> <li>• Listen to and join in with their musical play sensitively, value their ideas.</li> <li>• Play start/stop games and allow them to lead the game.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The materials that instruments are made from impact the sounds created, eg rubber, wooden and felt beaters all create different sounds and different levels of volume. Be mindful of the potential volume level that instruments can create.</li> <li>• Consider how some instruments may not be appropriate/safe within continuous provision.</li> </ul>

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 <p>22-36 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates own patterns in music making.</li> <li>• Experiments with ways of playing instruments, eg volume (<b>dynamics</b>), speed (<b>tempo</b>), character of sounds such as tapping a tambourine/shaking a tambourine (<b>timbre</b>).</li> <li>• Shows control in holding and playing instruments, eg use a guiro by holding the guiro in one hand and scraping it using the other hand with a beater.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen out for the patterns of children’s music making, listen carefully and you may hear distinctive patterns and/or use of elements of music, eg volume (<b>dynamics</b>), speed (<b>tempo</b>).</li> <li>• Listen respectfully to children’s music making and try not to judge their music with what you may consider music to be. Children’s musical play can be compared to their visual doodling or mark making, value their musical doodles.</li> <li>• Copy children’s musical patterns, this will show them that you are listening to them and valuing their music making.</li> <li>• Respond to their music making by varying their musical ideas, eg they play a pattern loudly, you play their pattern quietly. Be a sensitive musical partner.</li> <li>• Record their music making, music is invisible, once it has happened it disappears unless you capture it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiment with the use of levels eg instruments on tables, on the floor, instruments indoors and outdoors, group instruments together eg place instruments together in a basket that can be shaken, tapped, scraped.</li> <li>• The physicality of playing instruments impacts the music making, eg children’s musical patterns created with a maraca may be very different to their musical pattern created on a drum due to the physicality of playing the instrument.</li> <li>• Children’s music making is not only influenced by type, shape and size of instruments but also where and how instruments are offered, eg the music that children make whilst sitting on the floor to play a xylophone may be different to the music they make whilst standing due to the nature of movement involved.</li> <li>• Vary your musical environments. eg one day drums out on a table and another day baskets with different types of bells. Hang instruments, eg musical washing lines.</li> </ul>
 <p>30-50 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds sound effects to stories using instruments.</li> <li>• Leads or is led by other children in their music making, ie being a conductor.</li> <li>• Listens and responds to others in pair/group music making.</li> <li>• Operates equipment such as CD players, MP3 players, handheld devices, keyboards.</li> <li>• Plays instruments with control to play loud/quiet, (<b>dynamics</b>), fast/slow (<b>tempo</b>).</li> <li>• Shows control to hold and play instruments to produce a musical sound, eg holding a triangle in the air by the string with one hand and playing it with a beater with the other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model your respect and care for instruments.</li> <li>• Invite children to create sound effects to accompany stories.</li> <li>• Explore conducting games, together with the children: decide on a signal for start and stop eg hand gestures, dancing puppets/sleeping puppets, red/green scarves/flashcards.</li> <li>• Whilst playing with children, explore ways of extending the children’s musical ideas, eg copy a child’s pattern and then add an idea of your own, sensitively offer and play with ideas. Adult involvement may encourage more sustained musical play.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create environments that invite children to make music together, eg a music table against a wall does not promote interactive and social music making, a music table with space around enables children to communicate musically and make music together more easily. Playing with a partner may impact how children make music.</li> <li>• Explore enclosures for music making, eg some children may enjoy making music in dens/enclosed spaces.</li> <li>• Experiment with different genres of music playing within the musical environment - observe carefully, does the music playing impact children’s music making? Do the children tune into the music that is played?</li> </ul>





40-60+ months

- Creates music based on a theme eg creates the sounds of the seaside.
- Finds and records sounds using recording devices.
- Plays instruments (including imaginary ones such as air guitar) to match the structure of the music, eg playing quietly with quiet parts within music, stopping with the music when it stops.
- Keeps a steady beat whilst playing instruments – his or her own steady beat in his or her creative music making.
- Taps rhythms to accompany words, eg tapping the syllables of names/objects/animals/lyrics of a song.
- Creates rhythms using instruments and body percussion.
- May play along to the beat of the song they are singing or music being listened to.
- May play along with the rhythm in music, eg may play along with the lyrics in songs they are singing or listening to.

- Invite children to create a piece of music. You could use a theme (eg jungle) or an element of music as a starting point to create a piece eg loud/quiet (**dynamics**) – create music which has a range of dynamics involved.
- Play rhythm games, eg tapping out the syllables of children's names, song lyrics.
- Invite children to play instruments one by one and encourage other children to listen carefully, ask the children to describe the sound or move to the sound of each instrument as they listen.
- Invite children to choose shapes to represent instruments, eg a circle could represent a tambourine, a rectangle could represent a chime bar. Children can create visual patterns with the shapes which they could then either play themselves, other children could play or an adult could play.
- Explore mark making to sounds. Invite children to draw to the sound of an instrument. Once children have created a mark of the sound introduce another sound for them to draw. You can then copy the children's representations, create a visual pattern and invite children to play the visual pattern.

- Set up a music area with a selection of instruments; invite children one by one to create a piece of music. If revisited regularly children may become familiar with the activity and you may see children developing their own ideas.
- Where possible record children's pieces, play the pieces back to the children and include them in your repertoire of music played in the setting. Music is invisible and can get lost unless we capture and record it.
- Offer instruments that lend themselves well to the activity you are exploring, eg tapping instruments such as claves and drums are easier to use when exploring rhythm games, shaky instruments are more challenging to play a defined rhythm with.

## Acknowledgements

The realisation of this guidance has been enabled by an important and significant project within the Early Childhood Music community. Tri-Music Together was a project initiated by the Tri-borough Music Hub (the Lead Organisation for Music Education across three London Boroughs – Hammersmith and Fulham; Kensington and Chelsea; Westminster). In 2015, the Tri-borough Music Hub established the Tri-borough Early Years Music Consortium, and in 2016 Tri-Music Together was created by the consortium and funded with thanks to Youth Music.

The partners of the consortium are:

- Chickenshed Kensington & Chelsea
- Creative Futures
- Inspire-works
- LBHF Children's Centres
- Music House for Children
- RBKC Children's Centres
- Royal Albert Hall
- Royal College of Music
- Sound Connections
- The Voices Foundation
- Tri-borough Music Hub
- Tri-borough School Standards  
(Local Authority Children's Services)
- WCC Children's Centres
- Wigmore Hall

The aim of Tri-Music Together was to develop early years music provision across the three boroughs through a workforce development programme of targeted support and continuing professional development. An aspect of the project was to create resources to support early childhood music and to create a legacy. This guidance has been written to help raise the profile of music in early childhood and to support those working with children in early childhood not only in the Tri-borough, but further afield. As an Associate of Early Education, the Tri-Music Together EYFS Strategic Lead Nicola Burke, was able to create this guidance with the support of Early Education, Tri-Music Together and Youth Music.

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tri-music together





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