

INSPIRING EARLY YEARS



ADVENTURES IN MUSIC CASE STUDY

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What did we set out to do?

Inspire Nottinghamshire Libraries, like most public library services, have a strong track record of work with children aged under 5 and their families. Libraries across Nottinghamshire run regular rhyme sessions and story sessions attracting tens of thousands of children annually.

We wanted to build on this foundation to enhance our offer to our youngest customers and develop an exciting cultural programme for early years children and their families. Supported by Arts Council England, National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding we wanted the programme to introduce early years children to new experiences, support their learning and language skills and

to create memorable and fun experiences in the library. The early years programme had three strands: one focused on visual arts (*Little Creatives*), one on music (*Adventures in Music*) and one on story and drama (*Story Explorers*).

Sessions took place at our largest 12 libraries between 2018 – 2023.



In the Music Hub we have always believed that early years education is a golden time to begin working with our young people. As early years Foundation Stage (EYFS) work was not funded under the National Plan for Music Education, we were delighted to be able to develop our programme with funding for our work under the banner of a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO).

Our application stated: We will develop a lively, interactive programme of musical activity reaching over 4,300 children across the 4 years. Delivered by Inspire Music musicians and supported by library staff, the sessions will use rhythm, rhymes,

music and movement to stimulate creativity and imagination and to develop language and literacy skills. Designed in weekly blocks of 10 sessions, children will be able to build on learning and gain confidence in exploring and making music.

There is a wealth of research demonstrating a link between exposure to rhymes and music in early years for speech and language development. This fun and creative programme will build on those principles to give an early cultural learning experience that equips children with the skills they need for future learning.

Let's play some music



What were the results?

Within a few weeks we had the basis of the curriculum mapped out and the objectives for each session completed. The programme is underpinned by the Early Learning Goals for the UK.

ethos

The ethos for the course was to provide opportunities for pre-school children to acquire core skills and understanding through participation in imaginative and play based musical activities.

framework

We were very keen to provide a framework for learning and activity but not be prescriptive over the exact content and so lesson plans were formulated with suggested use of repertoire.

workshops

We held workshops with teachers who had an interest in early years work, along with the Early Years Teachers in the county. We asked advice from the Early Years Team in the County Council and trialed aspects in EYFS settings.



Each session has a layout as follows:

Introduce session – pitch exploration – simple songs with movement – vocal improvisation – sound makers – exploring musical elements – story/poem/soundscape to end – close of session.

Each week takes on a new theme as part of the adventure. Examples of these are fairies, mini-beasts, and pirates all with suggested layout, content, and resources.



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We branded the programme and used this to create:

certificates

pathway document
for parents and carers to monitor the skills being learned

instructional booklets

resource booklets

We held 3 blocks of 10 sessions in 12 of our libraries per year in 2018 and 2019. In the spring of 2020, we took our entire programme online and delivered into people's houses. We created a block of 10 recorded sessions that became part of our Covid resources. We created a series of smaller bite-size videos to support parents and carers at home.

We restarted our live delivery in September 2021 with the full programme. We adapted our delivery, and each child had their own resource bag which was able to be taken home and brought to each session. The circles became bigger, and we restricted attendance to make sure there was enough space for all to learn safely within the Covid guidelines.

We held 3 separate sessions a year in all settings and thus we exceeded our target on number of children we have impacted on.

"My son loves these events and the library in general, he talks about it all the time."

"Such a lovely class. My daughter loved it, so nice to have the instruments to take home."





What did we learn?

Our teachers have been on quite a journey to embrace the skills needed for early years education, however, once they were trained and had done some practical sessions, they have been incredibly enthusiastic.

Top tips

- *train staff until they are confident*
- *wear comfy 'sitting on the floor' clothing*
- *be prepared to modify*
- *have more resources than you think you will need*
- *prepare the space to limit distractions*
- *build a relationship with the adults in the room*

"Absolutely enjoyed the course. My son has enjoyed interacting with other kids and his development has come on as weeks have progressed."

"Delightful class, music for little people, library is a very special place."

"My son loves these session, and I do too!"

- ▶ Some teachers didn't enjoy the change and went back to their more traditional teaching. It has meant a change of pace and of energy.
- ▶ They have had to learn to engage the carers within the sessions and ensure they were laying a foundation for extension work at home. This was a new skill for many of our teachers as much of their experience is school based and there is not much interaction with carers on a weekly basis. We set up a mentoring programme to increase the skills of our wider instrumental team and share good practice and enabled peer learning within forums.
- ▶ The plan was for library staff to learn alongside our music team but we found it was not possible to release staff in the current climate and so we put this as a possible development at a later date.
- ▶ We added in a pathway document which maps the skills learnt over the course of the 10 weeks. We created carer support packs which gave guidance for extension activities at home. Finally, we designed a certificate of completion which completed our suite of materials.



Appendix 1

Example of a session overview

Land of the Minibeasts

Lesson Songs and Activities

Listen: Flight of the Bumblebee

Sing: The Stop Song, Ring a Roses, Round and Round the Garden, Wiggly

Woo, Sleeping Bunnies

Instruments: Egg shakers

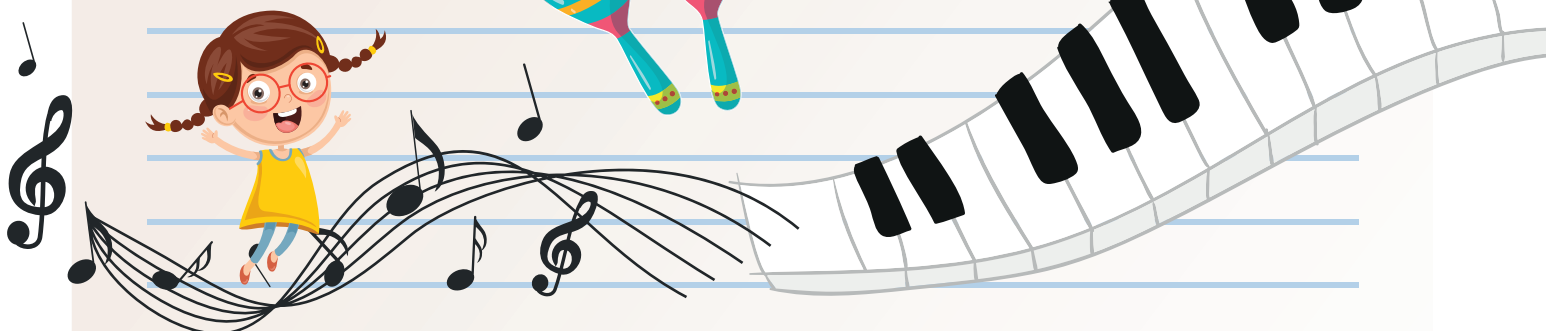
Resources

Per Group: Accompanying instrument (optional), song sack, themed story/poem

Per Child: Themed puppets/toys, streamers and/or soft play dough

Musical Learning

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Start and stop | <input type="radio"/> Tempo |
| <input type="radio"/> Exploring vocal sounds | <input type="radio"/> Rhythm |
| <input type="radio"/> Listening | <input type="radio"/> Timbre |
| <input type="radio"/> Singing | <input type="radio"/> Playing instruments |
| <input type="radio"/> Pitch | <input type="radio"/> Being creative |
| <input type="radio"/> Pulse | <input type="radio"/> Being imaginative |
| <input type="radio"/> Dynamics | <input type="radio"/> Structure |



Appendix 2

Example of a session sections

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION

(Hello song and travelling song)

HELLO SONG

Suggested Travel song:
The Runaway Train

ACTIVITIES:

March to the pulse.
Add in arm movements pretending to be a train.
(Extension - add in sand blocks and a train whistle to create train sounds)

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Accompanying instrument e.g. ukulele. Train whistle, sand blocks, recording of *The Runaway Train*

PITCH EXPLORATION

(Vocal warm ups, glissandi focusing on head voice- use of props where appropriate to introduce sound and symbol concepts)

ACTIVITIES:

Introduce fairy prop and wands with ribbons. Follow the shape of the wands and ribbons with voices. Invite children to create shapes for everyone to follow.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Fairy wands with ribbons attached.

SINGING SIMPLE SONGS

(Matching pitch, rhythm, pulse awareness, building a repertoire of songs and dances including echo, movement, action songs, finger plays and circle games)

SUGGESTED PIECES:

This can be any suggestion from the children or based on any props from a song sack. Circle songs work well as a fairy ring.

ACTIVITIES:

Introduce the song session as part of the imaginary adventure e.g. "*The fairies love to sit in a circle on the grass and sing their favourite nursery rhymes, lets join in!*" In a circle, sing a selection of songs from the song sack-include actions/movement.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

A song sack filled with props for children's songs. Parachute or giant scrunchie if using circle songs.

VOCAL IMPROVISATION

(Using props to initiate improvisation of more than two tones)

ACTIVITIES:

Using the fairy toy, encourage the children to ask the fairy to do tasks using a singing voice e.g. "*Can you do a cartwheel?*" Sing alongside less confident children.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Fairy Toy

EXPLORING MUSICAL ELEMENTS

(Creating rhythms and tapping simple dupe and triple time to recorded music, highlighting pitch, form and expression through simple movement)

SUGGESTED PIECES:

Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy (Tchaikovsky)

ACTIVITIES:

Use the rainbow shakers to tap to the pulse and the ribbons to follow the pitch.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Recording of suggested piece and the sound maker that the children have made.

MUSIC BASED STORY, POEM, SOUNDSCAPE OR SONG TALE

(Play alongside others engaged in the same theme and introduce musical vocabulary)

ACTIVITIES:

Read a Fairy-based story or poem to bring everyone together towards the end of the session. Themed background music (e.g. *Fairy Dance from Peter Pan*) whilst reading is optional.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

The Fairy Ring Poem.
Fairy Dance from Peter Pan recorded music.

CLOSE OF SESSION

(End in unison with a repeat of the travelling song and a goodbye song)

TRAVEL SONG:

The Runaway Train
Goodbye Song

ACTIVITIES:

Use the travel song to end the imaginary adventure and draw the session to a close with a Goodbye Song.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Accompanying instrument e.g. ukulele. Train whistle, sand blocks, recording of *The Runaway Train*.

Appendix 3

Example of a assessment

Adventures in Music Assessment Log

Name of child:

	Emerging	Competent	Consistently competent
The child is able to imitate simple melodic patterns with and without words	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The child is able to remember and sing an entire simple song tunefully	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The child is able to improvise an original tune using two tones or more	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The child is able to imitate choreographed movements with appropriate expression to a song, rhyme and/or piece of classical music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Pathway document



Resource bags for use through Covid



Certificate of completion