



FAIRBEATS! Teacher toolkit **By Fairbeats! Ukulele Leader: Ben Reeve**

Fairbeats is a small music charity based in South London. We work with refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants age 3-16. Fairbeats is all about empowering children to create new music, find new confidence and make new friends. We do this by teaching musical skills such as how to play the ukulele, fife or drums and facilitating participants to create music together through improvisation, songwriting and composition. We aim to create safe respectful spaces, where the voices of children are heard and acted upon and where everybody feels valued and empowered.

This toolkit was written by one of our most experienced music leaders Ben Reeve and is the result of observation, consultation and research of EYFS, KS1 and KS2 music teaching (as well as drawing upon his knowledge of teaching beyond these key stages as a secondary school music teacher and Head of Music). It also takes into consideration the additional challenges faced by Fairbeats! leaders.

The toolkit is a series of tips, tricks and recommendations divided up into the following categories:

1. Engagement and differentiation
2. Modelling
3. Catering for children with EAL
4. Behaviour strategies
5. Resources, links and organisations

There are plenty of excellent resources available to music leaders (many of which will be detailed in this document). So whilst this document should be of helpful use, please take some time to explore resources elsewhere too. In particular, Dr Alison Daubney has created a detailed 'Primary music toolkit,' which is an excellent starting point.

<http://ismtrust.org/resources/primary-toolkit>

1. Engagement and differentiation

The 'hook' - an instant engagement tool

This could be:

- A room set up in a new way
- A thought-provoking question
- A piece of music playing as children enter
- An instant activity (for example, joining in with a rhythmic ostinato)

Check-in – a way to reengage

After setting a task, 'checking-in' with a child individually makes them feel supported (without embarrassing them in front of the whole group), and allows you as the leader to understand their needs better. To be seen to be doing this by the children also means that they are more likely to approach you to ask for support – a good thing!

The 'little wave' – a subtle cry for help!

Create a signal for the children to use if they need help. A 'little wave', for example, allows them to inform you that they need support without drawing unnecessary attention to themselves.

Bite-size chunks – achievable steps

Keep tasks short and meaningful to maintain engagement. Having prolonged periods of 'practice time', for example, can lead to disengagement quickly. Instead, break up practice with intervening feedback and/or complementary tasks. This also impacts on the pace of the lesson – doing short tasks allows the pace to remain fast, giving more fluency to the session.

Choice – children taking ownership

There are many levels of choice that can be adopted within a learning environment. Giving choice allows young people to take ownership and have a meaningful say in their musical experience.

Examples could be:

- Choosing what chord to warm-up on
- Choosing what song to play
- Choosing whether to play a solo
- Choosing which lyric they prefer
- Choosing what colour ukulele to play!

All of these, whilst seemingly simple choices, are empowering and improve engagement.

Let's get physical! – engaging all in music through movement

Whilst music lends itself well to learning through doing, this can be further enhanced by incorporating movement into activities.

Examples could be:

- Marching to the beat
- Doing actions whilst singing a song
- Swapping instruments during a warm-up
- Listening to a piece of music and acting like an animal that they feel the music represents

Stretch it – increasing the difficulty of tasks

If a child is finding a task too easy, it is advisable to have a way to 'stretch' them. This could be an additional task, but could also be an extension of the task set.

Examples could be:

- Playing a part faster
- Partnering with and supporting someone who is struggling
- Improvisation
- A 'star performer' task that is noticeably more difficult

Phone a friend – children supporting each other

Peer support can be an effective way for pupils to engage each other in music-making. If a child is having difficulty with a task, they could 'phone a friend' who could then go to support them or make a suggestion.

The challenge – setting goals

Ideally the children will be setting their own challenges, but sometimes creating a special challenge for them to push themselves towards can really motivate (especially those with a competitive streak).

Mix it up – varying the way children practice

Individually, round the circle, in pairs, in groups, back to front, as a group, call & response, recording, performing to an adult... essentially all different ways for children to do the same thing! Repetition is of course key when learning, however it's important to vary the way repetition is presented to the group.

Using technology

Creating backing tracks or using YouTube (for example) backings can help engage the children in effective practice. Even putting a drum beat in the background can make the music more 'real' and enthuse children further.

TOP TIP – use loops on the Garageband app on your iPad (allows you to change the tempo)

Levels of difficulty – challenging all

Sometimes differentiation in music will happen quite naturally or implicitly. There will be times though when you'll need to cater more explicitly for different needs and levels of experience. Having simple, intermediate and advanced versions of tasks means all abilities can be challenged. If you give clear options then children can take ownership choosing the level that feels most comfortable for them.

For example, learning the C chord on the ukulele:

Simple: Strum a C chord every 4 beats
Intermediate: Create a strummed rhythm using the C chord
Advanced: Create a broken chord pattern using the C chord

Collaboration

Combining musical skills is ambitious, and extremely rewarding for both leaders and children. Where possible, try to pull together the various musical skills you have available to engage all in music-making that showcases all types of musical talent.

Examples could be: Having a singer/rapper or drummer in a ukulele performance
 Composing using all instruments available (not just singing + percussion)

2. Modelling (demonstration)

Be the expert – teacher demo

It's inspiring for children to hear an expert musician. Don't be afraid to show them how a piece of music should be performed, and don't be afraid to show off a bit! For example, playing them something that they're going to learn next lesson can get them really excited (and motivate them to practice it before you see them next).

Join in – being wholly inclusive

Very simply encourage EVERYONE in the room to be part of your music making. Creating a wholly inclusive atmosphere means everyone can learn from everyone as well as engaging all. This sometimes means altering your expectations and valuing the different things that children bring, rather than having a fixed idea of what they should be achieving or how they should be behaving. Inclusivity also includes adults: if there are staff or volunteers in the room who aren't taking part, have a chat with them after a session to find out if they'd like to join in or if there are things that would help them feel more confident to join in.

Guinea pigs – children modeling tasks

Before setting children on a group task, have a 'guinea pig' group show the class how to go about it (directed by the leader). This is relatable for the children and can make a task seem more achievable than first thought.

Recordings – how the pros do it

If you can find a recording of a piece of music that the children are tackling, play it to them! This shows them how it goes, as well as motivating them to make their rendition stand up to the standard of the recording. Even better still... get them to play along.

What did I do wrong?

Demonstrating something with a deliberate mistake is a different way to engage children in critical listening. If they know what's wrong then they're less likely to make the mistake themselves.

3. Catering for children with EAL (English as an additional language)

Actions

When singing, actions can help those who don't speak English as confidently understand what they're singing about.

Visuals

Pictures can aid understanding of words that children find difficult, as can close-up demonstrations (eg of flute fingering) whilst stressing the word.

Repetition

Repeat key skills/words often, and ask children to repeat (or even demonstrate musically) key words back to you.

Colours/numbers

Especially effective with ukulele, using colours to represent chords means they are far easier to understand. Numbers are also effective when learning fretting. Numbers and colours are often part of the early stages of learning a language so could be more familiar.

Buddying-up

In a multi-national class, children often understand the needs of children with EAL very well and are very patient and supportive. Make the most of this by encouraging peer support and perhaps using particularly effective 'buddies' to support those with greater EAL needs.

Copying

Another form of repetition - copying others makes a process easier to understand.

Rhythmic work

... is by nature very inclusive and requires minimal knowledge of English (if any!). Rhythmic games, drumming work, chair drumming(!) are all great ways to include everyone regardless of any language barriers.

4. Behaviour strategies

Firstly, the best behavior management strategy is **ENGAGEMENT**. It's when children are disengaged that they display disruptive behaviour. **EMPATHY** is also key as almost always there is a good reason (often something deep-rooted) that means someone comes to a lesson frustrated, angry or disinterested.

Routines

Set clear expectations and try to establish routines where appropriate.

Examples could be:

- Lining up outside the room before entering
- 'Rest' position for instrumental work
- A routine for handing out instruments

Helpers

Some children respond really well to being given a role of responsibility.

Examples could be:

- Handing out instruments
- Teaching someone
- Putting equipment away

Positive praise

Rather than drawing attention to poor behavior, comment on the good behavior being shown by the class. When an individual then adjusts their behavior, praise this.

Rewards

Reward good behaviour or excellent effort. Children love being able to show off rewards they have received and this can motivate them to try that bit harder.

Warning system

Whilst this should come second to positive praise and rewards, establishing clear expectations and issuing penalties can be necessary in order to avoid difficult situations escalating. Issuing a warning gives a child an opportunity to adjust their behaviour. If a child adjusts their behaviour well after a warning, this should be praised. Conversely, if a child continues to demonstrate the same poor behaviour after a warning, you need to take action.

Time-out/a little word

It may well be that a child is feeling wound up about something, and simply needs a moment to calm down. In which case, don't be afraid to give the child that opportunity. They may well need to step outside for a second – you can then have a quick private word if you feel it's necessary. This sensitive approach, taking the time to understand someone's emotions, and being empathetic is often greatly appreciated.

Rhythmic signal

During a period of loudness clap a rhythm that the whole group has to clap back to gain their attention.

Quiet power

Sometimes, to refocus a group, speaking to them in a hushed tone can gain their attention. It means that they have to be quiet to hear what you're saying!

Teacher voice

The opposite of 'quiet power'! Raising your voice for a brief moment (note that raising your voice is very different from shouting) can get attention quickly.

5. Resources, links and organisations:

There are PLENTY of resources available online if you look hard enough, many of which are free. Below are just a few well-known examples that we have found useful over the years:

Participatory Arts with Young Refugees (Oval House)

- <https://baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/YoungRefugee.pdf>

Join Facebook groups eg Primary School Music Teachers

Fairbeats! music leader toolkit

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- regular posts from experienced teachers with resources shared and support offered

Musical Contexts (musicalcontexts.co.uk)

- requires a one-off subscription fee but some good resources here

Times Educational Supplement website (tes.com)

- go to 'resources' then search for early years or primary music resources

Sing Up (singup.org)

- high-quality singing resources including backing tracks

Music teacher's resource site (mtrs.co.uk)

- free resources

Charanga (charanga.com)

- requires a subscription. Many schools use this site as their main resource for music

Musical futures (musicalfutures.org)

- some great resources here (check out the chair drumming!)

Music Mark (musicmark.org.uk)

- for information on all things to do with music education (eg news and courses)

Sound Connections (sound-connections.org.uk)

- specialist information and resources on 'Early Years Music' + 'Music in Challenging Circumstances' as well as music education news, training and networking opportunities