

**Musical inclusion:**  
guidance for Associates  
supporting SEND students  
in mainstream schools



[www.wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk](http://www.wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk)  
[info@wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk](mailto:info@wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk)  
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**This guide is for music leaders working in Wiltshire mainstream schools who may be working with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) as part of their sessions.<sup>1</sup>**

**It offers practical advice on how to ensure music sessions are inclusive, and check whether any adjustments need to be made.**

The term SEND is widely recognised – but it is also a term which covers a wide range of needs and disabilities. Some disabilities are invisible, and some educational needs are mental health or illness related. In any school there are children with a wide range of needs at any one time – so whether teaching in large or small groups, or one to one we need to take an inclusive approach –recognising the diversity of students, enabling all students to access musical opportunities, to fully participate in music making and learning, and to demonstrate their knowledge and strengths when progress is assessed.

Music making is a unique activity with the power to transform every young person's engagement with the world and their aspirations. Being a music leader means you already have some amazing tools and skills at your disposal!



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<sup>1</sup> Consultation into disabling barriers to formal music education (Drake Music, 2011)

## Inclusion in music

Inclusion in music means everyone having an equal opportunity to participate meaningfully. Each person's journey will look and feel different with a variety of outcomes possible – musical, personal and social.

The National Plan for Music Education (DfE, 2012) states that music is a right for every child, whatever their circumstances or disabling barriers they may face including:

“...equality of opportunity for all pupils, regardless of race; gender; where they live; their levels of musical talent; parental income; whether they have special educational needs or disabilities; and whether they are looked after children.”

Working inclusively is a fantastic opportunity to open up this world of music for young people who may have least access to it and in the process continue to broaden your professional skill set and experiences.

**Wiltshire Music Connect Associates and Associate Organisations recognise and are committed to continuing to develop inclusive approaches to their music teaching, and report that they need to be prepared to respond in a flexible way on a regular basis, in both group and individual teaching.**



## Planning for musical inclusion

**Research shows that disabled young people view poor organisation and planning as significant a barrier to participating in music as the nature of a person's disability.**

As a visiting music leader in mainstream schools it is likely you will work with young people with SEND, either one-to-one, in small teaching groups, or as part of ensemble whole class teaching.

The most common primary types of need in mainstream education include Moderate Learning Difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Speech, Language and Communication needs – but many other types of need are catered for in mainstream schools.



# How will I know which young people have SEND in my teaching groups?

**5 practical steps you can take to find out more about the young people you will be making music with and to support your lesson planning.**

## 1. Ask before you start delivery

Contacting key staff at your schools before delivery starts is a useful way to begin planning for inclusion. The SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) may have the best overview if you are teaching young people across different key stages or, if you are teaching just one class, then the class teacher will be the best person to ask.

Trying to locate staff during a busy school day to talk in person is not easy at the best of times so emailing ahead or booking a phone call is often the best way to communicate initially.

Note that schools cannot discuss sensitive information about individual children via email due to data protection requirements, so your first email may simply be to introduce yourself and arrange for a phone call or face-to-face meeting.



## How will I know which young people have SEND in my teaching groups? – Five practical steps

continued

### 2. What to ask

The key question you can ask school staff is ‘are there any young people in this teaching group/ class who might require additional support to access my music session?’ It’s most useful to discuss the range of needs rather than focussing on just SEND ‘labels’ or medical information. You will want information that will help you to support the child and access the music making.

#### Examples include:

- What musical experiences / skills does this child/young person already have?
- Might they startle at loud or sudden noises?
- What is the ideal amount of time for a music session for this child initially?
- Will they be able to access conventional instruments or need something else?
- Should this child be sat nearer to me in order to hear any instructions clearly?
- Will this child find it challenging to work with other children in a group?
- Could I prepare music resources in different formats for this child?

If you have direct contact with parents / carers of the pupils you will be teaching you can provide them with a sign-up sheet and ask directly whether they might need additional support – whether there are any special needs or access requirements you should be made aware of.



### 3. One page 'pupil profiles'

Many schools create one-page profiles for young people with SEND which list key information about their needs, interests and educational/ personal targets. These profiles are often summaries of more detailed documents for each child, most commonly Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Most schools will be happy for you to read these profiles but only on-site i.e. they cannot be taken away by you.

### 4. Keeping notes

You may find it useful to make some notes when you are planning to work with students with SEND, and to help your students progress. A reminder that, even if you are registered with the Information Commissioners Office to store and process data you need explicit consent and agreement to record any health-related information.

You must take qualified advice regarding GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and check with the schools you are working with – as child and data protection guidelines may vary from school to school, depending on status and key stages. Naturally, if you have a direct relationship with parents / carers you need to obtain their consent. As always, any hand written notes should never use full names or any information that could be put together in order to identify a child, e.g. date of birth, gender, address. Use initials only, and focus on making notes about the resources, approaches and equipment needed to enable the student's musical progress rather than disability or medical information.



## How will I know which young people have SEND in my teaching groups? – Five practical steps

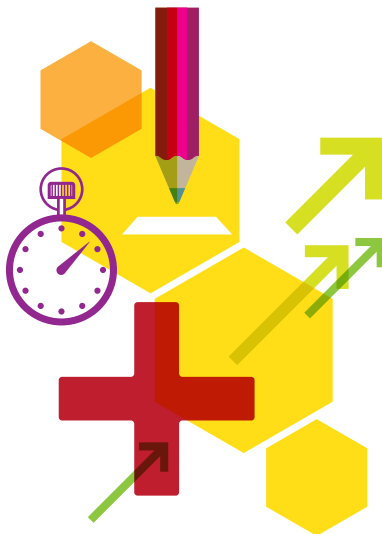
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### 5. Making reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 says changes or adjustments should be made to ensure children and adults can access a range of services, including education if they are disabled. This means we take positive steps to remove barriers that people with a disability face. The Equalities Act 2010 calls this ***the duty to make reasonable adjustments***.

Music exam boards including Trinity and ABRSM publish their reasonable adjustment guidance – for example allowing extra time, or using scale books, extra equipment, or learning support in examinations. These always need to be notified well in advance of the exam – and will usually need evidence (SENCO report or EHCP for example) It is worth finding out about the reasonable adjustment procedures for the exam boards you use.

Wiltshire Associates can contact us for advice and support about making reasonable adjustments for young people they are working with.





## Five principles to support your inclusive approach

Planning to work inclusively is crucial but it's not the end of the story! Once you begin actually delivering lessons it is crucial to keep asking questions and reflecting on your sessions so that you continue to improve the quality and accessibility of what you offer over time.

### 1. You don't have to be an 'SEND expert' to work inclusively

Inclusive music making has a reputation for being complex: all that tricky music technology and so many different types of need amongst the students to cater for. However, the reality is more straightforward – the majority of what you need is covered by 'basic' good music teaching skills for any situation – including:

- having a child centred approach
- working at a pace that suits the child
- choosing repertoire that motivates and challenges them and which is presented in formats they can understand

### 2. Think 'social model of disability'

The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. For example, a wheelchair user wishing to get on a bus is only disabled by the lack of an accessible bus stop and vehicle, not by their physical impairment. Planning ahead can make all the difference – is the room right? Are the instruments accessible? Do you have repertoire and exercises a range of formats?

There's no pressure to get everything right straight away, it will be an evolving process in partnership with the young people themselves.



## Five principles to support your inclusive approach

continued

### 3. Remember you are part of a bigger team supporting a student

No music leader can single-handedly achieve success for their SEND students – it always involves teamwork.

SEND pupils often have support staff. They know the students the best because they work with them every day! So always make the best use of these professionals. Involve them in planning, and direct them clearly on how best to support their student's music making. They may feel that they are not 'musically talented' but with your encouragement they will feel more confident about their ability to support their students in music sessions.

### 4. Find each student's musical identity

Every young person has a unique relationship with music, shaped by multiple influences. For disabled young people this can include how the nature of their disability affects playing an instrument or singing but it equally covers what music they listen to in their own time or what they deem to be cool at any given time! Take the time to find out what a student's musical identity is – do they like to play fast or slow? Have they memorised a Grime tune in its entirety and are just waiting to show you? Do they find it hard to play in a large group?

Use these ingredients to shape how you will plan your sessions and create musical opportunities that work for them.



## 5. The power of one note

Some of the young disabled people you work with will not, for a host of reasons, be able to play loads of notes, in sequential order, to a strict pulse.

This doesn't mean they are not musical, or effective musicians, as the anecdote below demonstrates:



“Recently when observing a whole class instrumental lesson a government minister expressed concern that the children were still only playing one note after a term’s work.

In one sense she was right to wonder, but in another she perhaps missed the point. In this lesson the children could have been playing their one note with a real sense of expression; keeping in time with good tone, ensemble and dynamic contrasts, and listening and responding to others.

Together with an inventive accompaniment from the teacher the result may well have been musical. The children’s understanding of the structure, involvement in the performance and care of the music could have demonstrated that they had indeed made good progress, but that their musical development was more qualitative than quantitative.”

## Inclusive Music Aware – Associate provider status

There's a common saying that 'Inclusion is a journey, not a destination'. Rather than simply a box ticking exercise before moving on, making music accessible to everyone is a continually evolving process, generating a rich seam of creativity, learning and enjoyment from both teachers and students.

All Associates are asked to pledge a minimum of three SEND CPD activities per year to request IMA – Inclusive Music Aware – status in our Associate Directory. These activities can be anything from spending some time researching online, reading a book, attending a free workshop, networking with colleagues, viewing a webinar or film online, or going to a conference. "IMA" status means that schools and parents/carers looking for Associates with an inclusive approach can easily search and find you in our directory.

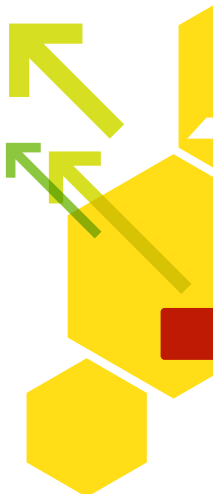
**More information and how to make your pledge here:**

**[wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk/send/ima](http://wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk/send/ima)**

### Further support

Visit our website for more resources, including specific information about working with young people with dyslexia, hearing impaired and deaf, and young people with ASD:

**[wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk/SEND](http://wiltshiremusicconnect.org.uk/SEND)**



Wiltshire Music Connect is the music education hub for Wiltshire: connecting all children and young people with musical opportunities. Because music is excellent for developing young minds.

