Excerpt from ‘The power of music to change lives – A National Plan for Music Education’

DfE 2022

**Music for children with SEND in mainstream and special schools**

A high-quality music education is the right of every pupil. It should be inclusive of all, regardless of additional needs, in both mainstream and specialist education settings. Schools should aim high with music – an individual child’s needs may make some aspects of teaching, learning and performance different, but there should be no compromise on quality provision.

Indeed, not providing music opportunities for young people with SEND denies them a chance to experience the joys of the subject and to progress their learning in it, so schools should not, for example, send pupils with SEND to another classroom when music is happening.

Music education for pupils with SEND must be a long-term provision, sustained, rehearsed and nurtured carefully through effective personal interaction and collaboration, trust and time. It must be more than one-off workshops which, if solely relied on, will only show children what they are denied access to on a regular basis. Schools should not only actively include children with SEND in music teaching, but should also consider where music opportunities could be led by pupils with SEND.

Schools have to publish equality objectives under the Equality Act 2010 and should consider whether they could helpfully cover greater inclusion of pupils with SEND in the school’s musical life. They should be willing to challenge any pre-conceptions they might have about the musical potential of a child with particular needs and should discuss adjustments with their pupils, and, where appropriate, their parents and carers. Adjustments could range from differentiating resources (as teachers would do in any school subject), to providing specific equipment, adaptation or technology to ensure music is accessible.

Adaptive instruments should be celebrated as much as other types of instrument, and teachers should be supportive of music-making, using these instruments, which may be less familiar to them. Music Hubs should support schools with identifying the best instruments for their pupils and sourcing them at an affordable cost, working with partners across the country.

Teachers should also consider how they can make disabled role models visible to pupils. These could be their peers or previous students, taking lead roles in school ensembles and performances, for example, or highlighting the successes of musicians who have disabilities themselves. Equally, school leadership and music teams should consider how they can bring in disabled musicians, music leaders and music educators, or disability specialist or disabled-led organisations, to help train their staff and build an inclusive musical offer.

There are opportunities for collaboration between music organisations which are disabled-led or have expertise in disability and a range of schools and education settings. Collaboration will build understanding and practical action which will support more children and young people with SEND to develop their potential in music. There are strong examples of positive partnerships, but still further to go.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-power-of-music-to-change-lives-a-national-plan-for-music-education>