



MUSIC EXPRESS Year 1 Skills



Many of the learning points are covered in several units (aspects of musical learning do not happen in isolation), but we've added single references to help with planning and finding units that fulfil certain criteria. Some points appear under more than one heading for the same reason.

Skills are reinforced and built upon throughout the scheme. After Year 1, only those activities which bring a new level of challenge when compared to the previous year are listed.



By the end of Year 1, pupils should be able to:

Use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes	
• Create, respond to, place and change vocal sounds	Unit 1: Ourselves
• Understand (recognise) pitch: make high and low vocal sounds	Unit 3: Animals
• Sing a song with contrasting high and low melodies	Unit 3: Animals
• Control vocal dynamics, duration and timbre	Unit 4: Weather
• Sing a song together as a group	Unit 7: Our School
• Rehearse and perform a rap with sound effects using voices	Unit 9: Storytime
• Combine voices and movement to perform a chant and a song	Unit 11: Travel
• Use voices to create descriptive sounds	Unit 12: Water
Play tuned and untuned instruments musically	
• Learn to play percussion with control (e.g. changing dynamics)	Unit 2: Number
• Identify and keep a steady beat using instruments	Unit 2: Number
• Explore and control dynamics, duration, and timbre with instruments	Unit 4: Weather
• Play percussion instruments at different speeds (tempi)	Unit 5: Machines
• Create a soundscape using instruments	Unit 7: Our School
• Explore sounds on instruments and find different ways to vary their sound	Unit 8: Pattern
• Rehearse and perform a chant/rap with sound effects using instruments	Unit 9: Storytime
• Use instruments to create descriptive sounds	Unit 12: Water
Listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music	
• Recognise and respond to changes in tempo in music	Unit 2: Number
• Identify a sequence of sounds (structure) in a piece of music	Unit 4: Weather
• Respond to music through movement	Unit 4: Weather
• Identify changes in pitch and respond to them with movement	Unit 6: Seasons
• Listen in detail to a piece of orchestral music (e.g. identify instruments)	Unit 6: Seasons
• Identify metre by recognising its pattern	Unit 8: Pattern
• Understand how music can tell a story	Unit 9: Storytime
• Respond to change of mood in a piece of music with a slow and fast steady beat	Unit 10: Our bodies
• Identify a repeated rhythm pattern	Unit 10: Our bodies
• Understand musical structure by listening and responding through movement	Unit 12: Water
Experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music*	
• Explore, create and place vocal and body percussion sounds	Unit 1: Ourselves
• Explore and develop an understanding of pitch using the voice and body movements	Unit 3: Animals
• Explore and control dynamics (volume), duration, and timbre with voices, body percussion, and instruments	Unit 4: Weather
• Improvise descriptive music	Unit 4: Weather
• Play and control changes in tempo	Unit 5: Machines
• Relate pitch changes to graphic symbols and perform pitch changes vocally	Unit 6: Seasons
• Explore different sound sources and materials	Unit 7: Our School
• Create a soundscape using instruments as part of a song performance	Unit 7: Our School
• Explore sounds on instruments and find different ways to vary their sound	Unit 8: Pattern
• Play fast, slow, loud, and quiet sounds on percussion instruments	Unit 9: Storytime
• Invent and perform new rhythms to a steady beat	Unit 10: Our bodies
• Create, play and combine simple word rhythms	Unit 11: Travel
• Create a picture in sound	Unit 12: Water

*Inter-related dimensions of music: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations





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By the end of Year 2, pupils should be able to:

Use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes	
• Develop the use of vocal sounds to express feelings	Unit 1: Ourselves
• Chant and sing in two parts while playing a steady beat	Unit 4: Our bodies
• Explore voices to create descriptive musical effects	Unit 7: Storytime
• Sing with expression, paying attention to the pitch shape of the melody	Unit 8: Seasons
• Perform a rhythmic chant and play an independent rhythm pattern accompaniment	Unit 9: Weather
• Perform an updated version of a traditional nursery rhyme with a rap section	Unit 9: Weather
• Understand pitch through singing, movement, and note names	Unit 11: Water
• Prepare and improve a performance using movement, voice and percussion	Unit 12: Travel
Play tuned and untuned instruments musically	
• Listen to and repeat rhythmic patterns on body percussion and instruments	Unit 4: Our bodies
• Play pitch lines on tuned percussion	Unit 5: Animals
• Perform a steady beat and simple rhythms using movement, percussion, and body percussion	Unit 6: Number
• Accompany a song with vocal, body percussion and instrumental ostinati	Unit 8: Seasons
• Explore and develop an understanding of pitch using percussion instruments	Unit 11: Water
• Use instruments expressively in response to visual stimuli	Unit 12: Travel
Listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music	
• Identify ways of producing sounds (e.g. shake, strike, pluck)	Unit 3: Our land
• Match descriptive sounds to images	Unit 3: Our land
• Listen in detail to a piece of orchestral music (e.g. identify how it depicts a season)	Unit 9: Weather
• Use simple musical vocabulary to describe music	Unit 12: Travel
• Listen, describe and respond to contemporary orchestral music	Unit 12: Travel
Experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music*	
• Notate pitch shape and duration using simple line graphics	Unit 1: Ourselves
• Understand the structure of call and response songs	Unit 1: Ourselves
• Mark beats within a four-beat metre	Unit 2: Toys
• Explore timbre and texture to understand how sounds can be descriptive	Unit 3: Our land
• Understand and perform rising and falling pitch direction	Unit 5: Animals
• Read and write simple pitch line notation	Unit 5: Animals
• Combine pitch changes with changes in other elements/dimensions	Unit 5: Animals
• Understand and differentiate between beat and rhythm	Unit 6: Number
• Combine sounds to create a musical effect in response to visual stimuli	Unit 7: Storytime
• Identify rising and falling pitch	Unit 8: Seasons
• Compose music to illustrate a story	Unit 9: Weather
• Perform and create simple three- and four-beat rhythms using a simple score	Unit 10: Pattern
• Explore different ways to organise music	Unit 10: Pattern
• Understand and play from simple notation	Unit 12: Travel

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By the end of Year 3, pupils should be able to:

Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

• Sing in two-part harmony	Unit 1: Environment
• Accompany a song with a melodic ostinato on tuned percussion	Unit 1: Environment
• Layer rhythms using untuned percussion instruments	Unit 2: Building
• Perform a pentatonic song with tuned and untuned accompaniment	Unit 5: China
• Play independent parts in more than one metre simultaneously on body percussion, untuned and tuned percussion	Unit 6: Time
• Perform rhythmic ostinati individually and in combination	Unit 6: Time
• Copy and create a wide range of vocal sounds to incorporate into a song	Unit 8: Communication
• Sing in two parts (two different melodies) with movements and percussion	Unit 9: Human body
• Perform a round in three parts	Unit 11: Ancient worlds

Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music*

• Select descriptive sounds to accompany a poem	Unit 1: Environment
• Choose different timbres to make an accompaniment	Unit 1: Environment
• Make choices about musical structure	Unit 2: Building
• Improvise descriptive music	Unit 4: Poetry
• Improvise to an ostinato accompaniment	Unit 6: Time
• Develop a song by choosing lyrics and structure	Unit 10: Singing French
• Arrange an accompaniment with attention to balance and musical effect	Unit 11: Ancient worlds
• Explore simple accompaniments using beat and rhythm patterns	Unit 12: Food and drink
• Use a score and combine sounds to create different musical textures	Unit 12: Food and drink

Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

• Identify a sequence of sounds (structure) in a piece of music	Unit 4: Poetry
• Identify the metre in a piece of music	Unit 6: Time
• Recognise pitch shapes	Unit 10: Singing French
• Explore musical phrases, melodic imitation and rounds	Unit 11: Ancient worlds

Use and understand staff and other musical notations

• Use graphic notation with the pentatonic scale	Unit 5: China
• Recognise rhythm patterns in staff notation	Unit 6: Time
• Understand and use pitch notations	Unit 7: In the past
• Read simple rhythm notation	Unit 7: In the past
• Create and perform from a symbol score	Unit 8: Communication
• Read graphic notation to play a melody on tuned instruments	Unit 10: Singing French

Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians

• Learn about ternary form	Unit 1: Environment
• Understand how music can be organised in sequences and layers	Unit 2: Building
• Learn a traditional Caribbean song	Unit 3: Sounds
• Listen to and learn about Hindustani classical music	Unit 3: Sounds
• Learn how sounds are produced and how instruments are classified	Unit 3: Sounds
• Understand the pentatonic scale	Unit 5: China
• Listen to and learn about traditional Chinese music	Unit 5: China
• Understand and perform binary form	Unit 9: Human body

Develop an understanding of the history of music

• Listen to and learn about a Romantic piece of music	Unit 6: Time
• Listen to and learn about a medieval antiphon	Unit 7: In the past
• Listen to, learn about, play and dance to Tudor dance music	Unit 7: In the past
• Learn about an instrument from Ancient Greece	Unit 11: Ancient worlds

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By the end of Year 4, pupils should be able to:

Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression	
• Use beatbox techniques to imitate the sound of a drum kit	Units 1: Poetry & 3: Sounds
• Perform a rap or song with a vocal beatbox accompaniment	Units 1: Poetry & 3: Sounds
• Perform a poem as an ensemble with rhythmic accuracy to a steady beat	Unit 1: Poetry
• Learn to sing partner songs	Unit 3: Sounds
• Perform verse and chorus structure	Unit 4: Recycling
• Chant in three parts	Unit 4: Recycling
• Combine four body percussion ostinati as a song accompaniment	Unit 5: Building
• Play a pentatonic song with leaps in pitch on tuned percussion	Unit 6: Around the world
• Combine singing with untuned and tuned percussion in a performance	Units 6: Around the world & 8: Singing Spanish
• Sing a call and response song in a minor key in two groups	Unit 8: Singing Spanish
• Sing a song with three simple independent parts	Unit 10: Time
• Play a piece with melody, chords, bass and rhythm parts from graphic, rhythm and staff notations	Unit 11: In the past
• Combine singing, playing and dancing in a performance	Unit 11: In the past
• Play an instrumental accompaniment of rhythms, chords and riffs	Unit 11: In the past
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music*	
• Balance voices in a performance by choosing appropriate dynamics (volume)	Unit 1: Poetry
• Compose an introduction for a song	Unit 2: Environment
• Improvise in response to visual stimuli, with a focus on timbre	Unit 4: Recycling
• Explore household items as instruments and match rhythms with appropriate soundmakers	Unit 4: Recycling
• Improvise melodies with a given set of five notes (a pentatonic scale)	Unit 5: Building
• Create descriptive sound pictures with instruments	Unit 8: Singing Spanish
• Compose a rap	Unit 9: Communication
• Understand syncopation and clap improvised off-beat rhythms	Unit 10: Time
• Compose a fanfare	Unit 11: In the past
• Compose and play sequences of word rhythms	Unit 12: Food and drink
Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory	
• Understand how rhythmic articulation affects musical phrasing	Unit 1: Poetry
• Identify different instrument groups from a recording	Unit 3: Sounds
• Demonstrate understanding of how sounds are produced by making instruments	Unit 4: Recycling
• Compare and contrast the structure of two pieces of music	Unit 7: Ancient worlds
• Copy rhythms and a short melody	Unit 9: Communication
• Identify the metre of a new song or piece	Unit 10: Time
Use and understand staff and other musical notations	
• Compose and notate pentatonic melodies on a graphic score	Unit 6: Around the world
• Explore layers and layering using a graphic score	Unit 7: Ancient worlds
• Play and sing repeated patterns (ostinati) from staff notation	Unit 10: Time
• Match short rhythmic phrases with rhythm notation	Unit 10: Time
• Learn to play a Renaissance dance from notations (graphic, rhythm and staff)	Unit 11: In the past
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians	
• Explore the descriptive music of two famous composers of the 20th and 21st century	Unit 2: Environment
• Listen to and play along with Bhangra music	Unit 4: Recycling
• Perform a piece in rondo form	Unit 4: Recycling
• Describe the structure of a piece of orchestral music	Unit 5: Building
• Use rondo structure to build a performance	Unit 5: Building
• Learn about and sing an African-American spiritual	Unit 6: Around the world
• Develop listening skills by analysing and comparing music from different traditions	Unit 6: Around the world
• Learn a traditional West African call and response song	Unit 12: Food and drink
Develop an understanding of the history of music	
• Listen to and learn about 1940s dance band music	Unit 3: Sounds
• Identify key features of minimalist music	Unit 7: Ancient worlds
• Listen to and analyse 20th century ballet music	Unit 10: Time
• Learn a dance and play music from a 19th century German opera	Unit 11: In the past
• Listen to and learn about Renaissance instruments	Unit 11: In the past
• Learn a 1960s pop song and popular dance styles of the time	Unit 11: In the past

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By the end of Year 5, pupils should be able to:

Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression	
• Conduct metres of two, three and four	Unit 1: Our Community
• Prepare for a performance by considering narration, performance space, setting up and other logistics	Unit 1: Our Community
• Develop techniques of performing rap using texture and rhythm	Unit 2: Solar system
• Create and present a performance of song, music and poetry	Unit 2: Solar system
• Sing and play scales and chromatic melodies accurately	Unit 4: Keeping healthy
• Sing and play percussion in a group piece with changes in tempo and dynamics	Unit 5: At the movies
• Perform music together in synchronisation with a short movie	Unit 5: At the movies
• Sing a song in unison and three-part harmony	Unit 6: Celebration
• Perform a song with a complex structure in four parts	Unit 6: Celebration
• Sing with attention to accuracy in rhythm, pitch and dynamics	Unit 6: Celebration
• Develop ensemble playing, focusing on steady beat and placing notes accurately together	Unit 6: Celebration
• Control short, loud sounds on a variety of instruments	Unit 6: Celebration
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music*	
• Develop accompaniments using ostinato and invent or improvise rhythms on untuned percussion	Unit 1: Our Community
• Play and improvise using the whole tone scale	Unit 2: Solar system
• Create musical effects using contrasting pitch	Unit 3: Life cycles
• Use the musical dimensions to create and perform music for a movie	Unit 5: At the movies
• Evaluate and refine compositions with reference to the inter-related dimensions of music	Unit 5: At the movies
Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory	
• Listen to music with focus and analyse using musical vocabulary	Unit 2: Solar system
• Hear and understand the features of the whole tone scale	Unit 2: Solar system
• Compare and contrast two pieces of 19th century Romantic music	Unit 3: Life cycles
• Identify changes in tempo and their effects	Unit 5: At the movies
• Demonstrate understanding of the effect of music in movies	Unit 5: At the movies
• Explore and analyse a song arrangement and its structure	Unit 6: Celebration
• Rehearse, improve and analyse an ensemble performance, with attention to balance and staying in time	Unit 6: Celebration
Use and understand staff and other musical notations	
• Read a melody in staff notation	Unit 3: Life cycles
• Develop a structure for a vocal piece and create graphic scores	Unit 3: Life cycles
• Read grid or staff notation to play a bassline	Unit 4: Keeping healthy
• Interpret graphic notation on various soundmakers with an understanding of their qualities and capabilities	Unit 5: At the movies
• Learn about and use cue scores	Unit 5: At the movies
• Create sounds for a movie, following a timesheet	Unit 5: At the movies
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians	
• Learn about jazz scat singing and devise scat sounds	Unit 1: Our Community
• Listen to a 19th century tone poem and describe its effects and use of the musical dimensions	Unit 2: Solar system
• Explore extended vocal techniques through listening to and composing 'a capella' (unaccompanied) vocal music based on graphic scores	Unit 3: Life cycles
• Sing and play an American spiritual	Unit 4: Keeping healthy
• Learn about and explore techniques used in movie soundtracks	Unit 5: At the movies
Develop an understanding of the history of music	
• Learn to sing a song from English musical heritage (20th century)	Unit 1: Our Community
• Listen to and learn about modern classical/avant garde music (20th century)	Unit 2: Solar system
• Listen to and analyse 19th century impressionist music using musical vocabulary	Unit 2: Solar system
• Learn about the music of an early Baroque opera	Unit 3: Life cycles

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Note: All Year 6 units have a performance focus.



By the end of Year 6, pupils should be able to:

Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

• Demonstrate understanding of beat and syncopation through singing and body percussion	Unit 1: World unite
• Demonstrate coordination and rhythm skills by participating in a complex circle game	Unit 1: World unite
• Convey lyrical meaning through expressive singing in a part-song with echoes	Unit 2: Journeys
• Develop song cycles for performance, making decisions about texture, staging and dramatisation	Unit 2: Journeys
• Learn to sing major and minor note patterns accurately	Unit 2: Journeys
• Demonstrate planning, directing, and rehearsal skills through allocated roles, such as technicians and researchers	Unit 2: Journeys
• Play a chordal accompaniment to a piece	Unit 3: Growth
• Develop, rehearse and perform a mini-musical, including dialogue, singing, playing and movement	Unit 4: Roots
• Refine vocal performance with consideration of posture, breathing and enunciation	Unit 5: Class awards
• Perform complex song rhythms confidently	Unit 6: Moving on
• Change vocal tone to reflect mood and style	Unit 6: Moving on

Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music*

• Devise, combine and structure rhythms through dance	Unit 1: World unite
• Improvise descriptive music on instruments and other soundmakers	Unit 4: Roots
• Compose programme music from a visual stimulus	Unit 5: Class awards

Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

• Revise, rehearse, and develop music for performance, with reference to the inter-related dimensions of music	Unit 3: Growth
• Experience and understand the effect of changing harmony	Unit 6: Moving on
• Listen to and understand modulation in a musical bridge	Unit 6: Moving on

Use and understand staff and other musical notations

• Demonstrate understanding of pitch through singing from simple staff notation	Unit 1: World unite
• Follow and interpret a complex graphic score for four instruments	Unit 3: Growth
• Play tuned instrumental parts confidently from graphic scores with note names	Unit 6: Moving on

Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians

• Learn a 1980s pop song with understanding of its structure	Unit 2: Journeys
• Learn to sing and play ostinati from an early 20th-century orchestral work	Unit 3: Growth
• Sing and play traditional Ghanaian music	Unit 4: Roots
• Sing two West African call and response songs in two groups	Unit 4: Roots

Develop an understanding of the history of music

• Learn to sing a 21st-century British choral work	Unit 2: Journeys
• Learn to sing and play ostinati from an early 20th-century orchestral work	Unit 3: Growth
• Discuss the music of a Russian Romantic composer with reference to a painting from the same period	Unit 5: Class awards

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