Identifying and supporting exceptionally gifted and talented young musicians – Guidelines for teachers

First principles

- Young people who are Gifted and Talented in Music may or not be Gifted and Talented in other areas of learning
- A set of criteria for identifying a young person as G&T in music must be applicable to all, but by its nature giftedness and talent is individual and therefore some provision needs to be made for a personal view
- Different aspects of giftedness or talent might be apparent at different ages but any attempt to establish criteria for music should take into consideration the limits of achievement in music making at a young age due to physical development and other readiness factors
- Parents/cares, instrumental teachers and schools could all contribute to building a profile of a young person deemed G&T, but there should be mechanisms to guard against vested interests

What are we trying to do?

- Identify young people who are or who show signs of becoming exceptional musicians

Why?

- So that the musical learning of exceptional young musicians may be personalised by the provision of an individual work plan/programme of study contributed to by themselves, their school, their parent/carers and their school.
- To ensure that their musical learning is sufficiently challenging but takes account of their well being.
- To ensure that social, economic or cultural background is not a barrier to achieving their full potential.

How will we do this?

- By having a set of well defined criteria for the identification and monitoring of gifted and talented young people
- For the Music Service to have clear guidance for parents and instrumental teachers on procedures to follow
- For the Music Service to have clear definitions of what we mean by Gifted and Talented
- By having clear and well defined ways for instrumental teachers and schools to approach the Music Service for help and support
- To have the above supported by a service wide policy
Who?

- Training and development as necessary for Music Service staff
- Information and communication for parents/carers/schools
- Identifications of young people who are already in the system and learning an instrument by the traditional route
- Identification of young people via Wider Opportunities and/or Singing Strategy who currently learn free of charge as having the potential to benefit from more targeted learning
- Respond to schools’ requests for help in supporting individual they feel ought to be supported in music
- Have a procedure where schools can work with Music Service on providing musical activities for young people who may be deemed G&T academically who would benefit from extended activities designed to broaden their experience and contribute to their well being

When?

- Young people can be identified at any time
- Ongoing support for young people deemed G&T, their teachers and families, with built in regular reviews.
The identification of musically Gifted and Talented Young people, and procedures to follow

Pupils in Early years
Would be referred by parents/carers/preschool/Foundation Stage teachers

Advise to attend an Early Years music group provided at a local music centre or approved other provider and assessed further there.
Make provision in music centres for parents of children in EY music making groups to seek advice of Area Manager at whose discretion further advice could be sought from specialist, e.g. Suzuki, Dalcroze, instrumental teachers.

Pupils in Key Stage 1
Would be referred by parent/carers/school staff or picked up by MS staff during e.g. Singing Strategy sessions.
Advise to join a music centre age appropriate group and monitor for a term. Thereafter if child deemed to be able or above, go to criteria.

Pupils in Key Stage 2
Could be referred by parent/carer/school staff or instrumental teacher.
Could be picked up during course of Wider Opps lessons.
Advise to join a local age appropriate music centre group and monitor for a term.
Find out about experience of the child and talk to the child and parent/carer about their strengths and interests.
Give opportunities to attend concerts in a music centre.
Inst teacher/area manager assess if the Wider Opps instrument (if applicable) is the right one for the child.
Look for ways in which the child may be disadvantaged in practical terms for access to music making – financial, travel, practice facilities, and in partnership with school, offer support.
Apply criteria.

Students in KS3,4, and above

Would be referred by parent/carer/school staff/instrumental teacher, or self-refer.
If not doing so already, advise involvement in a music centre activity and put in touch with peers who are involved in music service activities.
Look for ways in which the student may be disadvantaged – as above plus level of music provision in the school. Offer support.
Apply criteria.
Any young person who is assessed for G&T status could come from a background of no or little previous music making or having already begun to play.

**Terminology**
Under the terms of reference set out in national guidelines to schools, ‘Gifted’ is said to refer to the academic subjects and ‘Talented’ to those areas which require physical, spatial and artistic ability.

It is common in musical circles for the word ‘gifted’ to be used as well, but the words are not of prime importance.

A Young person is said to be G&T if they show ability or potential **significantly above** that expected for their year group in school. In terms of instrumental and vocal learning there will be an important difference in that pupils start their playing at different ages and despite an accelerated learning pace it cannot be said that e.g. there is a benchmark for example, for all Year 8 pupils.

**Identifying pupils**

- For pupils who have shown signs of being G&T but have not started to play an instrument – refer to the action outlined above
- For pupils who are learning already and who show signs of possible G&T- own teacher plus a centre leader do an assessment; where the prompt comes from a parent, same action. If necessary refer also to an area manager

**Practice**

It will not necessarily follow that pupils who do the most practice are those who end up being deemed G&T.

This may be for a variety of reasons including –

- Being under undue pressure to practice
- Not having adequate practice provision at home or school
- Not having enough time to practice because of trying to do too many things or academic overload
- Special educational needs which necessitate learning to practice around them
- Practising long but not smart

There would also need to be a procedure for reassuring the parents/carers of pupils who did not match the criteria. It may often be the case that these pupils would come into the ‘able’ category and their families would need the reassurance that able and highly able students can be catered for very well.
within the music service and can reach the highest levels within say, County Activities.

For pupils, the process must not be one which would be stressful or suggest failure if the status was not attained. The assessment process would be carefully structured and not reliant upon evidence from one occasion. It will be recognised that very young children can display signs of giftedness which they ‘grow out of’ when their minds are redirected.

**Starting points for identifying musical giftedness and talent (indicators)**

**Younger children – three or more could trigger intervention.**

- The child is involving him/herself in music at every possible opportunity and displays increased concentration times when engaged with music as opposed to other activities
- The child has an extraordinary (for age) musical memory
- The child constantly asks to be allowed to play an instrument
- The child sings well and it accompanies play or work activities
- The child invents new music
- The child is making extraordinarily fast progress on an instrument
- The child picks up and retains information about music and is able to reproduce it through singing or playing, speaking about it or movement
- The child seems to possess some musical skills like singing in tune, a sense of pulse, a feel for harmony, when in others it has to be taught

**Older children**

- Is progressing significantly faster than pupils of a similar age or experience
- Shows a remarkable aptitude for age in pitch discrimination or rhythmic awareness
- Evidence of an exceptional musical memory or aural awareness
- Shows a need to create music
- Evidence of a particular aptitude for performance to an audience
- Has an innate understanding of structure, patter or harmony in music which is reflected in performance
- Inclination to practise and/or play at every opportunity (over a significant amount of time)
- Is deemed to be exceptionally suited to the instrument being learned e.g. making a sound way beyond expectations for age and stage

**The principles of Quality First teaching** (DCSF guide to personalised learning 2008)
• Highly focused lesson design with sharp objectives
• High demands of pupil involvement and engagement with their learning
• High levels of interaction for all pupils
• Appropriate use of teacher questioning, modeling and explaining
• An emphasis on learning through dialogue, with regular opportunities for pupils to talk both individually and in groups
• An expectation that pupils will expect responsibility for their own learning and work independently
• Regular use of encouragement and authentic praise to engage and motivate pupils