

Curriculum Overview - Music

Principles and Purpose of the Music Curriculum

The purpose of the Music curriculum is to:

- **Enable all pupils to develop their musical potential through engaging experiences**, recognising that music as art is an important part of cultural identity. We also recognise that music benefits both cognitive development and character development. Performing is a crucial part of this.
- **Encourage and prepare students for lifelong musical learning and appreciation**, both in and out of school, including preparation for further study if appropriate.

Learning music is a cultural entitlement for every child, and we hope that our approach will ensure that all pupils receive this and are successful in their learning.

The following principles have informed the planning of the United Learning curriculum across all subjects.

- **Entitlement:** All pupils have the right to learn what is in the United Learning curriculum, and schools have a duty to ensure that all pupils are taught the whole of it.
- **Coherence:** Taking the National Curriculum as its starting point, our curriculum is carefully sequenced so that powerful knowledge builds term by term and year by year. We make meaningful connections within subjects and between subjects.
- **Mastery:** We ensure that foundational knowledge, skills, and concepts are secure before moving on. Pupils revisit prior learning and apply their understanding in new contexts.
- **Adaptability:** The core content – the 'what' – of the curriculum is stable, but schools will bring it to life in their local context, and teachers will adapt lessons – the 'how' – to meet the needs of their own classes.
- **Representation:** All pupils see themselves in our curriculum, and our curriculum takes all pupils beyond their immediate experience.
- **Education with character:** Our curriculum - which includes the taught subject timetable as well as spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, our co-curricular provision, and the ethos and 'hidden curriculum' of the school – is intended to spark curiosity and to nourish both the head and the heart.

Here we explore these principles in the context of the music curriculum:

- **Entitlement:** Pupils should receive one hour of discrete music teaching each week at Key Stage 3. Where possible the curriculum should encompass activity from outside of the classroom and build on pupils' learning from beyond the classroom; progress in music comes from formal, non-formal and informal musical experiences.
- **Coherence:** It is more important for pupils to fully understand the key concepts presented than to cover lots of curriculum content. Progress and development are more assured as the curriculum content is sequenced. By working in this way, the dangers of a 'shallow musical odyssey', where pupils travel from genre to genre without making links between styles or building on their skills, are also avoided.
- **Mastery:** The curriculum is based on a mastery model, in which the ambition is that all pupils are taught and achieve the essential knowledge and skills in each of the years of the curriculum so that both knowledge and skills can be re-used effectively in future learning to achieve greater depth of musical learning and outcome. Students should begin to specialise as they progress through their school curriculum, choosing an instrument to 'master' over time.
- **Adaptability:** Musical activity in United Learning schools is likely to look different. Our distinctive schools each have a unique offer based on the individual strengths of the teaching staff, the size of the team and



the space and resources available alongside other factors. It is important to develop the strengths of each school whilst also recognising the need for a locally determined curriculum that meets student needs.

- **Representation:** The music curricula in our schools is unlikely to remain static for long periods of time. It needs to respond to the changing nature of the school and society. A curriculum that recognises the musical lives of children and young people, building on this prior learning and experience, will resonate with pupils.
- **Education with character:** Music plays a vital role in delivering a values-led education, aiming to:
 - **Give our pupils ambition:** to perform to a high standard, and to support others who also aim for high standards.
 - **Build confidence:** to perform in both small and large settings as a member of a wider ensemble, participating in memorable occasions that contribute to the school life and community.
 - **Foster creativity:** to compose and improvise with skill, building on prior experiences.
 - **Instil respect:** for each other in performance, and the artistry of musicians from all backgrounds.
 - **Drive enthusiasm:** to pursue musical talents and interests through an engaging curriculum and co-curriculum.
 - **Encourage determination:** to persevere and strive when refining and improving performance and composition.

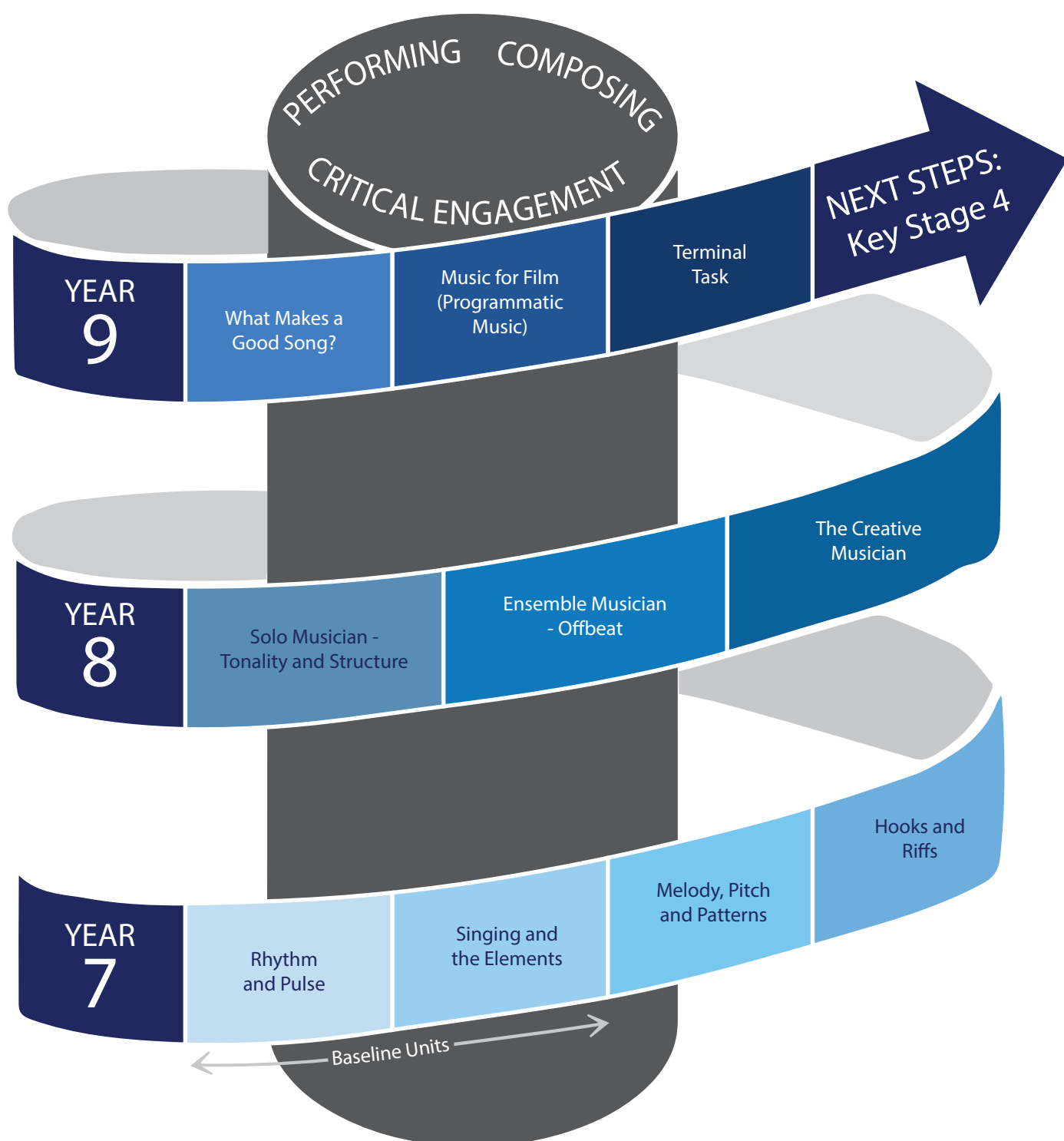
Roadmap of the Music Curriculum

The roadmap diagram on the following page sets out a suggested route that pupils can take through our curriculum. Our spiral curriculum features the development of musical skills and knowledge at its core, through the development of technique (performance and music technology), construction (composing and improving) and critical engagement – all of which are woven into each unit of learning, revisited, and developed throughout. The curriculum sequence is determined by our overall curriculum and assessment framework, which is included in [Appendix 1](#). The unit titles are listed for each year, where we have indicated the theme of each unit.



MUSIC

Key Stage 3



‘Why This, Why Now?’

In our planning, we have asked ourselves 'why this, why now?' Here we provide some examples of the curriculum choices we have made, and why the units have been placed in the order we have chosen:

- The roadmap is aligned to the United Learning music curriculum framework and is carefully sequenced to introduce students to progressively more challenging concepts. Year 7 is a baselining year where students experiment with patterns, repetition and contrast including simple melody. Moving into Year 8, pupils develop an understanding of the construction of musical structures over time such as melody, tonality, and large-scale structure (the horizontal) whilst Year 9 content includes more complex concepts such as harmony and texture (the vertical).
- The development of technical skill is progressive through the roadmap: in Year 7, essential skills are developed for ensembles, in Year 8 students develop individual technique, and in Year 9 leadership and direction becomes important.
- Whilst there is a unit focusing on singing in Year 7, singing is weaved into all units and is a core part of developing musicianship and understanding of internalised pitch.
- Year 7 begins with a unit on rhythm and pulse, this builds a unified sense of ensemble with classes, setting expectations for further work in large and small groups. The second unit of Year 7 also provides an opportunity to form a holistic view of pupils' musical starting points, continuing baselining in the first term.
- The final unit of each year includes an extended composition or improvisation as a ‘terminal task’. In Year 9 this is more flexible and builds on the content of the entire Key Stage.
- The taught sequence also links to other United Learning subjects. For example:
 - In Year 9, students will be developing leadership skills through school sport.
 - In Year 8, students will also be studying the transatlantic slave trade in history.

Teaching the Music Curriculum

Every unit has an overview that details the objectives, teaching sequence, key vocabulary, and terminology. In every unit, key vocabulary and terminology are displayed, defined, and continually revisited. Students are routinely tested on new vocabulary and terminology in 'Memory Platforms' and end of lesson reviews. Students are required to apply new vocabulary and terminology in their responses to music, both oral and written.

Extended tasks demonstrate whether students are accurately embedding the key knowledge through the core of technical, constructive, and critical engagement. For example, through the ‘Hooks and Riffs’ performing and composing tasks in Year 7, and through a ‘head’ arrangement in Year 8.

Lessons are structured to support the I-We-You cycle, and students have regular independent practice. High quality modelled examples are an integral part of lessons, many of which are provided as videos on-screen or as narrated guides for teachers. Extended tasks are often followed by a fully developed model to exemplify the standards students should demonstrate.

Great music teaching is rooted in the language of the subject: musical sound. All learning should centre around the music itself. The subject area can draw extensively on recent understanding in cognitive science to ensure that teaching and learning is impactful. We would expect to see the application of the Rosenshine Principles through:

- ‘Play me/show me’ used in teaching alongside ‘tell me’; so, students can demonstrate embodied musical understanding.



- Teachers always being a musician in the room.
- Whole class modelling is used alongside teacher and pre-prepared models.
- The music department has a culture of practice: both in lessons and beyond the curriculum, and the teaching environment is conducive to effective practice.
- Limitations placed on creativity, using scaffolds, models, and creative starting points.
- The co-curricular musical experiences of pupils being evident in the classroom.

More guidance on the Rosenshine Principles in Performing Arts can be found [here](#).

So, when we walk into any music lesson, what should we expect to see?

- Learning that results from exposure to musical sounds.
- Opportunities for practical music-making and/or structured listening.
- A very brief 'Memory Platform' which revisits fingertip knowledge from the taught curriculum.
- Success exemplified by high-quality models which are practically explored by both the teacher and the class before independent work.
- We do not expect to see students working in practice rooms without clear structure, roles, and accountability.

In addition, in Key Stage 4 lessons we particularly expect to see:

- Students working to their musical strengths in both performance and composition.
- Regular student performances and use of practice diaries, where students are accountable for their level of activity.
- An integrated curriculum where set works and areas of study are explored through critical engagement: listening, performing, and composing.

In Sixth Form music lessons we particularly expect to see:

- Frequent opportunities for independent responses to music; listening should be frequent and allow students to draw on a wide range of high quality and relevant stimuli in their own analysis and creative work.
- Regular student performances and use of practice diaries where appropriate.
- High academic expectations alongside effective support for students at different levels.

Our curriculum is designed to provide a challenge for all learners. Teachers are expected to adapt resources for the needs of their students. Department meeting time should be used to review schemes and lessons before teaching so that all teachers are confident with the content of units and strategies for delivery. Time is well spent on both co-planning, for lessons to be adapted as necessary for the individual needs of learners, and practising elements of lesson delivery such as practical models.

Homework in the subject at Key Stage 3 is a good opportunity to review fingertip knowledge that opens the curriculum to all pupils, such as through the review of knowledge organisers. In Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 we would expect students to be accountable for their level of continued independent practise as part of their homework, alongside revision of classwork and flipped learning exercises such as reading and composition planning.

Assessing the Music Curriculum

Formative Assessment in Music

In music, assessment needs to be proportionate and authentic to the subject. The best assessment practices have a clear purpose and provide meaningful information about what pupils know and can do, shaping future teaching.

In 2012, Ofsted published 'Music in Schools: Wider Still, and Wider'. This report was based on evidence from 194 specialist music inspections and good practice visits in schools between 2008 and 2011. This included provision in class lessons, additional instrumental and vocal tuition, and extra-curricular musical activities.

In their observations they found that:

- 'Too much music teaching continued to be dominated by the spoken or written word, rather than by musical sounds. Lessons were planned diligently, but not always prepared for musically'.
- 'In both primary and secondary schools, insufficient use was made of audio recording and teachers' listening skills to assess and improve pupils' work'.
- 'In too many instances there was insufficient emphasis on active music making'.
- 'Too much use was made of non-musical activities'.
- 'In too many cases there was not enough music in music lessons'.

In 2015 the ISM (Incorporated Society of Musicians) published guidance on developing assessment frameworks for the new National Curriculum, with the opening statement:

'Assessment of musical activity should be rooted in the reality of the musical activity taking place'.

Chiming with the Ofsted observations, the most effective practice supports and enhances musical processes, and does not interrupt musical learning. However, maintaining these aspirations in a school context is challenging; music and other performance-based subjects try, as far as possible, to align themselves with a whole-school approach.

Whilst written work can go some way to reveal how pupils have progressed (see suggestions below) there are more effective methods. In 2012 Ofsted also published 'Music in Schools: Promoting Good Practice.' This document states that:

'Good teaching over time can be evident in recordings and scores of pupils' work. A key feature of good teaching is that audio or video recordings are made of pupils' performing and composing, to help them listen to and improve their work. These recordings can show improvement in the quality and sophistication of pupils' musical responses, and they can show good assessment – over a long period or in a short project.'

The implication of this is that teachers should feel empowered to capture pupil work using video and audio recording devices at any opportunity. This can be very simple, using pre-existing technology that many departments already benefit from. A tablet computer is extremely effective. Managing the work that has been captured may require collaboration with IT teams, in particular the secure storage of files. This would go some way to creating a portfolio for pupils that grows through their school careers and could provide an extremely interesting stimulus for engaging conversations about pupil work. This is all part of ongoing formative assessment, which can be tracked using 'KPIs' (see curriculum framework in Appendix 1).

This does not mean that there is no place for written work in music. Activities of value include:

- Starter quizzes reviewing the 'fingertip knowledge' that is required in each unit of work.

- Written reflection activities such as creative journals that both support students' learning and help them to document their learning.
- Lyric writing, writing down chord sequences when songwriting and using musical notation to support a composition or performance piece. These can also be used during homework activities.

There is cautionary advice from Ofsted:

'Do not assume that simply copying out a table of rhythmic values means that pupils can accurately clap a two-bar rhythm using crotchets, quavers and semiquavers. Words and notations should be supporting musical learning.'

In this way, writing down objectives, facts or copying a paragraph about the history of the renaissance period do not evidence progress in music, and more musical tasks are preferable for maintaining intrinsically musical learning. Written assessments, while essential at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, are not able to capture most of the musical learning that occurs practically, and their weighting should be adjusted accordingly.

Summative Assessment in Music

Currently, there are no common assessments as part of this music curriculum. However, all the units provide opportunities for summative assessment. Just as the curriculum is a balance of knowledge and skills in technical, constructive, and critical engagement in music, assessment should also reflect this balance.

Notably, the Year 7 assessment materials include a baseline listening test alongside performing and composing tasks, allowing teachers to build a holistic picture of their new cohort. Aside from this, summative assessment should be infrequent; the third unit of every year includes an extended task that brings together learning of curriculum content from that year which can inform teacher planning for the year ahead.

Recovery and Catch-up in Music

There has been significant disruption to the delivery of music during the covid pandemic. Access to specialist classrooms for delivery of lessons and the guidance for practical music in schools have constrained the curriculum (for example, equipment usage, singing and work in groups). Additionally, guidance was published very last minute and has changed during the pandemic, causing confusion, and negatively impacting the confidence of staff and students.

As we move away from restrictions, schools have an opportunity to reset and ensure that their provision sufficiently addresses the full intent of the National Curriculum. Students will then receive a creative and authentic learning experience that will help them to recover musically and deliver their entitlement to a broad and inspiring curriculum.

Progression in the Music Curriculum

The United Learning curriculum reviews and builds on the Key Stage 2 primary curriculum so that lessons are suitably stretching and age appropriate. The experiences of students in primary schools are likely to vary hugely. Whilst some pupils will have benefitted from regular curriculum provision, a rich co-curricular experience and input from visiting music teachers or 1-2-1 lessons in the community, there will be a continuum of exposure to the subject. Gathering information through a school transition programme can help to build a better understanding of each cohort and identify areas of strength and development. It is also advisable to work with your local hub or music service in this process who will know more about the musical life of your feeder primary schools.



Pupils who wish to take Music at Key Stage 4 will benefit from additional musical experiences provided through enrichment and visiting music teacher programmes; their participation should be encouraged and facilitated. We have written a specific course for new Key Stage 4 students, 'Step Up to GCSE', which is advised to be used as part of the transition to Key Stage 4. The content of this course covers the essential theoretical knowledge that supports fluency in musical understanding.

For the few students who progress to Level 3 courses, there is a range of courses available that will allow them to continue to grow as musicians. Successful Key Stage 5 students should develop their own voice, both through performance and composition; wider listening from Key Stage 4 and continued engagement of the wider musical life of the school and community is a key part of this development.

Progression to University and Careers

Just as there are a variety of courses available to students in music at Key Stage 5, music offers a variety of specialisms to choose from including musical performance, composition, and production. The most up to date information on courses and grade requirements can be found [here](#).

The Music Curriculum Website

Our classroom resources are designed to put teachers in the driving seat. We provide centrally planned resources so that teachers can focus on preparing lessons for their classes and pupils. We have tried to be clear about the purpose of each resource, and all the resources we have produced support the principles shared in this document. Ultimately, once a teacher downloads and adapts a resource, it becomes their lesson.

All resources can be found on the [United Learning Curriculum Website](#).



Appendix 1: The United Learning Music Curriculum Framework

United Learning Music Curriculum and Assessment Framework: Year 7		
Musical Strand	Content	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
	Students should be taught to:	Students can:
Performing: Playing and Singing	<p>Perform on at least two instruments, developing technique, learning to listen, and using appropriate notation</p> <p>Sing as part of an ensemble, using appropriate notation</p>	<p>7.1.1 Demonstrate fluency and accuracy on at least two instruments (see age related expectations for common classroom instruments)</p> <p>7.1.2 Demonstrate ensemble listening skills in a group task</p> <p>7.1.3 Use appropriate musical notation when playing and singing</p>
Creating: Composing and Improvising	<p>Create music that shows an understanding of repetition and contrast</p> <p>Create music which demonstrates a controlled use of the inter-related musical dimensions</p> <p>Create music that shows understanding of musical devices: ostinato, riff, pedal/drone</p>	<p>7.2.1 Select appropriate sounds for solo or group compositions, making appropriate choices about instrumental forces and timbre</p> <p>7.2.2 Create compositions which make controlled use of the inter-related musical dimensions</p> <p>7.2.3 Develop and extend musical ideas and patterns effectively</p>
Critical engagement	<p>Identify instruments from a range of contexts, including the standard classical orchestra</p> <p>Identify and use devices: ostinato, riff, pedal/drone</p> <p>Use treble and bass clef notation (A1 to E2), recognise basic rhythms and simple time signatures fluently</p>	<p>7.3.1 Identify a variety of different instrument sounds and families</p> <p>7.3.2 Identify and comment on musical devices in a range of topics</p> <p>7.3.3 Recognise musical symbols and staff notation and demonstrate an ability to use these in performance</p>

United Learning Music Curriculum and Assessment Framework: Year 8		
Musical Strand	Content	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
	Students should be taught to:	Students can:
Performing: Playing and Singing	<p>Perform on at least one instrument, with increasing independence, learning to make critical choices</p> <p>Sing as part of an ensemble, using appropriate notation</p> <p>Make appropriate responses to performance directions</p>	<p>8.1.1 Co-ordinate their musical role with other performer(s), considering timing and balance (see age related expectations for common classroom instruments)</p> <p>8.1.2 Include solos or moments of musical leadership in performance</p> <p>8.1.3 Make adjustments to facilitate musical interpretation and sensitive ensemble performance</p>



Creating: Composing and Improvising	Create music containing melodic development, using major, minor, and pentatonic scales	8.2.1 Create music in conventional forms, evidencing melody development and rhythmic interest
	Create music in a variety of forms: binary, ternary, and song forms	8.2.2 Refine ideas effectively, through improvisation, mutual evaluation, and discussion
Critical engagement	Create music that develops original ideas	
	Revisit, improve and refine composition work	
Critical engagement	Recognise binary, ternary and song forms	8.3.1 Identify, comment on, and make links between musical devices in curriculum topics
	Recognise and use musical devices: call and response, imitation, syncopation, polyrhythm	8.3.2 Have a secure understanding of appropriate notations
Critical engagement	Identify major, minor, and pentatonic scales	8.3.3 Evaluate the success of their own work and set realistic targets for improvement
	Use keys with up to two accidentals and more sophisticated rhythms: dotted rhythms and a variety of simple syncopations	8.3.4 Explore the contexts and origins of a variety of different musical styles, genres, and traditions

United Learning Music Curriculum and Assessment Framework: Year 9		
Musical Strand	Content	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
	Students should be taught to:	Students can:
Performing: Playing and Singing	Perform on at least one instrument in an ensemble with competence and expression	9.1.1 Collaborate effectively with other performers, showing the ability to lead/direct an ensemble (see age related expectations for common classroom instruments)
	Lead a musical ensemble when appropriate	9.1.2 Play and sing from notated music with confidence and care
Creating: Composing and Improvising	Sing as part of an ensemble, using appropriate notations and accurately following performance directions	
	Create music that features melody and harmony, in clearly expressed key structures	9.2.1 Compose music in more than one genre which makes controlled use of musical features and devices.
Creating: Composing and Improvising	Create music which demonstrates understanding of textural contrast	9.2.2 Compose music which demonstrates development of musical ideas
	Create music which builds on existing knowledge of musical devices	9.2.3 Make accurate use of appropriate notations to realise musical ideas
Creating: Composing and Improvising	Notate musical ideas appropriately, using software where possible	
Critical engagement	Recognise and use the primary triads (I, IV, V) in at least two keys, and extended chords (7ths)	9.3.1 Discuss and analyse music in detail, using key words and musical terms
	Identify musical textures: monophonic, homophonic, polyphonic and heterophonic	9.3.2 Write accurate responses to music, using appropriately detailed musical vocabulary
Critical engagement		9.3.3 Explore and understand the contexts, origins and traditions of different musical styles, genres, and traditions

