

# Assessing Musical Progress

A Framework for Assessment

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# Assessing Musical Progress

Learning to play an instrument or learning to sing involves developing a broad range of skills, knowledge and understanding in addition to making progress with specific techniques.

This framework for assessment can be used across a variety of teaching styles and approaches to guide and support learning and to develop quality musicianship. There are five interrelated strands at each level:

- **Technique: Making and Controlling Musical Sounds** (Playing)
- **Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas** (Understanding)
- **Performance Skills** (Performing)
- **Listening and Internalising** (Listening)
- **Reflecting and Evaluating** (Thinking)

**Progression:** Young people are individuals and make progress at different speeds depending on a range of factors such as their previous learning and age. Each level demonstrates specific outcomes detailing attainment across the interrelated strands from 'Beginner' to 'Level 8'.

Progression through the assessment levels should be evident in the:

- **Depth** of skills, knowledge and understanding
- **Breadth** of musical activities
- **Quality** of the musical outcome *(A Common Approach, 2002)*

**Assessment:** Good teaching recognises the need to assess pupils regularly. Progress is reviewed via regular assessment from 'formative' (providing regular feedback to inform teaching & learning) to 'summative' (a more formal test or set of questions) allowing teachers to record pupil attainment.

**Repertoire:** Resources should be age appropriate and suitable for the musical level of the pupil providing the best opportunity for progress and offering a suitable level of interest, enjoyment and challenge.

# Assessing Musical Progress

Pupils are either 'working towards' or have 'achieved' a level of attainment. Levels from Beginner to Level 8 can therefore be awarded in the following ways, with reference to the level descriptors in this handbook:

Example: Beg W - Working Towards Beginner Level  
Beg - Working at Beginner Level

## **Celebrating Attainment:**

Success should be acknowledged in many ways and doing so is an important aspect of teaching and learning. It serves as feedback for learners on progress being made and can encourage them to continue learning, building their confidence when making music. It also improves their sense of well-being through an awareness of achievements and changes in their musical ability.

### Formally

Progress can be celebrated through the issue of certificates at appropriate points once a level of attainment has been identified by the teacher. An annual report can also serve as a formal way to share the details of progress made.

### Informally

Opportunities to provide feedback on progress and attainment should be incorporated into teaching practices frequently and can be done so in a variety of ways.

Discussion and communication with pupils, schools and parents should be regular where possible, such as through the use of practice diaries or 'Well Done' postcards for example. There will be many other ways to celebrate pupil progress informally which should be encouraged to recognise attainment.

**External Exams:** Assessing progress by a level descriptor does not replace the need to enter some young people for external examinations. Level standards are roughly equivalent to the requirements of many external examination boards and teachers should consider entering young people for external exams on an individual basis.

## Beginner Level

	<b>Pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate good posture with support from the teacher.</li><li>• Produce controlled sounds when performing a simple piece.</li><li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques as appropriate for this level.</li></ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate the difference between pulse and rhythm.</li><li>• Create their own short phrase using pitch and rhythm and share with others.</li></ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perform a simple piece.</li><li>• Perform with others demonstrating basic ensemble skills (listening, watching and keeping in time).</li></ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognise sounds as high or low, loud or quiet, fast or slow, long or short.</li><li>• Clap, hum or sing a call and response exercise using pitch or rhythm with a partner.</li></ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify why some sounds are more successful than others.</li><li>• Begin to discuss each performance and what went well.</li><li>• Explain why practice is important.</li></ul>

## Improver Level

	<b>Building on Beginner Level, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform a short piece demonstrating good posture, showing a relaxed approach without tension.</li> <li>• Produce controlled sounds at two or more dynamic levels, across an increased range of notes.</li> <li>• Demonstrate use of two different articulations within a short piece.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques appropriate to this level.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform a piece which makes use of semibreves, minims, crotchets and quavers.</li> <li>• Show an understanding of contrasting dynamics and tempo.</li> <li>• Lead a call and response exercise using pitch and rhythm.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform a variety of easy pieces from notation / symbols.</li> <li>• Perform a prepared duet or ensemble piece, with their teacher or peers, maintaining basic ensemble skills.</li> <li>• Sight read a simple phrase.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe a piece using simple musical terms.</li> <li>• Repeat a simple rhythmic pattern and identify the note lengths used by name.</li> <li>• Complete a short unfinished phrase played by the teacher.</li> <li>• Repeat a simple melody by singing or playing.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare two different performances of the same phrase.</li> <li>• Begin to suggest improvements following each performance.</li> <li>• Identify the technical challenges in a new piece with support of the teacher.</li> <li>• Describe an effective practice routine.</li> </ul>

# Level 1

	<b>Building on Improver Level, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the instrument / voice with more ease, both sitting and standing, paying attention to good posture.</li> <li>• Make a pleasing sound with increased consistency and more secure intonation.</li> <li>• Show an increasing control of the instrument / voice using contrasting scales and / or exercises.</li> <li>• Perform confidently using different articulations.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques appropriate to this level.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the difference between major and minor keys.</li> <li>• Make simple choices in relation to the elements of music in order to achieve an intended effect.</li> <li>• Lead a call and response exercise, varying the elements of music.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform a variety of easy pieces from notation / symbols, conveying the character of the music.</li> <li>• Perform with others maintaining a separate part.</li> <li>• Further develop the skills of listening, watching and keeping in time when playing or singing with others.</li> <li>• Perform a simple phrase from memory.</li> <li>• Sight read a simple piece with a given pulse.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to the elements of music, describing the mood and what they like and dislike about a piece.</li> <li>• Tap the pulse of a simple phrase with one hand / foot and the rhythm with the other.</li> <li>• Identify a piece of music as major or minor.</li> <li>• Listen to and reproduce a melody using the first three notes of a major scale and varied note values, using their instrument or voice.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the quality of their own performances using musical terms.</li> <li>• Suggest improvements following each performance.</li> <li>• Discuss with the teacher any technical challenges in a new piece.</li> <li>• Take some ownership of regular practice routines.</li> </ul>

## Level 2

	<b>Building on Level 1, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to correct posture with some independence.</li> <li>• Play with a pleasing sound when making subtle variations to the elements of music.</li> <li>• Show an increasing control of the instrument / voice using contrasting scales and / or exercises equivalent to this level.</li> <li>• Begin to tune their instrument / voice independently.</li> <li>• Use simple exercises to warm up and explain their purpose.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques appropriate to this level.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the characteristics of the music using musical vocabulary.</li> <li>• Improvise short rhythmic or melodic phrases within a simple structure.</li> <li>• Start to notate short musical ideas which may begin with improvising.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform contrasting pieces with confidence and increased accuracy.</li> <li>• Start to perform with a sense of occasion (e.g. projecting the character of the music and acknowledging the audience).</li> <li>• Take a lead role within an ensemble or group.</li> <li>• Perform a simple piece from memory.</li> <li>• Sight read a more complex piece with attention to musical detail.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare the characteristics of new repertoire with pieces already known.</li> <li>• Identify the main sections of more extended pieces and the differences between them.</li> <li>• Listen to and reproduce simple melodies using their instrument or voice.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the quality of their performances and make links to ongoing practice routines.</li> <li>• Begin to be aware of the performance of others.</li> <li>• Revisit past repertoire and incorporate their new skills, techniques and learning.</li> <li>• Take more ownership of regular practice routines.</li> </ul>



## Level 3

	<b>Building on Level 2, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct posture with more independence.</li> <li>• Play with a consistent sound when making variations to the elements of music.</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of chromatic scales with different starting notes.</li> <li>• Tune their instrument / voice with more independence.</li> <li>• Perform simple exercises to build range and stamina e.g. muscle development, breathing etc.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques appropriate to this level.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show an understanding of simple musical structures and devices (e.g. binary / ternary, sequence, repetition) in the repertoire being studied.</li> <li>• Improvise short phrases with a given starting note and / or key.</li> <li>• Create, notate and perform a simple composition.</li> <li>• Demonstrate how different techniques and musical elements can change the interpretation e.g. articulation, phrasing.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform a variety of pieces, suitable for this level, with an awareness of the musical intentions of the composer.</li> <li>• Perform scales, exercises or rounds in canon with their group or teacher, maintaining their own part confidently.</li> <li>• Memorise and perform phrases from their repertoire.</li> <li>• Demonstrate sight reading skills appropriate to this level.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start to identify period and genre, pointing out similarities and differences.</li> <li>• Show an awareness of intonation when performing as a soloist or within a group.</li> <li>• Identify and reproduce melodies which include basic melodic intervals, such as 3rd, 5th, Octave.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to recordings of their own performances and consider improvements.</li> <li>• Reflect and evaluate the performance of others.</li> <li>• Identify challenging passages, making suggestions and solving problems.</li> <li>• Devise their own practice plan based on reflection and evaluation of performance and technique.</li> </ul>

## Level 4

	<b>Building on Level 3, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate good posture independently and with some consistency.</li> <li>• Perform contrasting scales and arpeggios, including chromatic scales, with accuracy and showing an understanding of their differences.</li> <li>• Show a developing stamina, sustaining the quality of sound for longer performance times.</li> <li>• Tune their instrument / voice independently, developing accuracy.</li> <li>• Develop exercises to build tone, control and fluency e.g. finger positions, lip slurs, head voice etc.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques appropriate to this level.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the basic context in which the music was created and how this influences their interpretation. (e.g. waltz, march etc.)</li> <li>• Identify the keys, scales or modes in the repertoire they are studying.</li> <li>• Compose within a simple structure, applying instrumental or vocal skills / techniques where appropriate.</li> <li>• Improvise simple melodies above predetermined harmonic patterns with an awareness of cadence.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform a variety of pieces suitable for this level.</li> <li>• Show an understanding of the impact of body language when performing.</li> <li>• Memorise and perform a piece of music from their repertoire.</li> <li>• Demonstrate sight reading skills appropriate to this level.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to music that is similar in period and genre to those from their repertoire and compare and contrast using appropriate vocabulary.</li> <li>• Recognise secure intonation more consistently when playing or singing.</li> <li>• Identify and reproduce melodies in both major and minor keys.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate with perception, and some independence, the quality of their performances.</li> <li>• Regularly respond to the suggestions from others, including the teacher and their peers, to improve their performance.</li> <li>• Continue to adapt practice routines, setting short term targets and goals.</li> </ul>

## Level 5

	<b>Building on Level 4, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate good posture, consistently and independently.</li> <li>• Demonstrate full chromatic knowledge of their instrument / voice at this level.</li> <li>• Show awareness of appropriate instrumental / vocal specific alternatives e.g. hand position, fingerings etc.</li> <li>• Tune their instrument independently and with accuracy.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques appropriate to this level, applying their developing musicianship to technical exercises.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convey their own personal responses and interpretations when performing.</li> <li>• Show an understanding of where their music making fits within a wider musical context (e.g. links to Curriculum / GCSE / BTEC / Ensembles).</li> <li>• Compose within a specific style, creating and selecting from a range of musical ideas.</li> <li>• Improvise short melodies using a variety of scales e.g. major, minor, whole tone, blues.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform a variety of pieces suitable for this level developing a personal response and interpretation.</li> <li>• Demonstrate a positive performing image and communicate confidently.</li> <li>• Memorise and perform from a variety of sources, featuring a range of musical devices and structures.</li> <li>• Sight read demonstrating musical outcomes with attention to accuracy and expression.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the elements of music to describe a variety of music from different styles and traditions</li> <li>• Recognise secure intonation, adjusting and effecting changes.</li> <li>• Listen to and reproduce melodies across a wider range of intervals, different octaves and modulations, including cadences.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use their improving knowledge of repertoire and technique to make informed evaluations about their performances.</li> <li>• Listen to professional musicians (live and recorded) to contrast and evaluate their own performance.</li> <li>• Continue to adapt practice routines, setting longer term targets and goals.</li> </ul>

## Level 6

	<b>Building on Level 5, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate knowledge of more complex scales, arpeggios and broken chords as required for this level.</li> <li>• Have a growing confidence when using instrument specific alternatives and techniques.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques appropriate to this level, applying an increasing level of control.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convey consistently their own personal responses and interpretations when performing.</li> <li>• Further develop an understanding of where their music making fits within a wider musical context (e.g. links to curriculum / GCSE / BTEC / Ensembles).</li> <li>• Compose in different styles, creating and selecting from a range of musical ideas.</li> <li>• Improvise more extended melodies starting to gain confidence in experimenting and pushing boundaries.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme and perform a variety of pieces suitable for this level developing a personal response and interpretation.</li> <li>• Show a developing confidence, maturity and expression when performing.</li> <li>• Memorise longer and more complex repertoire from a wide range of sources.</li> <li>• Sight read demonstrating fluent musical outcomes with attention to accuracy and expression.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate how musical elements are used across particular styles and genres of music.</li> <li>• Recognise secure intonation, adjusting and effecting changes with increasing success.</li> <li>• Listen to and reproduce more complex patterns with increasing use of chromaticism.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make increasing links between performances and their own practice leading to improvements and greater understanding.</li> <li>• Start to value their own music-making, taking musical decisions with increased confidence.</li> <li>• Devise and adapt practice routines, with increasing independence based on long term aims and aspirations.</li> </ul>

## Level 7

	<b>Building on Level 6, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show an increasingly high level of technical control and apply this to performance and practice.</li> <li>• Communicate with confidence and musicality, demonstrating control of the instrument or voice.</li> <li>• Have knowledge and control of scales and exercises expected for the instrument or voice at this level.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques as appropriate for this advanced stage of learning.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret music with a consistency and personal style which is well thought out and builds on a secure technical control.</li> <li>• Build links between their music-making and wider curriculum learning (e.g. A Level / Ensembles).</li> <li>• Improvise and compose with increasing confidence, musicality and security across a range of styles, chord progressions and patterns.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme and perform a variety of pieces from different styles and periods that are technically advanced, showing and allowing for increased musical interpretation.</li> <li>• Memorise technically challenging pieces from an extended repertoire demonstrating the ability to play from memory.</li> <li>• Perform with increasing confidence, engaging the audience and fellow performers through effective communication.</li> <li>• Sight read more complex repertoire and extracts showing a developing fluency in the approach.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen critically to a variety of music from different genres, styles and traditions drawing influence for their own interpretations.</li> <li>• Play or sing with an increasingly secure intonation adjusting appropriately to their surroundings and other performers.</li> <li>• Show a growing aural perception, hearing music internally before playing, singing or composing.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make informed evaluations about performances, practice routines and sources of inspiration leading to greater musicality.</li> <li>• Take increasing ownership of what they do and how to progress further musically.</li> <li>• Show how their musical approach can be developed, improved or interpreted differently.</li> </ul>

## Level 8

	<b>Building on Level 7, pupils can:</b>
<b>Technique: Making and Controlling Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a high level of technical control to performance and practice.</li> <li>• Communicate with the greatest confidence and musicality demonstrating a secure control of the instrument or voice.</li> <li>• Have full understanding and control of scales and exercises expected for the instrument or voice at this level.</li> <li>• Demonstrate instrumental / vocal specific techniques as appropriate for this advanced stage of learning.</li> </ul>
<b>Creating, Developing and Interpreting Musical Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret music with a consistency and personal style which is well thought out and demonstrates a secure technical control .</li> <li>• Link their music-making across all learning contexts including the wider curriculum (e.g. A Level / Ensembles).</li> <li>• Improvise and compose with confidence, musicality and security across a range of styles, chord progressions and patterns.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme, present and perform a variety of pieces from different styles and periods that are technically advanced, showing and allowing for personal interpretation to be explored musically.</li> <li>• Memorise technically challenging pieces from an extended repertoire, with the ability to play from memory with confidence and accuracy.</li> <li>• Perform with assured conviction and confidence, engaging the audience and fellow performers through excellent communication.</li> <li>• Sight read complex repertoire and extracts showing skill and fluency in the approach.</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Internalising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen critically to a variety of music from different genres, styles and traditions drawing influence for their own interpretations and when working with other performers.</li> <li>• Play or sing with a highly secure intonation.</li> <li>• Show a secure aural perception.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflecting and Evaluating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate in-depth research into performance practices to further develop their own musicianship.</li> <li>• Take ownership of what they do, how well they do it, how to progress further and where to seek additional support.</li> <li>• Communicate that music is a life-long skill and can always be developed, improved or interpreted differently.</li> </ul>



