

RAISING THE PROFILE OF MUSIC AT GREENLAND COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Greenland Community Primary School was a school that loved to sing and make music with productions to mark different occasions in the school calendar. The school choir regularly shared that love of music with the community, performing for local events such as Christmas Light Switch Ons. Then, like all schools across the nation, in 2020 it fell silent. COVID-19 brought the weekly feature of singing assemblies to a screeching halt. The choir could no longer practise let alone perform. As measures have relaxed and schools have returned to normal operations, events such as the Diamond Jubilee have let that love of music shine once again but it was not yet re-established within the school routines. In September 2022, I was given the responsibility of leading Music. It felt only natural to choose music as the focus for my Cultural Leaders project.

The focus for the project has been the presence of music in school outside of the curriculum subject; seeking to make music a fundamental part of the school experience. As such, this project has consisted of many parts, each with their own rate of development and success. Some of the big project moments have included:

- Reviving weekly whole school singing assemblies
- Supporting Harvest and Christmas performances across the school
- Running a Music Makers after school club for KS1, introducing them to a range of instruments and giving them the opportunity to explore their own creativity with music

- Doubling the choir's membership back to pre-COVID numbers and removing the after-school fee
- Relocating the music trolley to a more accessible location (for children and staff!)
- Making the school piano available for practise during lunchtime
- Launching the school Christmas season by singing to celebrate turning on the Christmas tree
- Singing Christmas Carols at a local care home
- Taking part in Durham Music Service's Big Sing and Sign



Of all these wonderful actions, a particular highlight was taking children from the school choir to a local care home for Christmas Carolling. This could very easily have been a disaster as we arrived to find the care home on lockdown and we were not allowed inside! Some quick thinking on all parts saw us engaged in some more traditional carolling as we walked around the entire home singing as windows opened to hear the children's voices. We were also able to perform outside two of the large lounges with residents watching (and dancing) from three floors of the home. The resilience shown by the children in the face of rapidly changing plans and typical December North Eastern weather was wonderful to see and they were a true credit to the school. This moment really helped the children to realise what they could bring to other people through their own enjoyment of music.

Across school, the joy and excitement of making music has risen. Children are asking when the next singing assembly is, asking to join the choir, asking if they can play the instruments available. The children are curious about music.



A discussion during the early stages of the Cultural Leaders programme resonated with me throughout this project and really informed how I approached working with colleagues. The topic of discussion was culture and disruption. Initially, this centred around advocating for cultural experiences and developing children's cultural capital as being disruptive to the status quo however, the discussion quickly evolved to include the disruption this can create on a practical level. Adding something in, means that something else has to give. By focusing this project outside of the curriculum subject, elements have inevitably clashed with an already packed timetable. This is something I have tried to remain extremely conscious of during this process as I know how frustrating it can be! Singing assembly is often only 10 minutes once movement in and out of the hall is taken into account. But, compared to a year ago, this is 10 minutes more than previously. Increasing the length of the assembly would have a detrimental impact to the time available for the next lesson and risk negatively impacting staff's perception of music in school. Input from and collaboration with staff has been essential for balancing this project's potential for inspiration and it's potential for disruption. Having a supportive SLT has been invaluable in making the project a reality. As a new member of staff and still within my ECT phase, I have relied a lot on the strategies of building relations in order to influence and 'manage-up' for this project. Staff have had the opportunity to select the children who take part in each event to help prevent the same children always missing key learning in lessons. This has had the additional benefit of widening the range of children who do participate in additional music activities compared to when this is left to self-selection. Staff have also been instrumental in the practical aspects of managing behaviour during and around music. Instilling a respect for the process of making music and engaging with instruments by modelling expectations has been crucial. The success of staff support is very clear in the attitudes the children have shown by noticing when the trolley

perhaps requires a tidy up and complimenting each other when practising on the piano.

For a project that has been so much about getting the children to use their voices, it only seems right that they get to share their own thoughts. Here is a small snippet of what they had to say:



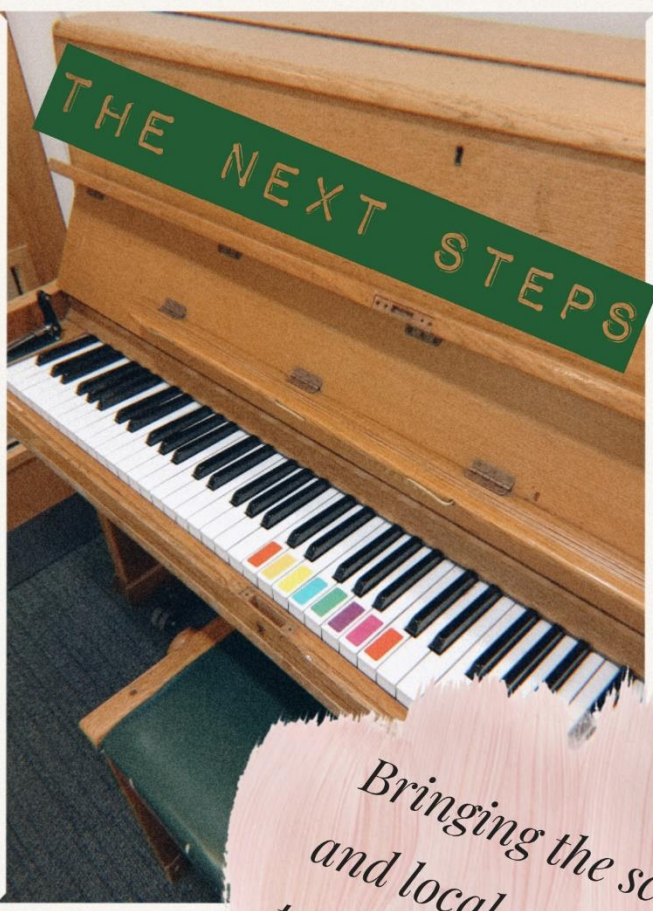
There is so much scope and potential to keep developing the presence of music in our school, taking inspiration both from the traditional role of music in schools and from outside the education sector. For example, the global success of the street piano movement and the recent Channel 4 series about playing public pianos is the inspiration for one of my next steps to make the piano more accessible to all pupils. A summer showcase will hopefully be possible to celebrate the children's achievements. I hope to continue rebuilding our strong musical connections with our local communities through events such as a return visit to the care home (hopefully in better conditions!). As this project grows, I anticipate more organic development and for the children to take a central role in guiding the direction and shape of music's presence in our school. Who knows how the future will sound?

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Bringing the school
and local community
together through music



Summer Music
Showcase?