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# **ICT in Schools: Effect of government initiatives**

## **Secondary Music**

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# Contents

<b>Secondary Music</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Effect of the initiatives</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	4
<i>Pupils' achievement</i>	5
<b>Implementation in schools</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Management</i>	6
<i>Staff development</i>	6
<i>Resources and accommodation</i>	7

# ICT in Schools: Effect of government initiatives

## Secondary Music

1. This report is based on subject-specific evidence from secondary schools visits made as part of the inspection of government information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives between May and December 2001. This contributed to the main report, *ICT in Schools: Effect of government initiatives*, which is available from the OFSTED Publications Centre (07002 637833) or via the OFSTED web site ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

### Effect of the initiatives

#### *Teaching and learning*

2. There has been some progress in teachers' understanding of the contribution of ICT to music teaching and learning. However, opportunities for teachers to acquire or extend their own skills, to review music education software and resources, and then to incorporate ICT strategies in schemes of work and in lessons, have been too variable. The best work is from teachers who, despite having undertaken the generic training, are largely self-taught in applying ICT to music teaching, or who have received informal training from a more knowledgeable colleague.

3. Teachers now have more knowledge about the effective use of ICT for administration in music departments, including the production of documentation. They are aware of the facilities and potential of the technology. This has helped in the review, updating and presentation of documentation connected with recent changes to the National Curriculum, examination courses and assessment procedures. In these circumstances, written materials are effectively stored and retrieved. For example, in the good lessons observed, pupils were given details about units of work, as well as task sheets, which had been designed and produced effectively, using word-processors and music software. However, such examples of good resource planning and use were rare.

4. Teachers' use of ICT in music is effective with examination groups in Year 10 and above, but is much less secure in Key Stage 3. This is often because resources are adequate only for the smaller groups usually found in examination classes and for the more independent and individualised work with these pupils. In Key Stage 4 there are good examples of effective use of software in composing music. Teachers can demonstrate the facilities for inventing sounds and extending musical phrases using sequencing software, and also using notation programs for editing and printing.

5. In post-16 courses, individual students make good use of CD-ROMs and the Internet for research. This enables teachers to set each student a different task and for the whole group to have a complete set of the resulting collective work. Where this is effective, teachers are knowledgeable about the content of CD-ROMs and

web sites; match the tasks well to the needs of individual pupils and save their own time in the planning and preparation of the research aspects of the work. Consequently, they gain time for planning their specialist input to lessons and for supporting individual pupils. Teachers are making good progress in developing their own ICT skills and in using software to support GCSE and post-16 groups. However, at times there is confusion over the intended functions of the software and some inappropriate tasks are set, where some aspects of music technology are underused. In particular, there is insufficient use of the range of facilities, some of which are not screen-based. These include using the recording and sequencing facilities on electronic keyboards and the use of digital audio and video-recording equipment.

6. Where teachers have been able to acquire and experiment with a range of music technology equipment, there is a much more secure understanding of the technical capacity of the facilities and how to use these appropriately. For example, some teachers have made significant progress in using electronic keyboards which have both recording and sequencing facilities. This allows pupils to construct musical compositions, to save them and to edit them and maximises the time available for the musical task. From the earliest stages of composing, teachers can demonstrate the wide range of sounds and styles available, from which pupils select, combine and layer them for their individual or group work. Where teachers are knowledgeable and confident, pupils have a much wider choice of sound sources, many of which are new to them. Teachers are therefore encouraging pupils to be imaginative, individual and inventive, with musical skills and purpose.

7. The best use of music technology occurs when teachers are confident not only in the potential of the resources, but also when their use is appropriate. For example, good teachers know how to use both electronic and acoustic resources effectively in combination, using sound 'samplers' and multi-track recording techniques. There are good examples of effective work from individuals or groups of pupils in Key Stage 4, who both compose and perform their own compositions. Good teachers ensure that pupils use the recording and editing facilities to refine their work and to improve or extend the musical content. There has been some effective use of notation software where teachers produce musical arrangements for class use, or for schools' vocal and instrumental groups. These allow the music to be matched to pupils' skills, as well as producing high-quality printed materials.

### *Pupils' achievement*

8. The effect of ICT on pupils' achievement is more notable in Key Stage 4 and post-16, where it is not unusual for pupils to have their own facilities at home, which they can use independently between lessons. Most subject departments give pupils access to the schools' facilities in extra-curricular time, so that all students can continue their work. Students show considerable commitment in the amount of time they spend individually, or in working groups, to develop their work outside lessons. Indeed, it is not uncommon to find good work in schools where pupils are self-taught as far as music technology is concerned, often supported by an older pupil with more advanced skills.

9. Pupils' achievement is highest when they know how to apply the music technology to a musical purpose, not merely to use the applications because they

are available. This entails considerable time with teachers and other pupils exploring the applications and using both their ICT and music skills to select, refine and edit their work. When they are encouraged to be inventive, they adopt a 'research' or 'problem-solving' approach to their tasks, which builds their confidence and skills. In examination classes, pupils share their knowledge about software applications and help each other with musical and technical solutions. Where good teaching has occurred, much valuable musical discussion takes place in these sessions and pupils who are developing very individual techniques and styles of working share and evaluate these with the whole group.

10. The considerably higher achievement of pupils in examination classes needs to be extended to work in Key Stage 3. In particular, their use of electronic keyboards needs to use the full facilities which the instruments offer and they need to develop skills, both technical and musical, which allow them to maximise the opportunities for effective music-making. In several schools, resources are insufficient to offer these opportunities to all pupils in Key Stage 3. Also, they need sufficient access to music software to enable them to acquire the musical and technical skills to use it effectively as an integral strand of the music curriculum and not as isolated or disjointed experiences.

## **Implementation in schools**

### *Management*

11. Most schools visited have a clear plan for the development of ICT in the curriculum; for the acquisition of resources and the provision of training. However, music departments are usually small, with one or two full-time members of staff, who have the full responsibility of introducing wide-ranging and complex new resources. In schools where there are recently trained teachers, they bring experience and skills from the requirements of their training courses. The music software applications, though, have specific purposes and most teachers, whether new or experienced need both the time and the opportunity to explore these to the full, then to incorporate them into the work of pupils in all year groups.

12. In departments where music technology is effectively integrated into the curriculum, the teachers concerned have usually had access to both technical and musical support. School-based technicians have often been an excellent source of advice, as well as dealing with any technical problems. Musical support is not so readily available. In some cases, it is available from the LEA, but in others, subject teachers use their initiative to find a 'mentor' or to spend the time necessary to become fluent in the musical applications of the technology. A number of the 'self-taught' have become effective practitioners, but in other cases, there is either under-use or inappropriate use of some of the available resources.

### *Staff development*

13. Most music teachers understand the significance and the distinctive musical purposes which ICT applications offer. They are aware of the extensive use and influence of technology on the music industry and the music professions. However, many are not confident about their own capacity to use ICT and provide appropriate

leadership in this important strand of teaching music. Teachers have insufficient access to good advice when deciding on the purchase of resources to match the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination courses. They need to explore the range and quality of, for example, electronic keyboards, music software and recording equipment so that they acquire the most appropriate resources.

14. Although the generic NOF-funded ICT training which subject teachers have received has had a positive effect on some aspects of their work, such as administration, documentation and the production of printed materials, it has not yet sufficiently addressed the key area noted above. In particular, there has been insufficient training in effective subject applications of the technology, and insufficient guidance as to how such applications can be integrated successfully into existing units of work, particularly for pupils in Key Stage 3.

#### *Resources and accommodation*

15. The funding available to schools for resources is having a considerable effect on the work of music departments. Spending decisions have been influenced by the requirements of the National Curriculum and of examination courses. Most teachers, though, need access to reliable advice when deciding on the type, range and quality of resources for music technology. This information is rarely available within schools and the access to reliable external advice remains too variable. In some cases, LEAs are making a strong contribution to these discussions.

16. Sometimes music teachers are insufficiently experienced and knowledgeable about the effective use of music technology to make the most appropriate choices when equipping or re-equipping departments.

17. Additionally, when acquiring resources, departments give insufficient consideration to the available accommodation and the siting of valuable equipment. These aspects should be decided at an early stage. Pupils have limited opportunities to work individually, in groups and as whole classes, using the full range of technology available. Gaining such opportunities will have important implications for the linking, as well as the location, of facilities in classrooms, practice rooms and recording studios. In several departments, problems remain about the networking of computers, access to the Internet, the compatibility of equipment and the availability of sufficient resources for regular use by pupils in Key Stage 3.

18. Many music departments are making facilities available to pupils outside lessons, so that they can develop their work. This is particularly important when pupils' sole access to technology and to working in regular music groups takes place during the school day.