

Title

Modernising the music curriculum to move with changes in technology and to improve lesson engagement.

Date:	01.08.25
Written by:	Charlotte Hayes
School/setting:	Woodside Primary Academy
Purpose:	To improve engagement in lessons and attitude towards music
Audience:	Primary school music leads

Headline Details

Using music technology to improve the engagement and participation of pupils in music lessons.

Key Information

Delete sections as appropriate

Number of participants	90
Participant information (year group, ages, how participants were selected)	Various KS2 year groups, randomised.
Key staff	Charlotte Hayes
Timescale/Key dates	7 weeks
Cost	£0 (but could incur a cost depending on schools' existing equipment)

Activity

During the normal class music lessons, for seven weeks, traditional music learning objectives (learning notation, composing, performing, learning to play an instrument, music elements etc.) were taught using only modern methods and songs, and music technology (computers, iPads, keyboards, recording equipment, gamification, music tech devices etc.) to help improve engagement and motivation of all students. Music education and the music industry has seen huge developments over the last few decades due to the invention and introduction of technology and can have a significant benefit to how music is taught.

Case Study: Enhancing Engagement in Primary Music Lessons with Technology

Researcher: Charlotte Hayes

Context: Randomised KS2 year group classes

Duration: 7 weeks

The Challenge

- Traditional teaching methods (notation, traditional instruments) failed to engage disaffected learners, which led to poor attention and participation.
 - Question: *Can music technology improve participation and engagement?*
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Approach

Methodology: Action Research (Plan → Act → Observe → Reflect)

Lesson Types:

1. *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* – taught via interactive video + keyboards.
2. *Blinded By Your Grace (Stormzy)* – chords taught using iPads & GarageBand.

Data Collection:

- Lesson diaries (teacher reflection)
 - Student questionnaires (qualitative + quantitative)
 - Staff discussions
 - Observations
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Findings

1. Motivation

- Pupils responded strongly to *familiar, culturally relevant songs*.
- Competition & performance opportunities boosted participation.
- Simplicity = boredom | Complexity = frustration → balance is key.

2. Accessibility

- Technology lowered barriers: non-musicians could play full chords with one tap.
- Differentiated methods (letters vs. notation) helped self-paced learning.
- High-achieving instrumentalists sometimes felt held back by simplified tools.

3. Pedagogy & Behaviour

- Engagement through tech improved behaviour in typically disaffected pupils.
- Over-enthusiasm required classroom management (technology is exciting!)

4. Quantitative Insights

- Most pupils enjoy music lessons overall.
 - Majority wanted *more tech in lessons* but not as a replacement for traditional instruments.
 - Pupils valued both **teacher relationship** and **song choice** as key motivators.
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Conclusion

- **Technology alone is not the solution** – its impact depends on:
 - Song relevance & cultural connection
 - Differentiated, accessible learning strategies
 - Positive teacher-student relationships
- Best outcomes came from *blending technology with traditional methods* and tailoring pedagogy to pupil needs.

Key Takeaways for Educators

- Use culturally relevant music to “hook” disengaged learners.
- Integrate technology for accessibility, but retain traditional instruments for variety and challenge.
- Harness gamification principles to make learning playful.
- Build supportive teacher-student relationships – a vital driver of engagement.

Future Directions: Explore gamification, expand composition-based learning, and balance formal vs. informal teaching styles.

Impact on Participants and Staff

The impact on students was significant due to the lesson subjects being relevant to the children. Music that fits their taste = their interest in the learning objective and willingness to learn was enhanced. Using music technology = children did not need specific musical skills to create music, therefore fully inclusive. Children who would not usually engage well in lessons were now actively participating. The enjoyment in lessons was raised, engagement was improved and this had a positive impact on teaching staff as it lowers poor behaviour due to lack of confidence or disinterest.

Learning

What worked well? Children loved using technology and exploring new ways of making music. Using music that the children knew and related to meant children who would usually refuse to sing were now singing, and with enthusiasm.

What would be changed in the future? Supplementing learning with the regular use of music technology, rather than replacing traditional methods and instruments. You can see from the data collected that children did not want to replace traditional instruments. Both can work harmoniously together to improve the attainment of all pupils.

What are the outcomes so far and what do they point to? Increased engagement, improved willingness to perform, better attitude to music throughout school life.

