

Opening doors in music and learning with young people outside the mainstream: Gloucestershire Music Makers' work in Pupil Referral Units



Brief description of the work

Gloucestershire Music Makers (GlosMM) have been running weekly small group and one-to-one music mentoring sessions for young people who attend three pupil referral units¹ (PRUs) in Gloucestershire. The aim is to engage young people and build their confidence in learning.

Who's involved

This particular programme of work began in November 2012, and is part of the Music Inclusion Strategy of [Make Music Gloucestershire](#), the county's music education hub, which is led by Gloucestershire Music, the county's music education service. It is funded by Make Music Gloucestershire; [Youth Music](#), as part of the Hub's partnership with Swindon and Wiltshire (referred to as SWAG) in a Musical Inclusion programme; and by Gloucester and Forest of Dean **Pupil Referral Services**.

The aim of the Strategy is to address gaps in music opportunities for young people in challenging circumstances who may miss out on music education, and to work with partners outside of music education to improve musical and non-musical outcomes for children and young people.

¹ A pupil referral unit (PRU) is a type of school that offers short-term alternative education for young people who are excluded from school or not attending school for other reasons. Many of the children attending PRUs will have emotional and behavioral difficulties and some have special educational needs. The PRU will provide an environment where they can learn in smaller groups or one-to-one, through learning tailored to their needs. It will help them cope with difficulties they are having with learning, after which they may then be gradually introduced back into mainstream or special schools. Some attend a PRU part-time as well as attending a mainstream school.

What are the outcomes? Quotes from teaching staff, pupils, music leaders

Engagement

"Tom² doesn't always participate in things, but as you can see, he's straight in with these music sessions. For someone who's usually reluctant to join in anything, it's really good." **Teaching assistant.**

"It's very difficult for Sam to concentrate, so to actually stay in there and focus for half an hour is really good. He'd ... do anything to not focus on learning ... but he will focus on music." **Teaching assistant.**

"When [the music leader] comes in and starts playing his guitar, the whole atmosphere lifts. [He] is lovely with them, he's really spot on with them. He's incredibly patient. There have been some [very distracted] pupils, pupils with ADHD, but he gets them all engaging and getting something out of it." **Primary teaching lead.**

"You can see they have an enthusiasm for the subject when they come back into class - they want to carry on singing or playing guitar. And then in the classroom ... they ask to get the guitar out and it's started to form part of their social time." **Primary teaching lead.**

"I don't really get on with teachers ... [but] ... [the two music leaders] respect me and I respect them, I find you just don't get that with teachers." **Year 9 student.**

Confidence

"Music lifts their mood - you can see it in their faces, it's 'look what I can do' - they might have weaknesses in academic subject, but music is something they can achieve." **Teaching assistant.**

"She knew she had a nice singing voice but she hadn't done anything with it. It was this wonderful thing that blossomed in her." **Primary teaching lead.**

"I'm good at music." **Sam, Primary school age participant.**

"Through Arts Award, she had to teach someone a skill ... we found she's a very patient teacher ... as well her singing voice, we've also discovered she has a superb eye for design ... she wanted to do three versions of her PowerPoint presentation before she was satisfied with it, and each one took it up to another level of excellence. We were determined it wouldn't be a case of 'that'll do'." **Music leader, discussing a Year 9 student.**

"One of the things you said, was that you wanted to show people, that you could actually achieve something, the people that didn't believe in you." **Music leader, talking to a Year 9 student.**

Learning skills

"Yes there is literacy and numeracy involved, but there's also communication, listening, following instructions, there's so much wrapped up in music." **Primary teaching lead.**

"They wrote a few songs, but [it doesn't seem like] 'literacy' because it's music and lyrics. So there's a way into using your adjectives and doing a bit of poetry, but not sitting in front of a piece of paper. It's not that cold learning. So they get all of that out of it as well." **Primary teaching lead.**

"A lot of these young people have got into poor learning habits ... When they come across a difficulty, they will have an emotional reaction. I always try to approach it by identifying what's positive. I'll say, one, I'm glad you care about it being right or wrong, that shows you care about music and two, you obviously have musical ears because you can hear something wrong, so three, let's find out what's wrong so we can put it right." **Music leader.**

"Good, accurate feedback skills are essential in this work, as is emotional intelligence, properly attending to the person you're working with, and seeing yourselves as co-learners. I'm learning how to teach them all the time, just as they're finding out how to learn from me." **Music leader.**

"If I don't want to do something, they'll persuade me to do it. I don't know how, they just manage it!" **Year 9 student.**

Individualised learning

"It's their music, it's not like mainstream, where often it's, 'you will learn this today' ... you'll lose them... They're very flexible, they say, well what do you like?" **Teaching assistant.**

Self expression

"They desperately need outlets for expressing themselves ... they find words and expressing themselves in writing very difficult, so their behaviour is reflecting their emotion .. but with music you're using the other bit of your brain. They need these creative outlets." **Primary teaching lead.**

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² All names have been changed to protect young people's identities.