

Music Therapy in Education

About music therapy

Music therapy is a unique method of creative communication that takes place between a child and a music therapist and which develops over a series of regular sessions. It is often used when verbal skills are limited due to physical or learning disability, or where children are unable to make use of a verbal therapy due to emotional distress. Music therapy can be 1:1 or in a group.

Education or therapy?

Many children find it difficult to engage in their learning. There are many reasons for this, but often it is connected to complex issues at home, a learning or physical disability, a condition such as autism or a combination of the these factors. Emotional and cognitive difficulties can affect a child's motivation to learn and may make it difficult for them to participate in class-based educational activities.

Music therapy uses music as a tool for communication and expression, Making connections through music can have a positive impact on:

- self-esteem
- sense of identity
- communication skills
- social skills

If a child is well equipped in these areas they are more likely to engage positively in their education. Although music therapy does not directly teach musical skills, it contributes to musical development by encouraging:

- awareness of pitch and rhythm
- vocal confidence
- spontaneity and creativity
- improved listening skills
- greater concentration

Music therapists can support teachers and parents by providing music therapy in small groups or

1:1, with the aim of developing the skills which will help children participate more positively in school life. Music therapy can also create the conditions whereby a child is ready to learn to play an instrument. In short, it can help the children who struggle most at school to come closer to achieving their potential.

Evidence Base

Published research suggests that music therapy can help develop social and play skills in vulnerable younger children, promote communication skills in children with ASD, and address emotional needs of adolescents.¹

Case studies and reports also show how music therapy can benefit children with learning disabilities, and its capacity to engage children who may resist other forms of help.²

You can find out more through the Resources section of this leaflet.



Funding

Funding for music therapy can come from a range of sources, including school budgets, local authorities, music education hubs, parental contribution and charities. Special Schools have long recognized the value of music therapy for their children, and with the increase in children with Special Education Needs attending mainstream schools many mainstream schools now offer therapeutic services. Music therapy can help those children and young people who need additional emotional support and

find verbal therapy too direct or challenging.

Music Therapy and Ofsted

Music therapy in schools has been recognized by Ofsted as addressing educational and pastoral needs of children. It has also featured on Ofsted's 'Good Practice' website in relation to music education and special needs.³

Finding a music therapist

To find out about music therapy services in your area, or for information about employing a music therapist, you can contact our office or search our website at www.bamt.org.

Music therapists are trained at postgraduate (MA) level and are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (www.hcpc-uk.org).

Resources

¹ *Presenting the Evidence (2nd ed.)* by Mercedes Pavlicevic et al., (available online at www.nordoff-robins.org.uk/what-we-do)

² *Music Therapy in Schools*, ed. Amelia Oldfield and Philippa Derrington (Jessica Kingsley)

³ *Music in schools: wider still, and wider. Good practice case study Whitefield Schools and Centre* (available online at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources)

The British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT) was established in April 2011. It provides information and promotes the highest standards of practice, training and research to further the advance of music therapy.