

music Teacher

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Catch them early, says Youth Music

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The wide-ranging benefits of involving children in musical activity from an early age have again been emphasised, this time in new research commissioned from Northumbria University by the young people's music charity Youth Music.

The aim of the study was to establish the extent of any impact of musical activity on the general development of pre-school-age children. It traced the development of young people over an extended period and maintained that long-term music projects showed significant bene-

ficial effects on their personal, academic and social development as well as musical progress. Children whose carers had attended music groups with them were shown to have a greater vocabulary, an ability to sing in tune, increased concentration spans and improved hand-eye co-ordination as a result.

'There is something about experience in music,' said Jim

Calf, one of the researchers leading the study, 'that acts as a catalyst, supports communication and language development, and also acts in the same way for mathematical development.'

The results were launched at an event entitled *Turning Their Ears On* which took place last month at LSO St Luke's in London and included keynote speeches by Kathryn McDowell, managing director of the London Symphony Orchestra, Naomi Eisenstadt, chief advisor on children's services at the DfES and Christina Coker, chief executive of Youth Music.

'I hope from this research we can debunk the "Mozart effect",' said Coker. 'There isn't such a thing. Just putting music on for a child to listen to will not make them smarter - what does make a difference is well-structured, regular music-making activity.'

Youth Music has collaborated in this research with LSO Discovery, the London Symphony Orchestra's music education and community programme. Each year both groups bring between 30,000 and 35,000 children into contact with music. What Youth Music calls 'early years music making' is part of its set of five-year priorities that also includes the transition from primary to secondary school.

