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NURSERY WORLD

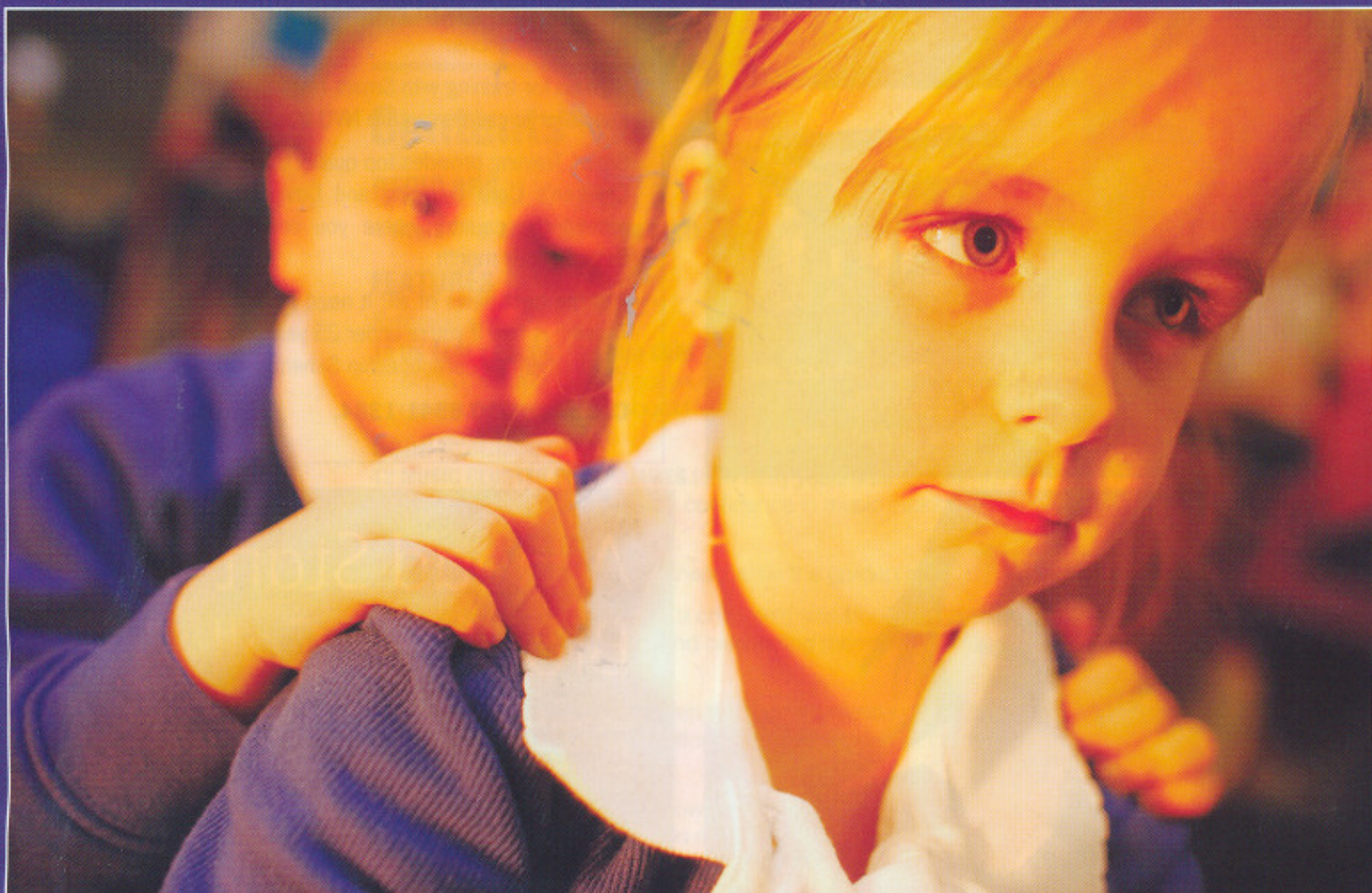


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THE magazine for early years and childcare practitioners



IN TOUCH

HOW PEER MASSAGE IS HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN

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Early years settings are to be the beneficiaries of a legacy of music making, thanks to the development of Music Cluster Programmes.

Following a successful pilot, Youth Music is seeking to establish Cluster Programmes in up to nine locations from next year. Each Cluster will comprise a number of early years settings working with a music organisation and other local partners, with guidance from the Association of British Orchestras and Youth Music. During the project, early years children will experience music played by professional musicians and explore musical instruments themselves.

Andrew Burke, head of LSO Discovery, which was involved in the pilot, says its outcome reinforced their belief that music is an essential part of young children's development. 'Engaging young children in music allows them to express themselves as they develop their language and communication skills,' he says. 'Music is an essential element because it allows emerging skills to come together in an often joyful activity.'

Take note

Youth Music has commissioned a training framework for the Cluster Programme that will provide guidance for practitioners and musicians and allow them to adapt their own music practices.

The project's aims include:

- To develop music practice in the everyday life of the early years settings
- To develop the skills, knowledge and musical confidence of early years practitioners in order to promote sustainability
- To develop the skills, knowledge and musical confidence of more orchestral musicians and workshop leaders working in early years settings
- To explore the difference that live music, musicians and instruments can make on the impact of music in early years settings.

Early childhood music specialist Nancy Evans, who wrote the training framework, says, 'The aim is to encourage collaboration between musicians and early years practitioners and their settings, who all bring different perspectives. It is incredibly important for musicians to go into settings, and there is a lot that musicians can learn from practitioners, and vice versa.'

'Musicians are well equipped to make sense of children's early music making. Early music play and improvisation can be dismissed as noise, but musicians can hear patterns and returning ideas which they can then work with.'

Music box

The project involves professional musicians attending a group of early years settings for a whole morning or afternoon each week over 12 weeks. Ms Evans stresses that it is important for musicians to observe and tune into the settings' dynamics and routines.

Vanessa King, early years animator with LSO Discovery, says, 'It is different from a normal musician visit, because I become a part of the nursery. I will liaise with a practitioner and watch the children to see how they are using music already.'

'The training framework advocates different ways to engage children from adult-led to child-led activities. For example, for a child-led activity

Tune in

the musician puts out a box of carefully thought out instruments, such as glockenspiel, xylophone and shakers, and watches what the children do with them and then takes it from their level.

'Children will tend to go from one instrument to another, and then the musician gets involved and copies what the child is doing. This forms an instant communication and engagement. The child's face often lights up and you can see they love the musical conversation.'

'There is no right or wrong way to play with the instruments, and the children are allowed to dictate what happens. For example, they bang a drum and I bang back and it validates what they do.'

Mr Burke says, 'Seeing musicians with orchestral instruments, such as tuba, violin and cello, is a very powerful thing. It is different from the usual range of instruments. Children can listen to them up close and actually touch them and feel the vibrations. It is a rich and meaningful experience which they can combine with other



musical experiences, such as singing, that they can recreate in the setting themselves.'

LSO double bass player Matthew Gibson understands the power of musical instruments. He says, 'The double bass is a great instrument for educational work, because visually it has a huge impact. It is a very physical instrument as well. I have a double bass that I take along to let the children have a go on.'

'I'm always careful at first when I play the instrument with early years children, because they either giggle or

Hearing the double bass can be frightening but exciting for young children





Children at Fortune Park Early Years Centre have learned respect for instruments

Practitioners as well as children are gaining confidence in music making through a unique project. **Annette Rawstrone** listens in

burst into tears – it can be a frightening sound. It's a sound that many children have not heard before and can be very surprising.'

Sound it out

Fortune Park Early Years Centre in Islington, London, was involved in the pilot, as a result of which it has made great changes to the way it approaches music. Education support worker Toni Amagor says, 'Before the pilot we did not have a music area. All the musical instruments were kept in a cupboard because we were worried they'd be destroyed. Now the children have free access to the instruments and have learned how to respect them. They know how to use them properly.'

'We now have a music corner and children will sit and play the piano by themselves or with a staff member. They do not bang on the piano, but explore what sounds it makes – going from the lower to higher notes or playing softer and harder.'

Following the project, Ms Amagor now feels confident to engage in and respond to children's music free play.

She says the children have learned many skills, ranging from rhythm and composing to turn-taking, instrument recognition and concentration.

Those with special educational needs also respond well. Ms Amagor recalls, 'A boy with Down syndrome loved it when a musician came in and played the cello. He sat next to him and listened for the duration. A child with global delay also got a lot out of it. Music is a way for children to communicate and express themselves without speaking or being seen as different.'

'All the children love the musicians coming in. On the first session the room was quite noisy and there was a lot going on. A musician started playing the cello and it got so calm and quiet. The children continued playing but were listening to the music. Everyone was amazed.'

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Further information

- Youth Music, www.youthmusic.org.uk
- LSO Discovery, www.lso.co.uk/discovery
- Association of British Orchestras, www.abo.org.uk

World Beaters

Early years settings in Reading, Berkshire, are using music to explore different world cultures.

The 'World Beaters Goes to School' project, funded by Youth Music, helps children and staff gain confidence in working with traditional instruments. Staff members from six nurseries and three primary schools are also working with World Beaters musicians to learn basic music skills teaching so that musical enjoyment continues once the project ends.

Ann Tanner, headteacher at Whitley Park School, says, 'World Beaters come in and work with us and help us to develop our skills and will leave that with us. It is very exciting and has made a big difference to music in our school.'

The nursery children are concentrating on South African music and dance, which will culminate in a carnival. They are learning different rhythms and holding a steady beat. 'The children are developing good listening skills. It is helping their physical development and reading and speech, plus promoting co-operation and music enjoyment,' says Ms Tanner.

Children and staff at Blagrove Nursery School are focusing on the Middle East during their five-week project. Weekly musician visits include talking about Middle East cultures and lifestyles, investigating the countries on maps and the internet, learning Turkish and Arabic words and tasting traditional foods.

Children are experiencing local rhythms through songs and musical stories and have learned how to play dumbeks, a drum held under the arm. 'The Egyptian rhythms are very different from European rhythms. It is giving us a real flavour of the Middle East. Children are singing and dancing in the garden and throughout the nursery and copying the rhythms they have learned,' says headteacher Vivienne Simpson.

'We spoke to World Beaters before the sessions so that we could integrate the work into our planning. The whole school community is learning together and parents are being invited to a music workshop.'

■ For further information go to www.worldbeaters.co.uk



A Turkish drum provides an introduction to Middle Eastern cultures to accompany learning about relevant countries