

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 18 MAY 2011**

Oxfordshire County Music Service, work with less advantaged children and young people.

## **Briefing notes for Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

1. The Music Service is committed to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn an instrument and to sing; also to experience high quality performance, both as a participant and as audience.
2. In order to achieve this, the Music Service is focussing on the following:
  - The development of quality whole-class and large-group teaching
  - The development of free beginner ensembles
  - Development of clear and affordable progression pathways
  - Developing partnerships with an increasing number of organisations that are able to work with the Service to deliver high quality music education opportunities for the children and young people of Oxfordshire.

## **Wider Opportunities Programmes**

3. The Wider opportunities programmes (known in Oxfordshire as the 'Vocal and Instrumental Programme') offer all pupils in KS2 the opportunity of a year's free whole class instrumental teaching at no cost to the children or parents.
4. Performances in and out of school that arise from this teaching often represent both the children and their parents' first experience of musical performance.
5. Subsequent to the initial year, pupils are offered a continuation year of learning in groups, at a significantly subsidised rate. In areas of greatest social need the Music Service has worked with the charity 'Future Talent' to ensure that pupils have had access to this follow-on year (known as 'Play On') at no cost. The Music Service has also worked with schools in such areas to maximise the number of pupils who continue learning with full remission of fees.
6. Work with Future Talent has also ensured that, in areas of greatest deprivation, free access to instrumental learning has been able to continue for a third year.

7. Particularly musically able children are able to access a special programme that includes longer lessons and more intensive tuition at reduced cost; additionally, some charitable scholarships have been available to a number of students to support accelerated learning and the provision of more advanced instruments.

### **Remission of fees and other support**

8. All pupils entitled to free school meals are given free lessons and free use of instruments. The Music Service helps those pupils from families who have incomes just above the F.S.M. threshold to find financial support from charities such as the Chief Officers Fund for Music. As a last resort, and in obviously very needy and deserving cases, the Service will support such families directly with partial remission of charges.
9. The Music Service sees it as a significant part of its role to provide support and mentoring for pupils who come from backgrounds that may have no experience in supporting children through musical pathways.

### **Ensembles**

10. All pupils in their first school year of learning an instrument with the Music Service are given free access to Saturday morning and other music ensemble provision. New beginner ensembles have been established at every Saturday Music Centre to accommodate these pupils. Subsequent remission of charges is available to families for access to these activities on the same basis as remission of charges for lessons.
11. A restructuring of the most senior activities means that all students are able to access the highest levels of performing groups on merit (with remission of charges available in the same way as for other groups). Students can then opt into the more expensive 'touring' programmes. In some cases it has also been possible to find charitable funding partners to support particularly able students to access the touring groups. However, the annual programme of high level performance is now undertaken by the regularly rehearsing ensembles that are accessible on merit.

### **Partnership programme with Christ Church Cathedral School**

12. The Music Service works in partnership with the Cathedral School on a programme of outreach into less advantaged primary schools in Oxford and the surrounding area. This programme results in the Primary School children having the opportunity to experience singing to an audience in the Cathedral with the Choristers.

## **Creating performance Opportunities in Oxfordshire**

13. The Music Service has been focussing on creating high quality performance opportunities for children, particularly those who may not otherwise experience performing in front of large audiences in major events.
14. In addition to working with school partnerships around the county, the Service has established a 'Youth Arts Festival' in Banbury, where schools are able to showcase whole-class and large group work that includes the full range of children. A large-scale event is being planned in Bicester for July, in partnership with the Town Mayor and the schools.
15. In November, around 400 Oxfordshire children will have the opportunity to sing in a massed choir in the Albert Hall as part of the Schools' Prom, and a similar number will be given this type of opportunity in March 2012 in a Grand Gala Concert in Symphony Hall (Birmingham). The Service ensures that schools from less advantaged areas are well represented in these and similar events.

## **Concerts**

16. The Music Service senior orchestras regularly give performances in Oxford Town Hall and the Sheldonian (and sometimes other venues) for primary school children. These are offered at very low cost to schools, and it has sometimes been possible to find funding partners to enable schools to bring children at no cost. Last year several hundred children in Banbury were able to attend a concert given specially for them by the Philomusica (with soloists from the County Youth Orchestra).

## **Youth Music Programmes**

17. The Music Service works with the organisation Youth Music to deliver programmes in Early Years which, in addition to developing musical understanding in young children, are designed to build capacity with the adults in the settings in which they take place.
18. Over the last twelve months the Music Service has been delivering a Music Technology and Performance programme in Littlemore, funded by Youth Music, designed to engage and help young people in their mid-teens avoid becoming disaffected and socially excluded. This programme continues until December, and we are currently seeking alternative sources of funding in order to continue it into 2012.

## **Free ensembles**

19. The Music Service has, with support from Future Talent, been able to offer free tuition and ensembles to two groups of young people in Bicester and Cowley. This has enabled young people with musical potential to access an opportunity, free of charge that has, in several cases, been life-changing.

## **Training and Development**

20. There has been a significant programme of training and development for all Music Service staff, focussing on inclusion, and the development of skills related to large-group tuition and 'teaching-by-ensemble'. These skills are enabling the Music Service to confidently offer low cost musical learning options to young people, schools and families.

Tony Mealings

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