

Why explore sounds?

Exploring sounds involves listening to, and creating sounds from a wide variety of sources including the environment, the voice, the body and instruments.

The Exploring Sounds strand unit advocates an active approach to **listening**. The Teacher Guidelines suggest that such an approach is important 'for children's musical development as performers, as composers and as members of an audience'. Listening skills developed through activities in this strand unit, are central to, and are further developed in, all the other strand units.

Being an active listener involves the children in listening for a purpose and identifying the sounds they hear. They begin to recognise sounds, describing them and classifying them into sound families. Description of sounds may be done through language, movement or symbols/drawings. These skills are required increasing awareness through the class levels. Children become more discerning as opportunities to listen to sounds within a narrow range are provided. At junior level, children investigate the sound makers and progress to begin to understand how sounds are produced and organised at senior levels (links with the Science curriculum are made here).

The environment offers a large bank of sounds for children to listen to, drawing on sounds in the child's immediate environment and also using sounds recorded from different environments or sources.

In addition to listening to sounds, children are given opportunities to **create** sounds. This may begin with **imitating** sounds. As children imitate sounds they develop their awareness of the different sounds around them. They are encouraged to imitate sounds from the environment and also to imitate vocal sounds.

There are hundreds of sounds which children's voices can reproduce using different mouth shapes and many ways of putting sequences of these together. Imitation of sounds leads on to sound words and word phrases being described and imitated and the pattern and rhythm of words being explored. Sounds of different pitch are also explored through environmental and vocal sounds. Vocal ranges are distinguished and described at senior levels.

The aspect of creating sounds is central to the Exploring Sounds strand unit. Children are enabled to create sounds using items from the environment and their voices, as mentioned above. They also discover ways of making sounds using **body percussion** and they explore ways of making sounds with percussion **instruments** and experiment with techniques on these that would suggest sound pictures.

Children need structured opportunities for exploring sounds, be they environmental, vocal, instrumental or from body percussion. Providing frequent, well structured experiences for children to do this will build their confidence in working in the medium of sound and will enable children approach other areas of the Music curriculum with more ease.

(See PPDS Website below for suggested activities for exploring sounds, using each of the sound sources)