

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	17 September 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Music Service
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/24/212
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne
REPORT AUTHOR	Beth Edwards
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At the Education and Children's Services Committee on 12th September 2023, the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning was instructed to continue to extend opportunities for music making through partnership working between the Music Service and Aberdeen City Music School and others; and report back on progress within one calendar year. This report provides an evaluative overview of the progress made over the 2023/24 academic session.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 instructs the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to extend opportunities for music making through partnership working between the Music Service and Aberdeen City Music School and others; and
- 2.2 instructs the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to report back on progress in one calendar year

3. CURRENT SITUATION

Collaboration and Performance

- 3.1 Members requested that the service continue to extend opportunities for music making through partnership working between the Music Service and Aberdeen City Music School and others.
- 3.2 Following the success of the Music Service Festive Concert in December 2022, the Music Service has established festive concerts as an annual feature of the Music Service calendar. Demand for tickets, coupled with the value to performers from this formal performance opportunity triggered the decision to split the concert over two evenings in order to include an increasing number of ensembles. As a result of these changes, the number of children performing in our festive concert increased from around 300 in 2022 to over 400 in 2023.

- 3.3 The service has also introduced an annual Spring Concert, again over two nights. The decision to introduce a Spring Concert was in response from feedback from pupils, parents and staff who shared that they wanted additional rehearsal and performance opportunities to take place across the year. Both the Festive and Spring Concerts offer an opportunity for the Music Service to be joined by pupils from Aberdeen City Music School, with Music School and Music Service pupils coming together to perform in the finale.
- 3.4 This joint working has enabled pupils of all standards to perform together, with less experienced learners being able to be inspired by those working at more advanced levels.
- 3.5 In addition to our newly established collaboration with the Music School, we were also joined by learners from the Scottish Culture and Traditions Youth Ensemble for the Spring Concerts, following our partnership project with them in a number of schools. The partnership project involved traditional music tutors spending a week 'in residence' at St Peter's School, Ashley Road School, Riverbank School, Cornhill School and Sunnybank School. The children in the upper stages of these schools had the opportunity to learn penny whistle, Scots song, clarsach and trad guitar, with each week culminating in performances to peers and families. The pupils made clear musical progress across each week with many children expressing the desire to continue learning a musical instrument. The performance as part of the Spring Concert, was an opportunity to celebrate this partnership working and for Music Service pupils to showcase their learning of traditional tunes. We are building on this by looking to run the project again in the 24-25 academic year linked to our established programme of ceilidhs. Taking this approach enabled the service to reach over 1500 children. To build on this success and increase knowledge of traditional music the service is offering a new ensemble, named Folk Collective, where children who play any instrument are invited to learn traditional tunes from Scotland and further afield.
- 3.6 Following the success of the Big Sing in 2022/23, the Aberdeen Big Sing 2023/24 took place at Duthie Park, with all Primary 4s in the city coming together to sing as one big choir of over 3000 children. The number of songs performed was increased and there were performances in both British Sign Language and Makaton. The songs were accompanied by an orchestra made up of pupils from Aberdeen City Music Service and Robert Gordon's College. The performance also featured pupils from Ashley Road School Woodwind Project, and Robert Gordon's College Pipe Band. Feedback from the event has been exceptionally positive, with it now being a keenly anticipated part of the education service calendar.
- 3.7 The Ashley Road Woodwind project ran during session 23/24 involving 90 Primary 5 pupils who received tuition on woodwind instruments. The project was extremely successful, with pupils having the opportunity to perform at three concerts. The Music Service's Wind Band Programme will continue to expand, with a new cohort of learners joining the Ashley Road Woodwind Project, and new projects being launched in Riverbank School and Charleston School. Members of the Music Service staff team travelled to Fort William in June 2024 to see the work of Highlife Highland Music Instructors who run similar band

projects in schools there. Plans are under development for pupils from Aberdeen City and Highland to perform together during the 24-25 academic year.

- 3.8 In order to increase the number of collaborative opportunities as per the committee instruction, The Scottish Young Musician Competition has now become an annual event. Following on from the success of the 2023 competition, the service introduced a Junior Young Musician Competition in 2024 to allow younger pupils to be able to have the opportunity to compete. The finals of the Junior and Senior competitions were held at the Cowdray Hall and the number of entrants rose from 30 to 67. The winner of the Senior competition had the opportunity to compete at the national final which was held at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in May.
- 3.9 In October 2023, the Music Service arranged three locality concerts. These took place at Woodside School, Muirfield School and Lochside Academy and featured pupils from across the Don, West and Dee localities. The concerts were well attended and featured a range of solo and ensemble performances from pupils from various stages of their musical journeys. These locality concerts provide an ideal opportunity to give our children and young people an early opportunity to perform in advance of performance at a bigger stage at either our Festive or Spring concerts.
- 3.10 In May 2024 a Wind Band performed at Pittodrie as part of the Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust Day, a first for the Service. This opportunity proved incredibly popular with pupils, with the band comprising of around 200 young musicians attending the stadium. The pupils performed an arrangement of Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen at the start of the game and during the second half, as well as having an opportunity to watch the match. We hope to perform at sports events in the future due to the popularity of this opportunity and await confirmation regarding specific events.
- 3.11 A percussion project has been running in a number of schools since August. In order to showcase their work the group performed at the SPECTRA festival in February 2024 using drum sticks that they had painted themselves with glow-in-the-dark paint. This performance was in a prominent location outside the Cowdray Hall and attracted a large crowd which was made up of both families and SPECTRA festival-goers.
- 3.12 At the start of the year, our older pupils had the opportunity to perform on stage at the Music Hall as part of a Blazin' Fiddles concert. The pupils rehearsed for this during their summer holidays and performed at a high standard. This group of pupils received numerous performance opportunities subsequently, including at an Education Scotland Creative Learning Event, the ACC Star Awards, Headteacher Meetings, the Lord Provost's Burns Supper and the Invest Aberdeen conference dinner.
- 3.13 Partnership working with Charanga (music teaching software) continues. There have been regular, well attended, Charanga training sessions for primary and secondary teachers who want to develop their knowledge and skills. Charanga is being used on a regular basis by around 75% of primary schools in the city.

- 3.14 The service has worked with Aberdeen Performing Arts to create a range of opportunities for pupils. This has included opportunities for pupils to sit in on sound checks for bands including Manran and Talisk, providing a chance for pupils to meet band members and ask questions as well as hearing performances.
- 3.15 In June, Aberdeen Performing Arts ran the Light the Blue Festival. A member of Music Service staff worked alongside drama and dance practitioners as part of the Light the Blue school residency at Skene Square School. This was a pilot project which saw pupils across the school engage in expressive arts activities which culminated in a performance for families at the end of the week. In addition, The Music Service Junior String Ensemble performed as part of the Light the Blue Family Arts Day which took place at Union Terrace Gardens.
- 3.16 The Music Service also performed at the Big Gig at the Music Hall. This was a concert that involved the Music Service Intermediate Wind Band, Scottish Culture and Traditions Youth Ensemble and Big Noise Torry. The Intermediate Wind Band performed three pieces to open the concert, and then the wind players were joined by Music Service string pupils and pupils from the other ensembles to play in a massed finale.
- 3.17 The Grampian Hospitals' Christmas Carol Concert took place at the Music Hall in December 2023 and the service provided a primary school choir and a string quartet for the event.
- 3.18 The Music Service Youth Orchestra performed at the Lemon Tree as part of the Aberdeen Jazz Festival in March 2024.
- 3.19 Our activities as part of the 'In the City' programme continued, with fully booked activities in the October, Easter and Summer holidays. These activities were delivered by Music Service staff to pupils aged 5-11. Each Music Instructor ran a session on their specialist instrument (e.g. violin) with pupils having the opportunity to play a number of instruments across the course of the programme. The programme culminated in performances for parents and carers, including a ceilidh where family members were encouraged to dance together.
- 3.20 The service introduced a new concert for school leavers. This took place in June at the Cowdray Hall and gave the pupils moving on from secondary education an opportunity to prepare a final performance for family and friends. The pupils introduced the concert themselves, and many of them shared their thoughts on the positive impact that their involvement with the Music Service had had on their educational journey. Amongst the performers, a number stated that they would be going on to study music further, with some young people undertaking a degree course in Music (BMus), Acting and Performance and Music with Computing. Other pupils stated that they are leaving to study courses including Law, Mechanical Engineering and Primary Teaching but all hope to continue music making.

3.21 The service continues to seek feedback from parents, carers and pupils. One way that feedback is gathered is through an annual survey (please see Table 1 in appendix). The results are used to shape the annual Service Improvement Plan. The comments on the survey from this year include:

'My child has made great progress and I appreciate all the effort that you have put in.' *'The organisation of many events has been fantastic and my child's Music Instructor is wonderful.'*

'We cannot thank our Music Instructor enough for his fantastic teaching and encouragement. He is a huge asset to the service. Many thanks for providing these wonderful opportunities for our children.'

'The quality of teaching appears to be quite high. Teaching competence is very good and the teacher has established a good relationship with my child to help nurture their love of music.'

'The opportunity to play as part of an ensemble has inspired them to play again, and practise more.'

'Setting up of parents evening was an excellent move forwards.'

'Reaching the final of Junior Young Musician was an amazing experience.'

'The support given for competition (Scottish Young Musician) was tremendous and hugely appreciated'

'The opportunities for ensemble and performance have been great. I'm delighted that my child will be able to meet regularly with intermediate wind band after the summer. Music is his main extra-curricular interest. Thank you.'

'My son truly enjoyed playing clarinet during school sessions and band practice. It's lovely to see his confidence build up. Keep offering the services to all kids as they love it.'

'My daughter has enjoyed all the performances, but particularly playing at the Beach Ballroom at Christmas and Easter. The music service staff are all amazing, enthusiastic and encouraging. Thank you for all the opportunities that have been offered and we look forward to next year!'

3.23 The Music Service hopes to increase the overall survey response rate both in general and from particular ASGs in 2024-25 in order to strengthen the data gathered. The Music Service will do this by moving from holding a central parents' evening to locality parents' evenings where parents/carers will have the opportunity to access a device to complete the survey.

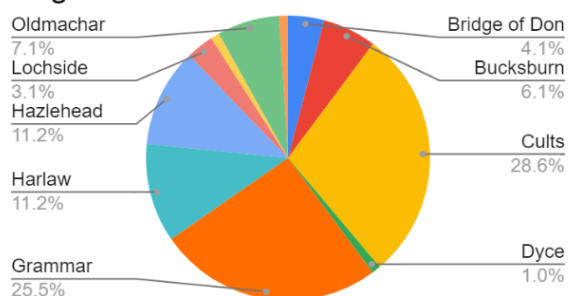
PERFORMANCE

3.24 The Music Service continues to aim to offer high quality tuition to as many children and young people as possible. Pupil numbers are currently sitting at 2057 pupils receiving tuition in a small group/individually on a weekly basis. Pupil numbers have remained steady over the past two academic years. The

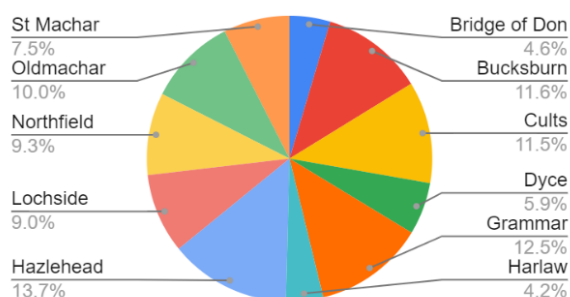
number of pupils engaging in whole class vocal and instrumental programmes continues to be over 5000 over the course of the academic year.

3.25 The charts below show the distribution of Music Service across Associated School Groups in August 2020 and in June 2024. This data shows continued progress towards the aim to offer tuition on a more equitable basis across the city.

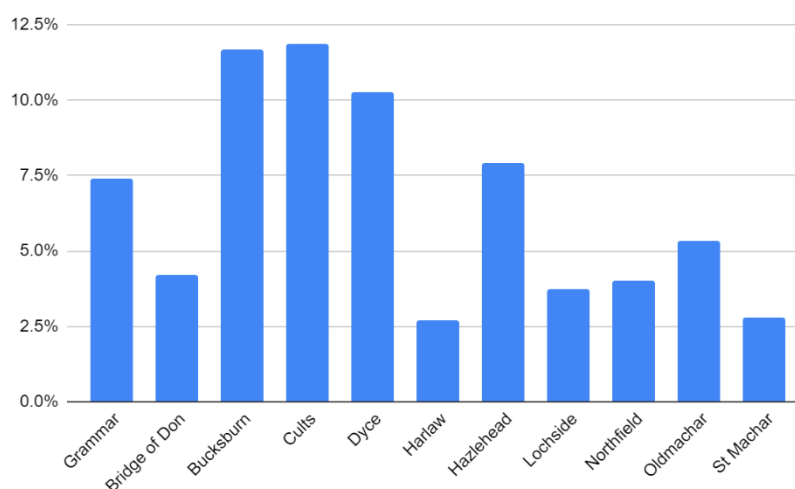
August 2020



June 2024



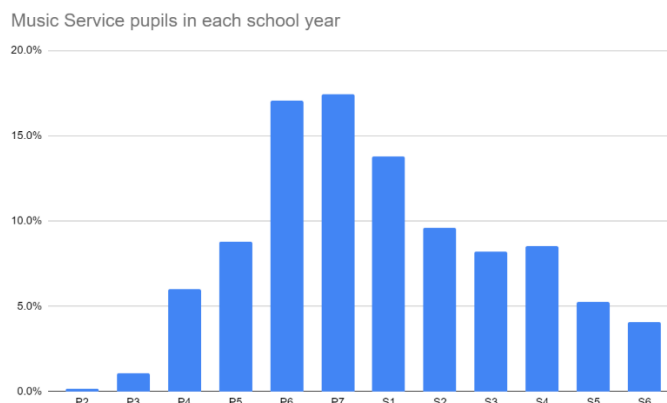
3.26 The chart below shows the percentage of children in each ASG roll receiving individual and small group tuition. It should be noted that the service aims to offer tuition on each instrument at secondary level and this can mean that some of the ASGs with smaller pupil numbers receive proportionally higher teaching allocations than other schools.



3.27 The Music Service continues to target provision strategically with the aim of increasing pupils recruitment and pupil retention in target schools where it has been identified that there is scope for improvement.

3.28 The Music Service aims to increase and maintain the number of children learning instruments that are considered to be 'rare'/'shortage', such as French horn, double bass, oboe and bassoon in order to create balanced ensembles (please find the number of children and young people learning to play each instrument in table 2 in the appendix).

- 3.29 The chart below shows distribution of Music Service pupils by school year as of August 2024. The higher number of pupils in P6-S1 reflect the influx of new pupils that started an instrument after the Covid pandemic.



- 3.30 As Music Instructors recruit and start new pupils at the start of the academic year we are expecting to see increased numbers in Primary 4 and 5, which are the usual starting points for tuition, and also in S4 as we see pupils start lessons as part of their National 5 music course.
- 3.31 The Music Service is putting measures in place to provide further support for pupils transitioning to secondary school, as this is often a point where many stop learning an instrument. A transition project was piloted in June 2024 with Oldmachar Academy and Danestone Primary School. This saw primary and secondary pupils rehearsing and performing together which gave primary pupils the opportunity to see what level they can aspire to and also gave them an insight into musical opportunities at secondary level.

3.32 PLANS FOR 2024/25

Due to the popularity of Music Centre ensembles in the 23-24 session the Music Service is expanding the number of ensembles on offer and increasing the frequency of rehearsals. As of August 2024, the service will be offering the following ensembles:

- Junior Wind Band
- Intermediate Wind Band
- Junior Strings
- Intermediate Strings
- Lower Strings Ensemble
- Folk Collective
- Guitar Ensemble
- Piping Ensemble
- Junior Choir
- Senior Choir
- Adult Choir
- Advanced Instrumental Ensemble/Senior Orchestra

- 3.33 Many of these ensembles will run on a weekly basis with the re-introduction of Music Centre activities on Saturdays. This is a significant increase in the number of rehearsals in comparison to the 23-24 session. The increased number of rehearsals will provide more time for our pupils to develop their

musical skills and also further opportunities for them to form friendships with others from across the city.

- 3.34 The service will work closely with pupils to develop a refreshed Music Centre uniform which pupils can wear whilst performing. This will help develop the identity of each group.
- 3.35 A number of performances have already been planned for the 24-25 session. These include a joint project between the Music Service, Charanga and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) in September 2024 at the Music Hall where pupils will have the opportunity to perform alongside members of the orchestra.
- 3.36 The Music Service staff will continue to develop their offer of ceilidhs for primary schools. Plans are underway for a St Andrew's Day Ceilidh for the children who attend the Music Centre.
- 3.37 The service will continue to offer a programme of Festive Concerts, Spring Concerts, Locality Concerts, Leavers' Concerts, Lunchbreak Concerts and the Scottish Young Musician Competition at both junior and senior level.
- 3.38 The service looks to continue and develop our partnerships with organisations such as Aberdeen Performing Arts and Aberdeen Jazz Festival in order to continue to offer performance and development opportunities for young people.
- 3.39 The service is looking to increase the number of teaching hours provided in Orchard Brae School and Aberdeen School for the Deaf with new options for children to receive vocal and woodwind instruction. The service will continue to run the work funded by the Youth Music Initiative in Orchard Brae School which will see musicians in residence in the school work with pupils of all ages and we hope to provide more regular performances throughout the year. The service will continue to offer performances to the children at Ashgrove Nursery on a regular basis.
- 3.40 The service worked with partners to source tickets for pupils to attend a number of concerts in the 23-24 academic year and this is something that we will continue to do in order to ensure that young people are able to be inspired by professional performers.
- 3.41 The Big Sing is now firmly established as an annual event. In order to strengthen links with other curricular areas the event in 2025 will include singing in other languages and we hope to link with our twin cities to increase the reach of the event and to provide further opportunities for collaboration. The service hopes to use technology to link pupils together from different countries. The theme of the Big Sing will be travel and the sea in order to link in with the programme of events taking place for Tall Ships Aberdeen.
- 3.42 The Music Service will be performing as part of Tall Ships Aberdeen with plans developing for a new composition to be commissioned to celebrate the event. This piece would become part of the legacy for the event as it would be able to be performed again in the future.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The expansion of music service activity and more equitable distribution of tuition across the City assists the Education Authority in fulfilling its duty to secure that the education we provide is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of our children and young people to their fullest potential.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified		L	Yes
Compliance	No significant risks identified		L	Yes
Operational	No significant risks identified		L	Yes
Financial	No significant risks identified		L	Yes
Reputational	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a	There will be regular quality improvement visits to the service with support being offered to any underperforming tutor	L	Yes

	reputational risk to the Council			
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified		L	Yes

8 OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	The Council's Delivery Plan states that the Music Service continues to work to maximise uptake, establish a Music Centre and welcome families back to concerts to celebrate the musical skills of our pupils. This report reinforces this aim and furthers it by offering increased rehearsal and performance opportunities for pupils.
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	This report supports the LOIP Key Driver 7.1 Improving pathways to education, employment and training for identified groups (including disability, ASN, term time leavers and those from priority neighbourhoods) because it supports the Music Service giving additional musical opportunities for children and young people through more rehearsal and performance opportunities led by the Music Service and in conjunction with partners.
Regional and City Strategies	The universal provision of education is fully aligned to the Prevention Strategy and a key partner to the Children's Services Plan

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

11. APPENDICIES

Appendix A – Data tables

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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