



The Sparkyard Reception Music Curriculum & THE 7 AREAS OF LEARNING

Singing and music are **essential ingredients in the Early Years**. They strengthen **every area of learning in the EYFS framework and help** children achieve their **Early Learning Goals**.

The good news is that the Sparkyard Reception Music Curriculum has everything you need to embed music and singing in every corner of your EYFS classroom. To aid planning, we've added relevant Early Learning Goals at the bottom of each lesson plan, and they can also be found on our inspiring 'Pick & Mix' pages and detailed content overviews.

Let's start with the **prime areas of learning**: Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Communication and Language and Physical Development – these are the core aspects of a child's development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Singing and group music-making are social activities that require everyone to **work together** towards an agreed **cooperative outcome**. Regular singing creates a sense of togetherness and helps children **build relationships with others**. Musical activity also develops **self-regulation**: can the children stop when the music stops; can they copy a simple rhythm pattern; can they pass a noisy instrument around the circle without it making a sound?

Musical games and instrumental activities also develop listening skills and encourage turn-taking. And of course, music and singing boost confidence and help children express their feelings.

Children at the expected level of development will...

Self-Regulation

- ★ Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly;
- ★ Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate;
- ★ Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

The Sparkyard Reception Music Curriculum is jam-packed with activities that support this **prime area of learning**.

Here are just a **few examples**:

Singing songs as a class, in a small group or as a solo	→ Encourages a sense of belonging Builds confidence
Action songs	→ Helps children learn to follow instructions
Pulse and rhythm activities (e.g. parachute games)	→ Supports self-regulation
Creative movement and dance: Children invent movements to music and follow musical instructions	→ Encourages self-regulation, expression and following instructions (e.g. knowing when to start and stop, responding to tempo, dynamics or mood)
Musical games (class and small group)	→ Encourages turn-taking, eye contact and focused listening Builds relationships with others
Instrument exploration (adult-led activities and play provision)	→ Develops control of immediate impulses Encourages turn-taking
Creating and performing own music	→ Encourages self-expression and independence
Responding and talking about themes in songs and music	→ Encourages children to recognise and express feelings
Sharing songs at home using the Share Link feature	→ Develops social bonds and strengthens connections between home and school

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

Music and singing activate all areas of the brain and get children 'tuned in' to the world around them. Musical activity develops **attention** and helps with **aural processing**. Songs **introduce vocabulary**, make learning 'stick' and are designed to be repeated again, and again, and again! Most importantly, children **communicate through music** – it encourages **self-expression** and is a powerful tool for **all**, developing **understanding** and **boosting language** skills.

Children at the expected level of development will:

Listening, Attention and Understanding

- ★ Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions;
- ★ Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding;
- ★ Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

Speaking

- ★ Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary;
- ★ Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate;
- ★ Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Every lesson in the Sparkyard Reception Music Curriculum includes a choice of **age-appropriate songs and nursery rhymes** that children just love to sing! In addition, you will find a **diverse range** of listening choices and stimulating activities designed to boost those all-important **listening skills**! Don't forget to visit the Pick & Mix area to find more ideas.

Here are just a **few examples** that support this **prime area of learning**:

Singing songs and traditional nursery rhymes	→ Develops a rich bank of age-appropriate language Singing 'slows language down' and word rhythms are emphasized Develops communication skills (e.g. eye contact) and builds confidence Provides opportunities for children to listen and copy (e.g. singing call-and-echo phrases)
Using props to encourage voice play and singing (e.g. microphones, funnels, telephones, puppets)	→ Develops communication skills
Listening activities and games	→ Encourages focused listening and develops sound discrimination skills Builds aural memory
Composition activities	→ Encourages collaboration to create music, and the exchanging and developing of ideas Encourages children to talk about their musical creations
Exploring and playing instruments	→ Encourages turn-taking, eye contact and focused listening Builds relationships with others
Musical role play	→ Develops control of immediate impulses Encourages turn-taking

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Music and singing are key to physical development. Children express their response to music through movement, developing their **balance, coordination and sense of rhythm**. When moving, dancing or interacting with instruments, children learn to **negotiate space safely**. **Fine and gross motor skills** are also developed through exploring instruments and resources such as parachutes, scarves, wrist bells and dance ribbons. Singing is great exercise – it gets the heart pumping, the blood flowing and wakes up the brain!

Children at the expected level of development will:

Gross Motor Skills

- ★ Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others;
- ★ Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing;
- ★ Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.

Fine Motor Skills

- ★ Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- ★ Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paintbrushes and cutlery;
- ★ Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

You will find a fantastic range of **creative movement activities** in the Sparkyard Reception Music Curriculum that can be used as part of whole-class or play provision.

Here are **some examples**:

Songs and music to encourage movement (e.g. action songs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Develops coordination and balance and control of movement ➔ Encourages children to physically respond to changes in tempo and dynamics
Parachute activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Develops gross motor skills ➔ Encourages teamwork and listening skills
Playing a range of instruments and sound-makers	➔ Children can explore ways to play (e.g. tap, shake, rub, scrape)
Instrument stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Children can access a range of instruments in different settings (e.g. a cosy music den, outdoors, water tray, table-top, basket, sound walls) ➔ Children use small tools to create junk instruments
Using instruments with movement (e.g. wrist bells)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Develops fine and gross motor skills ➔ Encourages creative movement
Mark making to music (e.g. playdough, paint)	➔ Develops fine motor skills
Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Develops gross motor skills ➔ Encourages controlling and inventing movements in response to music (e.g. getting faster or slower)

PRIME AREAS OF LEARNING

Next, let's deal with the **specific areas of learning**: Understanding The World, Expressive Arts and Design, Literacy and Maths. These areas develop key knowledge and support children in their future learning.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

Music is a universal language that develops children's understanding of **people, cultures and the world around them**. Through singing songs, exploring instruments and listening to a variety of music, children become aware of music from different genres, styles, periods and cultures – this **broadens their experience** and **develops their vocabulary**.

Exploring the **outdoor environment** enriches children's knowledge and sense of the world and provides a rich stimulus for music-making. Children can take their music-making outdoors: creating instruments using natural objects or composing music inspired by the world around them.

Songs are fantastic **learning tools**, building knowledge of core themes (e.g. seasons, weather, celebrations, people and communities) and also encourage children to ask questions and **talk about their experiences**.

Children at the expected level of development will:

Past and Present

- ★ Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society;
- ★ Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- ★ Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.

People, Culture and Communities

- ★ Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps;
- ★ Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- ★ Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and (when appropriate) maps.

The Natural World

- ★ Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants;
- ★ Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- ★ Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

Each term of our curriculum includes inspiring ideas for developing musical learning in the outdoors – look out for the **'Get Outdoors'** symbol on our lesson plans and visit the Pick & Mix pages for more ideas. A **diverse range of listening choices** build understanding of music from a range of cultures and children learn about the role of musicians and composers. The Sparkyard 'Share Link' feature and **'Take It Home'** activities also provide opportunities for children to enjoy songs and music-making with their families.

Here are a **few examples** of music curriculum activities to support this specific area of learning:

Songs and composition activities inspired by seasons and nature	→ Develops understanding of the natural world, introduces vocabulary Sparks curiosity about the natural world
Singing songs and exploring music for festivals, celebrations and traditions	→ Develops understanding of people, cultures and the world around them
Sharing songs and nursery rhymes at home using Sparkyard's Share Link feature	→ Encourages children to talk about personal experiences
A diverse range of listening choices and instruments	→ Children can access a range of instruments in different settings (e.g. a cosy music den, outdoors, water tray, table-top, basket, sound walls) Children use small tools to create junk instruments
Creating sound-makers from natural objects and the outdoor environment	→ Develops observation skills and encourages exploration of natural objects
Using an iPad or tablet to select and play songs	→ Develops understanding of technology

EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

Music and singing are at the heart of Expressive Arts and Design. They inspire **creativity**, boost children's **imagination**s and enable **self-expression**. Children thrive in a classroom that encourages this!

Singing songs, dancing, playing instruments, composing, listening and performing to others develop children's ability to **communicate through the arts** and builds understanding of the **inter-related dimensions of music** – the key ingredients that make up music.

Creative experiences spark curiosity in children and with that comes a desire to play, explore and find out more! This enables children to become independent, happy and confident learners.

Children at the expected level of development will:

Creating with Materials

- ★ Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function;
- ★ Share their creations, explaining the process they have used;
- ★ Make use of props and materials when role-playing characters in narratives and stories.

Being Imaginative and Expressive

- ★ Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher;
- ★ Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs;
- ★ Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and (when appropriate) try to move in time with music.

Every activity in the Sparkyard Reception Music Curriculum supports this **specific area of learning**. In addition, the Pick & Mix area is bursting with ideas to encourage high-quality musical play and many of our activities link to other creative art forms such as art, dance and drama.

Here are a **few examples** of music curriculum activities to support this specific area of learning:

Singing a range of songs and nursery rhymes	→ Builds a bank of rhymes and songs that children remember for life! Helps children discover their singing voice and develops pitch-matching skills
Performing songs to an audience (e.g. class, assemblies, other classes, parents.)	→ Develops confidence and communication skills
Listening to a range of high-quality music and performances	→ Develops awareness of arts and performance (e.g. dance, music) Builds knowledge of instruments
Singing and making music as part of role play	→ Encourages self-expression and the ability to communicate with others through the arts
Responding to music through art (e.g. mark-making, creating pictures, sculptures)	→ Develops listening skills and encourages self-expression
Exploring sound effects and creating simple musical patterns and accompaniments	→ Builds understanding of the inter-related dimensions of music

LITERACY

Research shows that music-making strengthens **phonological and phonemic awareness** which is **key to successful reading**.

Songs and rhymes are vital in the early years and get the children tuned in to the **rhythm and patterns of language**, teaching sequencing skills and **enriching their vocabulary**. Songs are a platform to explore **characterisation** – children can add actions and facial expression to enhance meaning. In time, they may draw on all these experiences in their reading and writing – reading expressively and adding 'sparky' ideas to their stories.

Through musical composition, children learn the **connection between sound and symbol**. They might represent the music they have created with simple notation such as natural objects, pictures or symbols. Writing opportunities naturally arise when children work like composers – they can create story maps to use as musical scores or experiment with mark-making in response to a piece of music.

Children at the expected level of development will:

Comprehension

- ★ Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary;
- ★ Anticipate (where appropriate) key events in stories;
- ★ Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role play.

Word Reading

- ★ Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs;
- ★ Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending;
- ★ Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

Writing

- ★ Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;
- ★ Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters;
- ★ Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

From exploring fairytale characters to creating musical story maps, the Sparkyard Reception Music Curriculum is bursting with activities to enhance Literacy.

Here are just a **few examples** of activities support this specific area of learning:

Singing and performing a wide range of songs	Builds recognition of language patterns and structure (e.g. tapping syllables) → Boosts vocabulary Encourages characterisation and role play
Sound discrimination games	→ Helps children identify differences between sounds
Playing instruments in whole-class and play activities	→ Develops coordination and fine motor skills necessary for writing
Simple song writing (e.g. inventing new lyrics)	→ Develops rhythm and rhyming skills → Builds understanding of structure
Creating descriptive sounds to accompany a song or story	→ Develops descriptive language and musical storytelling
Creating simple musical notation (e.g. sound story maps)	→ Helps children make sound-to-symbol connections → Develops understanding of narrative structure (beginning/middle/end)
Following simple musical notation (e.g. pictorial)	→ Builds understanding that notation (pictures, symbols) carry meaning → Reading notation helps children learn about the direction of text

MATHS

Music and singing support learning in maths and rhythm work is particularly beneficial for young children. Pulse activities give children a sense of 'inner beat'; they strengthen counting skills and help children grasp concepts such as one-to-one correspondence. As the great 17th-century German mathematician Gottfried Leibniz said, '*Music is the sensation of counting without being aware you were counting.*'

Music is full of **pattern!** Rhythm (duration) is the pattern of longer and shorter sounds and silences; pitch is the position of notes (high/low) and structure refers to the organisation of a song or piece of music (e.g. Verse/ Chorus/ Verse/ Chorus). Recognising patterns is key to mathematical learning.

Music develops mathematical thinking and language (e.g. counting tambourine beats, predicting the next sound in a sequence, sorting instruments and sound-makers into groups). Songs supporting mathematical topics boost this understanding and develop key vocabulary (e.g. ordinal numbers, days of the week, shape).

Children at the expected level of development will:

Number

- ★ Have a deep understanding of numbers to 10, including the composition of each number;
- ★ Subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to 5;
- ★ Automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to 5 (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to 10, including double facts.

Numerical Patterns

- ★ Verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system;
- ★ Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity;
- ★ Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

Here are **some examples** to support this specific area of learning:

Singing and exploring songs	Develops recognition of musical patterns → Moving to music develops sense of inner pulse, supporting one-to-one correspondence
Musical passing games	→ Children learn to count beats and match movements to music
Rhythm and pulse activities	Develops understanding of note lengths (duration) → Strengthens counting skills, supporting one-to-one correspondence
Creating musical patterns using voices, body percussion or instruments	→ Children learn to spot patterns and make predictions
Exploring and recognising properties of instruments	→ Helps recognition of similarities and differences → Develops sorting skills
Creating notation	→ Children learn to represent simple musical sequences pictures and objects (e.g. shapes)
Exploring the inter-related dimensions of music	→ Develops comparative language: longer/shorter; higher/lower; louder/quieter

For additional ideas to support learning in the EYFS, look out for the 'learning link' symbol on our lesson plans or dip into our Pick & Mix pages.