

## Developing Teaching and Learning within Peripatetic Percussion Provision

Key Stage 2, years 3 to 6

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Over the last 18 months I have been researching and implementing the generally overlooked area of school-based peripatetic percussion teaching for key stage 2 pupils, focusing on the teaching of tuned percussion and snare drum.

I may be over-generalising here, but there does appear to be a gap in the amount of provision delivered at this key stage for peripatetic percussion. This may be due to several factors, and they probably vary from one music service to the next. Some may just have a traditional void at this level (e.g. no teachers, no management interest!). Some may just not know how best to make it work. What about the cost? Aren't percussion instruments awfully expensive (blah, blah, blah...)

Admittedly, peripatetic drum and percussion teachers don't usually focus on teaching pupils aged 7 to 11, and I have had to get to grips with planning and group delivery strategies for this age group. But if we don't try and develop an understanding within this area, we are not really giving things fair and relevant consideration.

Before I get too tied up here, I should probably list the major discoveries and resources I use or have devised to help me deliver this type of tuition.

**Standard of Excellence Book 1 - Drums & Mallet Percussion** by Bruce Pearson. Brass and woodwind teachers may be familiar with this Band Method series of tutor books. The Drums (snare and bass) & Mallet Percussion (glockenspiel) book is a double book that includes tunes and exercises for both instruments. It is VERY well conceived, well sequenced material, making it an

excellent instrumental teaching book. I use an accompanying play-a-long CD to make lessons more fun, which helps to keep pupils in time. (See my review at [www.musicroom.com](http://www.musicroom.com))

**Junior Percussion Music Theory Book.** This is a workbook I have devised supplementary to the Standard of Excellence book. The tasks are completed in pencil, and then pupils try to play what they've discovered. This type of learning helps reinforce some important concepts - keyboard layout, tones and semitones, triads, tetra-chords, scales, staff knowledge, the music alphabet, and note copying skills.

**Instruments for home practice.** I've found that the greater percentage of children who have percussion or drum kit lessons at school, sadly, DON'T have instruments at home to practice on. To practice at home with this type of programme, I recommend parents get one of these two options:

### Glockenspiel Percussion kit

Glockenspiel, instrument stand, mallets, drumsticks, book pouch, tuneable practice pad and music rest, which come with either a bag or moulded case. Approx. £117 excl. VAT, available from Zings Music.

OR

### Separate items

- 30-note soprano glockenspiel including mallets. Approx. £42, available from Music Village.
- A 5B size pair of drumsticks
- practice pad with wood/plastic base
- music stand.

and

**Music Service Practice Diary.** This can be effective in helping with progress, especially if the parent uses your comments to monitor home practice. This is, of course, a standard item for all peripatetic teachers anyway.

A music bag, available from most music shops, helps keep books, sticks, and mallets in one organised place, and costs from £5 upwards.

Music Stand. From local music shops £9 upwards.

The above requirements may suggest a somewhat scholastic type of programme of study, but I have come to the conclusion that this is a good way forward in starting off KS2 percussionists with peripatetic tuition for the following reasons:

- 1) Parents worry about cost and noise associations related to drums, especially drum kit. Getting them to buy the relatively 'quiet' instruments above will help bring their peace of mind on side. Parents will also now become actively involved in the process of getting the instruments to and from lessons. This introduces 'duty of care' and organisational considerations that are usually only experienced by the parents of wind, brass and string pupils. Owning and caring for instruments is an important part, both psychologically and emotionally to parents' and pupils' ongoing commitment to percussion music education.
- 2) 'Drummers' are often criticised for having poor music-reading skills and a lack of melodic and harmonic and musical knowledge. Starting with this type of approach will help to provide a solid basis for the understanding of the rudiments of music.
- 3) Conversion to other percussion instruments late in KS2 and early KS3 will be easier, as they will already have music-reading skills, stick technique skills, knowledge of, and exposure to, musical performance, and good concentration skills in place.
- 4) Most pupils I've taught kit at KS2 have no drum kit at home to practice on. This aside, the musical/spatial/aural awareness needed to play drum kit and progress effectively isn't yet really fully developed. After learning a few eighth-note grooves, most pupils find it difficult to develop much else effectively, especially without a

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home practice drum kit I feel, that at this early stage, time is better spent training musical skills, developing rhythmic vocabulary, getting a good solid stick technique, developing good dynamic awareness, getting music reading solid and delivering a more holistic music teaching programme, as being more fundamental

5) 'Ownership' of an instrument is a major contributing factor to the success of a child's progress. This is glaringly obvious! How many string, woodwind or brass peripatetic teachers teach pupils who have no instrument for home practice? Therefore, percussion teachers should adopt, where possible, the same ethos as these other instrumental teachers. A starter violin costs apparently around the £50-70. The glockenspiel from Music Village is approx £42. Given these price considerations, starting percussion can be as financially accessible as starting string or flute tuition.

6) This type of tuition is compatible with 'A Common Approach 2002', the

recent document outlining provision for music service instrumental teaching. It allows young percussionists to discover and develop their musical skills via instrumental learning and performance, short composition-type exercises, note-copying and note-naming skills, rhythmic improvisation and rote learning.

Pre-Grade 1 pupils will need to have their progress mapped out into about 50 plus well-sequenced, step-by-step tasks. If you spoke to any number of junior string teachers you would probably find that they have similar views in relation to how they present early tuition.

Results with this approach will obviously take time, but progress with pupils is looking positive. All my pupils have their own instruments and this is making my job a lot easier. This initial stage of tuition should have a duration of about 2 to 3 years.

My main motivation for doing all this is to basically make my job easier down

the line. When KS2 pupils currently doing this programme get to secondary school (KS3), they will be far easier else to teach, as they will already know a good deal about playing drums and percussion and making music. Learning through years 7 and 8 will be more advanced due to having given them a good start in KS2.

So, if you percussion or drum teachers are looking for a great way to improve your scope in teaching, and if you haven't already done so, I recommend investigating ways you may enhance delivery across the years in schools. Do it in a way you feel most comfortable with, but please do investigate and research this area and age range. It will also prove to be a very good tool for your own professional development and growth as a teacher.



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