**School B teacher interview transcript – Miss Harper (MH)**

Researcher (R) – So can you tell me how you became familiar with Musical Futures (MF), and when you started teaching the approach?

MH – MF came here when XX got the job here. So it’s something he’d done on his training. So it’s about eight years now, ten years or something like that? And it’s something he kind of introduced into the department with his enrichment time I think. And then he obviously got the job then as someone else was leaving, and some kind of… we started off with the band skills approach, and with XX came the equipment. Because he got… I don’t know how he sorted that, but that’s something that came about then. So we kind of set A4 up as like the band skills room, and then that’s how we got started with it.

R – So when did you start using it?

MH – Me, personally?

R – Yes.

MH – It’d be the same time. So I don’t know exactly when that is, but I’d say that was eight, ten years ago? But as I say, we just started off really as like the… with band skills, if you like. And other things we were doing were more traditional still, if that makes sense? And then obviously as we’ve gone through the years, there’s kind of more and more things and ideas that have come in to the way that we teach.

R – Why do you think that’s happened?

MH – I think, as we’ve gone through, I think like kids becoming more independent and things like that. I think that’s played a bit part. I think really it’s just become more like a way of life in a lot of the topics, if that makes sense? So we’ve got used to being… teaching that way, if that makes sense?

R – Yeah, it does. Okay, when did you become a CS?

MH – Oh Gosh (sighs).

R – Roughly?

MH – I honestly don’t know. I’m sorry, I don’t know.

R – No, don’t worry. Is that like something XX did or something?

MH – Yeah, yeah. He would have put it forward, because he’s kind of obviously always been the link if you like. I’m really sorry, I don’t know.

R – Don’t worry, it’s not a trick question (both laugh). Could you talk me through your music education background briefly?

MH – My own education background?

R – Yeah.

MH – I started playing the piano when I was seven. I lived in a little village called XX in XX. So I had piano lessons from then. I was a choir girl (laughs). So obviously did a bit of singing. And then, when I was 13, we moved to XX. My secondary school at XX was… I remember I wanted to play the flute or something like that, but the music teacher there was really, really bad, and, we were in like a little hut at the back of the school, and we used to draw musical instruments whilst our teacher left us (laughs), and things like that. There was a little band there, but you had to like go on a waiting list for instruments and stuff like that. And then we moved over to XX and I went to XX, and I was kind of picked up there as being someone that could play, obviously, because I played piano still. And I got on the trombone, and on the brass band there, and was given loads and loads of amazing opportunities of like national champions, and world champion at one point, and played in the Albert Hall a couple of times, and things like that, so, I had like really amazing experiences. And that’s why I went into teaching, because I wanted to give those kind of experiences to the kids as well.

R – How long have you taught for?

MH – 14 years.

R – Is that all here?

MH – Yeah.

R – Okay, cool. What do you value in music education? What’s important for the students to learn?

MH – You mean the actual like stuff, criteria to learn? Or…?

R – Kind of. Is it like important for them to know theory, to play for enjoyment, or… that type of thing.

MH – Okay. For me, to start with, I want them to kind of feel like passion for music. I want them to be enthusiastic about it. To walk in and want to be there. I want them to want to be engaged and want to be involved, and (door knocks – ‘it’s going to put me off, that’), as we’ve gone through, obviously (door knocks again - students come in to ask a question – asked to come back another time). I’ve lost what I was saying then. So yeah, as we’ve gone through, we used to try and teach a lot of notation, shall I say, and that’s kind of gone by the side if you like, as we’ve gone more kind of practical. But I do have… me and XX have talked about this quite a lot, of issues of us not teaching notation, do you know what I mean, and it’s… So, I’m kind of in a bit of a… I feel a bit mixed about it, if you like. And I know like tab is obviously still notation and stuff like that, but… In an ideal world, I’d like… obviously practical, but I’d still like to somehow get the notation across, without teaching it in a really boring way. And I think the Just Play stuff’s a really good idea, for starting that. I think there’s a long… like it can be a long way to go with perhaps improving on the things like notation.

R – Is that like a good way of resolving that?

MH – Yeah yeah yeah.

R – What do you think of informal learning?

MH – Erm, (laughs). Erm, I think in the main, it’s a good thing (*said in a more high pitched tone).* If you can keep kids on task. There’s certain kids in certain groups that it’s not as good with, as other classes, do you know what I mean? Some classes that will just like… Like I’ve got a Year 9 class now, the biggest class that I’ve taught. There’s 31 kids in there, but they’re all kind of trained, if that makes sense? I’ll give them a task, and they just go off and they just do it. And they’re all on task and they’re all. Whereas other groups, I’ve got much smaller groups, and they’re not as good at doing that, so, do you know what I mean?

R – So you think it’s unsuitable for some groups? It’s not for everybody?

MH – For me, it might be - with other teachers, other staff, they I might be able to do it - be more successful. But for me at the minute, yeah, that’s… I’d say, if I’m being truthful, then yeah.

R – Okay, what’s the problem, like what are the barriers about it, or is it just the messing around?

MH – Some kids aren’t engaged, for whatever reason. Some kids aren’t into music, sadly (laughs), again, for whatever reason. Sometimes I suppose you can have a personality clash. Like that class I’ve just had then. I didn’t have them in Year 7, so they’ve kind of been left a bit if you like, now they’re not used to me, they’ve been kind of taught in different ways, so that creates problems. I think some kids just think like music is not for them. A small minority, but in the same way that I used to hate drama because I could not do it. It’s just not my thing. So you know, if you’d have asked me to get up on a stage and start being all dramatic, then I used to hate that. So in the same way like, I guess with music, if you’re saying perform something, and that’s like their worst fear or whatever, it’s again, do you know what I mean? Even though we obviously do, to like sort things out for those kind of people. I guess some behaviour sometimes, as well. So…

R – So are they barriers specifically for informal learning, or just for general music lessons? Or is it like played out a bit more?

MH – Perhaps played out a bit more. Yeah, perhaps. Because there’s a bit more freedom, isn’t there, perhaps with informal learning, so… I think some kids obviously can run with that, but perhaps not all kids.

R – What do you think of the principles, like do you use them in any of the other lessons? I don’t know if you’ve come across any of Lucy Green’s work, but like they can choose their own instruments, they can choose their friendship groups, and… do you agree with all of that stuff?

MH – In the main (laughs). I think, with choosing their own instruments, I’ve found that sometimes kids will go… like for example with singing, because they think that’s the easiest thing. So therefore, they don’t want to push themselves. So I think you have to be careful. I think you have to know your class. With choosing their own groups, then in the main again, I like to let them choose, because I think they work better in their own friendship groups, because they can obviously be as they are, with their mates. But again, occasionally, with some classes, I don’t always think it works well, because I think that sometimes they mess around. Or, like I was saying to you earlier on, the class with the Year 7s the other day, I grouped them, because I put a strong musician in each group, to try and help sometimes the weaker ones. That can work quite well sometimes, I’ve found.

R – What impact has MF had on your own practice and the students here, do you think?

MH – I would say the Just Play stuff has had a big impact on me. I don’t like, or I didn’t like the ukuleles, I’ll be honest (laughs). But, I think the way that they’re being used now… I’ve learnt how to play, you know, I can play the chords on there and feel quite okay now, but I’ve still got a long way to go, but I feel okay at teaching the class and stuff like that. And guitar, something that I’m not that good with, or anything like that. But I think teaching on it’s been really good. So I feel it’s kind of challenged me a little bit, but also stretched me as well, which is good.

R – And has it worked with the students as well, in like progress?

MH – Yeah, yeah, absolutely, the same kind of thing, yeah. Again, there’s a few classes here, you know, across the department, where they’re not picking up as well as another class, or there’s kids that aren’t picking it up as well as other kids. But, I guess that’s just kind of the nature of it really, and it’s just… do you know what I mean?

R – Yeah. What surprised you the most about using MF in school?

MH – What surprised me the most, did you say, about MF?

R – Yep.

MH – (thinks, ‘erm’) I don’t know. I suppose at the start, it had a big impact, with the rock bands. That’s quite unusual, or was quite unusual, to have like a rock band kind of thing in your class. And then obviously again, the impact of like the Just Play stuff has just come out, and like the chair drumming and things like that. I think that’s been a good, good thing.

R – So better than you thought kind of thing?

MH – Yeah, yeah yeah.

R – Okay, quickly because I’m really conscious of time, what’s your ultimate ideal vision for the future of secondary school music lessons here?

MH – Oh, that’s a big question (both laugh). Well, I want, as I’ve said before, the main thing for me is that kids walk in, and they want to be here. They want to enjoy what they’re doing. And ultimately, I want them to be able to pick up an instrument and get involved with extra-curricular, and I want the place to be thriving. We’re struggling at the minute with the extra-curricular and things like that. Getting and keeping kids coming through with the stuff they’ve already got going, and setting up new things, you know with like the ukulele teacher next door, but there’s like one kid in there (*referring to lunchtime ukulele club that dept is currently trying to set up, with a peri teaching the group*). And that’s like… we’re paying for that, but they just don’t seem to want to come back at lunchtimes and stuff like that, so... And then you can walk through the department and you can hear the rock band through there, and there’s a group of girls practicing in there, and the choir’s next door. So that’s nice, do you know what I mean? That’s what I want. I want to walk through and hear it all. So obviously that kind of feeds from your class really. So I just want kids to be fully engaged, wanting to be there and wanting to kind of push themselves at something, and be the best that they can be. Kids taking GCSE or the Rock School course we run, or the music tech course we run, you know, in Year 10 and Year 9 when that changes. That’s how I want it to be.

R – So everybody involved, that kind of thing?

MH – Yeah, yeah, absolutely, yeah.

R thanks MH for the interview (end of lunch period – out of time for any further questions).

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