Musical instruments for the classroom

Whilst you can engage with all activities on Aurora Classroom without classroom instruments, to meet the requirements of the national curriculum children should have the opportunity to engage with activities using tuned and untuned musical instruments. You may also wish to add scarves to your resources to support movement in response to music.

Here is a list of musical instruments that we feel would be beneficial for your settings:

Untuned percussion instruments

Class sets of:
Claves (in pairs)
Shaky eggs

A selection of:
Triangle
Tambourine
Tambour
Lollipop drum
Guiro
Wooden agogo
Sand blocks
Pairs of maracas
Indian bells
Accompanying beaters

Additional instruments you may wish to add:
Tone block
Xylo swirl
Wood block
Jingle stick
Agogo bells
Clickit
Cabasa
A range of drums: buffalo, djembe, conga

Tuned percussion instruments

Chime bars with 2 beaters per child — coloured sets can be particularly beneficial for supporting with coloured notation and working across different tuned instruments.
Xylophone
Accompanying beaters
Boomwhackers — at least one per child
Coloured bells

When first introducing the instruments with children you may like to try out this activity to find out more about how the instruments are played, their sounds and to sort them into different groups.

Activity plan

Choosing instruments

Sit in a circle with the children with a selection of instruments in the middle.

- Allow the children to select an instrument that they would like to play.
- Allow the children time for this selection process — they may need to try out a few instruments before they feel happy to take one back to their place in the circle.

Ask the children to consider the way different instruments make their sounds.

- Use questions such as: Which do you tap to play? Which do you shake? Which do you scrape?

Sorting instruments

Use hoops to sort the instruments in a Venn diagram. Identify instruments which overlap in different ways, for example *tambourine (tap and shake)*.

Explore different ways to group the instruments with your children. You might like to think about their timbre and type of sound.

Ask questions such as:

- Do you know the name of your instrument?
- Do you need to shake it or tap it to play?
- Is it similar to any other instruments in the circle?
- Do you like how it sounds? Why?
- Can you change the sound it makes?

What to look for

Can children manipulate the sound on the instrument they are playing?
Are they inclined to explore the sounds an instrument can make?
Can they hold and use a beater with their instrument?

Tips for leading

Know the names and how to play the instruments which you are sharing with your children.
Model exploring the instruments with the children; for example, *'I wonder what sound this instrument makes? I like this rattling sound, I wonder how loud I can make it?'*
Set-up clear instructions for putting down instruments, picking up instruments, and keeping instruments still, for example:

- Instruments back down on the ground, sh, sh, sh *(everyone says sh, sh, sh)*
- Drumroll *(pat your knees)*, instruments ready *(pick up your instrument and hold it still)*
- Instruments still *(everyone holds their instruments completely still)*

Encourage your children to find other ways to group their instruments, for example the material used to make the sound.