



musicfirst lighthouse

Real Stories of Success in Music Education

Engagement, Inclusivity and Impact – A Music Department's journey with technology

Simon Balle All-through School

Welcome to our MusicFirst Lighthouse series

Inspiring success stories in the real world capturing examples of how institutions have implemented online learning into their curriculum using innovative technology and creative thinking.



SIMON BALLE
ALL-THROUGH SCHOOL



musicfirst



Mark Taylor
Director of Music
Simon Balle All-through School

The Context

The integration of technology in education has paved the way for countless success stories, and the story of Simon Balle All-through School's music department is no exception. It showcases how the introduction of technology has transformed the delivery of traditional classroom music within a cutting-edge, thriving hub of creativity, learning, and musical excellence.

Mark Taylor became Director of Music at Simon Balle All-through School in 1999 joining the school at a time when technology in the department was in its infancy. Windows 95, dusty keyboards, old versions of music software and a lack of engaging curriculum resources meant that Mark's needs were not being met. However, this presented an opportunity to develop a plan for the future.

Mark recognised the need to adapt to the digital age, get ahead of the curve, engage tech-savvy students, and elevate music education in the school to new heights.

Mark always believed that music was for the masses and not for the few – a trend he has always worked to change for the better during his tenure at the school. The desire to make music more inclusive was enhanced by the early introduction of **Focus on Sound** in 2012 which gave every student the opportunity to access engaging, interactive resources to support their learning at Key Stage 3, 4 and 5. This move to music in the cloud proved a huge success and led the way for what was to come five years later.

The Conversation – What and Why?

Developing the ultimate technology setup to help students achieve excellence in music is a challenging task. Knowing what to invest in and how to implement it is just the start. What it all boils down to in the end is that dreaded conversation with Senior Leadership to secure funding.

Ultimately you want to deliver music to the best of your ability and Senior Leaders have a duty to help you achieve this. In today's digital age, technology is a clear means of supporting this goal – they need to know this. However it is imperative that that you have a well thought-through approach to presenting what you want and why you want it.

Mark worked with the school's Senior Leadership to support his vision to increase engagement in music, foster creativity, and help students take control of their musical journeys.

A 5-step plan:





Be creative and look for other opportunities for funding. Don't just look at your Music budget and give up!"

Mark Taylor

Fast-forward to 2017

Focus on Sound was proof of concept that the cloud was the way forward. In 2017 Mark was introduced to the online DAW **Soundtrap for Education**. It was an immediate hit and now Mark was in a position to pitch for funding and implement this new solution.

In addition to this, the move from Apple Macs to Chromebooks and a subscription-based model would save thousands of pounds in the process. Securing funding wasn't always plain sailing and Mark had to be creative and look for other opportunities to find money, but after a solid pitch to Senior Management, **Soundtrap for Education** was rolled out and is now not only used by the music department but elsewhere in the school for podcasting.

The introduction of **Soundtrap for Education** gave all students the opportunity to shine. They now had a tool where they could explore and experiment with composition, production, and performance in innovative ways at school and at home. The level of engagement rocketed both at Key Stage 3 and 4.



Mark's key take-aways

Focus on Sound

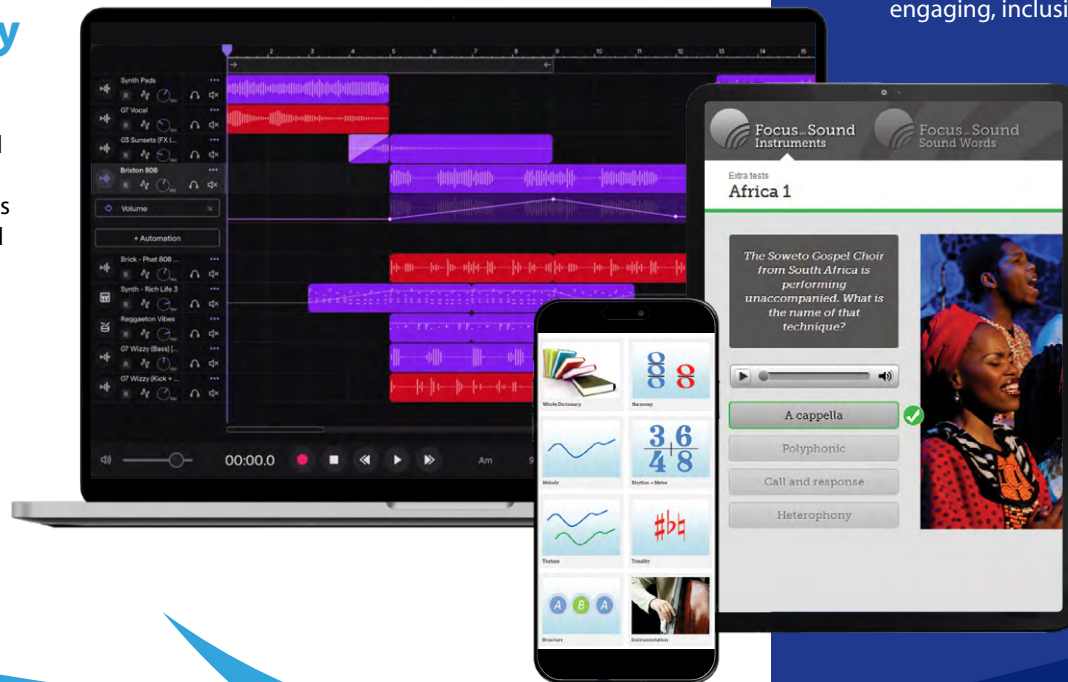
Enablement of flexible learning

Students coming into GCSE all have different levels of understanding of the core elements of music and learn at different rates. Giving students the opportunity to be independent learners using **Focus on Sound** has helped them reach the necessary level of knowledge to thrive at GCSE.

Soundtrap for Education

Unleashing creativity

Soundtrap for Education engages students in music from Year 4 onwards by providing a versatile, interactive, and creative platform for composition and music production. It empowers students to explore, experiment, collaborate, and develop their musical skills.



Outcomes

Simon Balle All-through School now boasts a vibrant music department having recognised the need to adapt to the digital age. By embracing technology, fostering creativity, and providing students with engaging resources, Mark's vision has come to fruition and not only transformed the student experience but also harvested recognition and acclaim.

Simon Balle All-through School is now a MusicFirst Lighthouse Institution and Soundtrap showcase school where other teachers are welcomed to see how the technology is used.

This success story demonstrates the power of technology to revolutionise traditional classroom music, making it more engaging, inclusive, and impactful.

“

**My ambition is to
inspire more students
to love music.”**

Contact Us

For further information about MusicFirst
or on how your school can become a
Lighthouse Institution contact us today.

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