



# Seeds Creative

## Reflective Practice Projects

# Including Quiet Children in Early Years Foundation Stage Music

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## Introduction

This report hopes to start a conversation amongst the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) community about how we can best include quiet children in music. I became interested in this topic due to my own personal experiences and have been pondering it more seriously since 2007 when I came across sociologist Susie Scott's book *Shyness and Society: the Illusion of Competence*. In her book, shyness is discussed from a sociological perspective rather than as a negative trait to be overcome. During my degree at Sussex University I started to explore the privileging of confidence in Western Classical music performance. Since then a bigger conversation around quietness has grown amongst academics, artists and activists. I hope to touch on some of those ideas during this short investigation and to explore the exciting possibilities for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) music when we accept quietness as a way of being.



## Aims

The aim of this project was to reflect upon how we as music practitioners treat, listen to and value quiet children in EYFS education and what impact including quiet children has on the music we make.

I have only had space to scratch the surface of this huge topic during this report. However, I hoped to reflect on the following questions:

- Do we problematise quietness in any way?
- Do we foster a relationship with music that respects who quiet children are?
- What assumptions do we have about quietness?
- How are quiet children currently treated in EYFS music settings?
- How are quiet children valued?
- What spaces do we cultivate for quiet children?
- Are children labelled as quiet less quiet in alternative environments?
- Are quiet children's ideas listened to, represented and valued to the same extent as their louder peers? If so, how is this done? If not, how could this be improved?
- Which musical activities or spaces do quiet children value?
- Can we rethink musical spaces so that quiet children feel more included?



## Rationale

I am a quiet musician. I am both introverted and shy. My personality has at times felt at odds with my career choice but my connection with music never has. In fact, music was often my safe haven. This has led me to wonder if our assumptions about quiet children and musicking limit the contribution that they can make musically and deny them access to an art form that can be have huge meaning to them.

In her blog 'The Girl With The Curly Hair'<sup>1</sup> (a social enterprise which supports those on the autistic spectrum and the people around them)<sup>2</sup> Alis Rowe comments that throughout her childhood "quietness was seen as a negative character trait". Our society currently values charisma, personality and confidence.<sup>3</sup> The privileging of extroversion, or "extrovert supremacy" (a term coined by artist, activist and author Hamja Ahsan) manifests itself in open plan classrooms, collaborative group activities and depleting quiet spaces. Within the traditional music exam systems we see a weighting that strongly favours solo performance placing an enormous amount of pressure on teachers and students to focus on individual performance over listening, composition or improvisation. "Networking" is seen as a necessary skill to be a musician.

EYFS is where our first relationship with music is explored and every human will connect with music in some way. Babies, toddlers and children of this age are only just starting to learn the social and musical norms around them. If extroversion is the norm, as practitioners do we not have a duty to discuss how music is meaningful to quiet children? I wonder what would happen if we truly listened to the quiet ones. What sort of musical worlds would they create? How would this benefit them? How would it enrich all of our musicking?

Throughout this report I will be using the word "quiet" to encompass people or children that present to the world as quiet. If quietness is problematised by society, the reason for a child's quietness is irrelevant to the assumptions, judgments and criticisms they face due to their quietness. However, it is extremely important to acknowledge children may be quiet for a number of reasons and should be treated as individuals with differing needs. A child may also be quiet in one environment but not in another. By using the term quiet I am accepting it as a way of being.

Reasons a child may be quiet:

1. Personality – A child may just prefer to be quiet or to be alone. They may be an introvert or ambivert.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, 2012



2. A child may sit in quiet protest if they do not want to or are not interested in an activity
3. The environment is not suitable for that child
4. The child does not feel safe because of discrimination or bullying
5. Quietness can be an involuntary response to stress from the polyvagal system (fight, flight or feign death)<sup>4</sup>
6. The child may be shy or selectively mute
7. The child may have a sensory processing disorder such as autism.
8. Additional languages

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen W. Porges, *The Pocket Guide to Polyvagal Theory: The Transformative Power of Feeling Safe*



## Literature Review

I look at the discussions about quietness across several areas and relate this to EYFS music.

### **Shy Radicals**

This year Hamja Ahsan, a British artist, activist and curator won the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, a prize previously won by David Hockney and Damien Hirst. He is the author of *Shy Radicals: the Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert* in which he eloquently imagines a safe haven for the shy and those on the autistic spectrum called “Aspergistan”. Music is poetically woven into the fabric of the book welcoming some and rejecting other more “extrovert supremacist” compositions. The figure of the “sensitive white man” from the 90s such as Grunge “shycon” Kurt Cobain is embraced as understanding and representing the struggles of the “unheard” whilst genres such as Bosnian “Turbo-folk” are seen as an oppressive extrovert manifestation of “trendy club culture” that he describes as “music for looking, not listening”. Elsewhere he reimagines and subverts the genre of the national anthem and the space that it occupies. There are no podiums, no stages or platforms, no opening ceremonies. In Aspergistan citizens simply raise a seashell to their ear whenever they wish to hear it. Ahsan’s own deep connection to music was made clear in a recent podcast interview.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst fictional and written with some humour, the book clearly reflects how meaningful music can be to quiet people. It can be a means to recognise others like you, a way to express the sometimes painful experience of being quiet (or the struggles that have “silenced” you). It can be relaxing, meditative and can even be a secret language. *Shy Radicals* does not try to fit in with our world but dares to imagine a new one. *Shy Radicals* was the book I had been waiting for - a piece of fiction that felt representative of my experiences of shyness and hundreds of examples of spaces in which quietness is accepted and protected.

Earlier this year Michael Ross’s play *The Shy Manifesto* toured the UK starring Theo Ancient who is known for his role as Harry Potter in the West End production *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. More in depth representations of shyness are being explored in storytelling from the perspective of “shy pride”. Seeing accurate representations of ourselves can be the difference in feeling like we belong.

Ahsan’s book has been adopted by the neurodiversity movement and extrovert supremacy is now a recognised critical term taught at Ivory League universities.

### **Neurodiveristy**

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mixcloud.com/SOASradio/hamja-ahsan-on-soas-radio/>



A shycon has risen to fame during the course of me writing this report. Greta Thunberg, a quiet school girl from Sweden, has led a growing global movement that redefines “climate change” as “climate crisis” and highlights the bogus failures of our political leaders and economic systems. Greta comments that:

"Some people mock me for my diagnosis. But Asperger is not a disease, it's a gift. People also say that since I have Asperger I couldn't possibly have put myself in this position. But that's exactly why I did this. Because if I would have been "normal" and social I would have organised myself in an organisation, or started an organisation by myself. But since I am not that good at socializing I did this instead. I was so frustrated that nothing was being done about the climate crisis and I felt like I had to do something, anything. And sometimes NOT doing things—like just sitting down outside the parliament—speaks much louder than doing things. Just like a whisper sometimes is louder than shouting."

Greta Thunberg’s quietness allowed her to think and organise herself differently. The very success of quickly achieving a carbon zero economy depends on radical thinking. We need diverse minds.

Neurodiversity is a term coined in 1998 that came out of the Autistic Rights movement and has now been expanded on by the autistic community and other activist communities. Neurodiversity is another type of diversity that recognises the infinite variation in cognitive function of the human brain. It also recognises the cultural oppression and prejudice experienced by those labelled with such conditions. Neurodiversity has been broadened to include other forms of neurodivergence as well as autism. This does not mean to homogenise neurodivergent people as one group but rather to recognise that there is no “normal” or “right” brain. The social model of disability believes that disability is caused by society creating barriers to the equal participation of impaired or neurologically different people.

In *Musical Development Matters in the Early Years* Nicola Burke states that development is not an automatic process but depends on the “unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments”.<sup>6</sup>

### **Bullying and discrimination**

In his book *Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire* educator, Akala recounts how he was bullied by a school teacher for being a “loud mouth” and in response he “tried to keep quiet”. His teacher had been uncomfortable with him showing his intelligence in the classroom due to her racist assumptions and belief in a Eurocentric curriculum. It is doubtful that Akala would have described himself as a quiet child but quietness is an understandable response to being in stressful circumstances and all forms of bullying can have this consequence.

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<sup>6</sup> Music Development Matters in the Early Years, Nicola Burke, 2018



Being quiet in and of itself can be seen as a “deviant” behaviour. Quietness is often noted as a reason for suspicion, or a cause for concern in safeguarding and, as we have seen in Akala’s case, sometimes quietness is an indicator that something is not right. However, we also know that quietness can be part of a personality type, or a sensory processing disorder and something that the child cannot change. Alis Rowe explains in an article<sup>7</sup> that the “main trait of my ASD that makes me stand out is that I am always on my own inside social situations” and that having her quietness picked up on by others makes her feel worse. Ahsan’s book explores extrovert-normative categories in the high school movie and the hate that is often directed at intelligent quiet people via name-calling such as “nerd”, “geek” or “weirdo”. It is clear from these examples that our assumptions about a child’s temperament can intersect with other identities such as disability, race, class, gender, culture or religion. A virulent anti bullying policy is therefore important to a child’s sense of safety.

Just a few examples of teaching in a socially and culturally responsive way include:

- Having a good relationship with parents and discovering what music is sung, played or listened to at home
- EAL children may be silent for some time, it’s ok to allow them to be silent. Allow them time to think, reflect and quietly absorb the language around them
- Representing different cultures, social groups and social energies through a variety of genres and activities<sup>8</sup>

### **Polyvagal Theory**

Polyvagal theory explains the neurophysiological responses to stress such as fight, flight or shutdown. During non-stressful situations the ventral vagal response allows us to connect with others in a social engagement mode. We are relaxed and happy to connect with other humans. This is where children need to be in order to learn as it allows them to access the “thinking” area of their brain. Under stress, the sympathetic nervous system kicks in and we go into fight or flight mode. Its purpose is to keep us safe so we become hypervigilant to threat. If our sympathetic nervous system goes into overdrive, the dorsal vagal parasympathetic nervous system takes over and we freeze or shutdown. Shutdown is when our body behaves as if in a life threatening scenario and keeps us alive by being as still as possible. Stress responses can happen even if the threat is perceived and not real. A child who has experienced trauma may be triggered into a state of fight, flight or shutdown. Quietness can be a sign of stress.

Music can help to disengage stress responses by returning us to a relaxed state. Examples of calming activities may include:

- Singing, pulse or rhythm to regulates breathing
- Gaining a sense of achievement
- Exploring overwhelming emotions

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<sup>7</sup> <https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/2018/12/03/how-to-cope-with-not-being-able-to-integrate/>

<sup>8</sup> [www.cumbria.gov.uk/eiibrary/Content/Internet/537/3953/4202/7088/42563164148.pdf?timestamp=42627367](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/eiibrary/Content/Internet/537/3953/4202/7088/42563164148.pdf?timestamp=42627367)



- Humour
- Listening to relaxing music
- Cultivating a safe environment in which music can happen
- Drawing children's awareness to the polyvagal system in simplistic terms may be helpful, for example by saying "sometimes when I sing alone my tummy feels funny and my heart goes boom, boom, boom, but it always passes"

However, activities that are too challenging may overwhelm a child and add to their stress:

- Singing out or drawing attention to the child. Such a child could find solo performance or even the thought of it extremely stressful
- Expecting a child to do something that is too difficult
- Ignoring signs that a child is distressed. For example, if it is clear a child does not want to do a solo performance (in EYFS this might mean singing their name to the group during circle time) it might be better to empathise rather than encourage, maybe singing for the child or doing an action instead. This avoids drawing attention to them.
- Some sounds might be triggering or provoke sensory stress

In Episode 9 of her *Quiet Power* podcast, *Parenting the Highly Sensitive Child*, Cain discusses *Orkidebarn* or "orchid children" a term Dr. Tim Boyce, professor of paediatrics and psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine, coined to describe sensitive children who will either flourish or wither depending on their environment. This is in contrast to *maskrobarn* or "dandelion children" who cope with most environments. Mother, Priscilla, recounts how as soon as her baby was born he was extremely sensitive to visitors and cried a lot. Similarly settling into school was problematic with her son being very attached at the school gate. Boyce's research suggests that orchid children are hypersensitive to their environments and have both the worst and best outcomes in our society. Dr. Franklin Schneier, social anxiety researcher says that some people are more heightened to threats and are more hypervigilant and the line between introversion and social anxiety is a blurry one. Even at preschool age these differences are measurable with nearly 20% being highly reactive with some having high sensitivity to sensory stimuli and all startling more easily. These children were both more likely to experience mental health problems and addiction in later life or to be doing extremely well depending on the social circumstances. These children are at great risk if in the wrong environment but in the correct one can exhibit extraordinary abilities and talent.<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting here that not all quiet children will be gifted and the "quiet genius" is an unhelpful stereotype.

Wanda Canton, founder of Soundout UK, provides workshops, group courses and individual mentoring exploring how spoken word poetry, hip-hop and creative writing can enhance mental health and wellbeing. During her online "7 day challenge" she reiterates that there is no pressure to share. When there *is* a challenge to share something on social media she

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.quietrev.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Quiet-The-Power-of-Introverts-with-Susan-Cain-Episode-9-Transcript.pdf>



draws the participants attention to the fact that every social interaction is a performance. From going to the shop to talking on the phone we are often thinking on our feet. Mistakes are fully accepted and encouraged as a way of discovering something new. A creative process such as this puts the participant in control which can help to make the performance space feel safe. There are ways of making solo performance accessible to quiet children.

### **Susan Cain**

Susan Cain's bestselling book *Quiet: the Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking* published in 2012, popularised the notion that we live in a world that values extroversion over introversion despite approximately one third of the global population identifying as introverts. Workplaces, schools and industries are designed physically and organised in such a way that puts introverts at a disadvantage. Quietness is problematised or pathologised and seen as something to overcome in order to reach your goals. This can make both education and working life extremely painful for quiet people. Susan Cain now has a website, *Quiet Revolution*, a podcast, a TED talk and a huge global following.

Susan Cain describes introverts as people who:

- prefer one-on-one interactions to group activities
- enjoy solitude
- prefer in depth conversations
- are good listeners
- are not big risk takers
- enjoy activities they can be absorbed in without interruption
- dislike parties or large social gathering
- are softly spoken or mellow
- dislike sharing ideas until they are finished
- dislike conflict
- work best on their own
- think before speaking
- feel drained of energy after social interaction

Susan Cain highlights a number of ways introverts in particular can be included in the classroom:

- She has developed a quiet friendly comment guide for teachers that value and validate introvert strengths and needs such as deep thinking, managing social energy and respecting difference amongst others. Some examples include:
  - “Cary can often be found with a book during recess, using this time to recharge for afternoon classroom activities.”
  - “Nicole is an insightful student who thinks deeply and thoughtfully before responding.”
- Sharing ideas one to one rather than in front of the group
- Building in thinking time to lessons
- Sharing introverted role models
- Solitary creative projects that never have to be shared



- Solitary practice
- When sharing is needed, encouraging quiet children to share ideas first so they are not anxiously anticipating when they will have to share
- Allowing quiet children to observe others in the group before “joining in”

In Barry Blesser and Linda Ruth Salter’s Book *Architecture Speaks, Are You Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture* they note how music is often written in a way which reflects the architecture of the building. Architecture often reflects social relationships, for example, churches are designed for worship or quiet contemplation whereas pubs are designed for social interaction after work. The music composed for these spaces therefore can be described as socio-physical and socio-musical as it reflects the social use of the space and in turn the architecture. Introverts interact differently socially to extroverts. It’s therefore possible if we “build” quiet spaces we may discover new ways of musicking.

### **Michel Jones**

Michel Jones is a speech and language therapist and co-author of *Supporting Quiet Children*.<sup>10</sup> He explains the difference between shyness, introversion and selective mutism:

A shy child is keen to join in, but is anxious about how other people might react to them having a go at something, or talking in a group. Their anxiety can be so great that it stops them from joining in.

A child who is an introvert will enjoy being with other people, and may join in, but will be energised by being on their own: to think their own thoughts and to ‘do their own thing’. Or they may operate best when working in pairs or small groups because they prefer the company of a few people at a time. A child with selective mutism has developed an extreme anxiety about talking outside their home. They may have developed a dread of talking, or the possibility that someone will try and make them talk. They can be so anxious that they may ‘freeze’ physically and be unable even to move.<sup>11</sup>

Many ideas in Jones’ and Johnsons’ book use music. The musical activities themselves are extremely low pressure and avoid putting children on the spot. They include:

- Barrier games
- Listening and guessing instrument types
- Whole group call and response

Low pressured musical activities give children opportunities to communicate without using spoken word. Once they have played with instruments in this way, vocalisation often follows. Music can be a safe way to explore communicating for children that struggle to find their voice.

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<sup>10</sup> *Supporting Quiet Children: Exciting Ideas and Activities to Help ‘Reluctant Talkers’ Become ‘Confident Talkers’* by Maggie Johnson and Michael Jones, 2012

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.teachearlyyears.com/learning-and-development/view/quiet-children>



### **Creative Solitude**

Quiet children often prefer and need time in solitude. Although many EYFS music sessions involve circle time or collaborative music making, ironically, most professional musicians will spend many hours alone refining their technique and exploring ideas. The minute a child starts instrumental lessons their teacher is likely to encourage them to do more practice. Further up the education system there are spaces specifically designed just for this - practice rooms!

Learning how to be focussed and absorbed in an activity is a gateway to discovery. Quiet children often want to do this and it is a characteristic of introversion. Yet how often do we think about solitary spaces in EYFS music settings? If we visit a setting as a music specialist, it often feels we have to be constantly active or even entertaining. Could we also use it as an opportunity to model and explore how to create effective spaces for solitary play in the setting? Whilst I'm not suggesting we encourage children to practise earlier, imagine if we valued these spaces of discovery that give children time to think and explore ideas or techniques.

Whilst these activities can include others there is no need for them to always happen in a group. Children also explore, play and "practise" alone. Here are just a few examples found in *Musical Development Matters in the Early Years*:

- Exploring the sonic environment, for example, tapping, shaking, striking
- Exploring musical toys or instruments
- Listening carefully to sounds or music in the environment
- Creating visual representation of sounds, instruments and pieces of music, for example mark making to specific sounds or pieces of music.
- Early vocalisations such as cooing and babbling, exploring timbre and melodic shape
- Imitating sounds heard in the environment
- Vocaling or singing whilst playing an instrument
- Creating their own music or song
- Internalised music making i.e singing songs or melodies in their head
- Moving or tapping the pulse to music heard in the environment
- Explore one instrument in a range of ways e.g tapping, scraping, shaking, hitting, blowing
- Experimenting with volume

Using sound effects during imaginary play



## Methodology

I observed two EYFS music sessions and discussed quiet inclusion with a practitioner who carried out a session that is mindful of quiet children. I carried out a questionnaire that aimed to gain a temperature reading of the concerns practitioners have about including quiet children and how aware they are of the conversations around quietness. The questionnaire was distributed to Hampshire Music Service and Lewisham Music Hub and some self-employed Early Years music practitioners.

### Timeframe

March 2019	Background Reading
Saturday 16th March	Meet with R (practitioner) to discuss quiet inclusion
Wednesday 26th March	Observe family music session 1 Observe family music session 2
Thursday 27th March	R to deliver a lesson with designed quiet inclusive activities
Thursday 4th April	Follow up phone conversation with R
April 2019	Write and send questionnaire
April 2019	Further background reading
May-June 2019	Report Writing

### **EYFS Setting 1: Family Music Session**

This group is led by M. In 2002 M co-wrote a book on early years music and also works for Hampshire Music Service which is how I was introduced to her. M works in local infant schools and Early Years settings as a music specialist as well as running these sessions on two mornings a week. She leads music training courses for Early Years practitioners and over the last 12 years has worked with a huge range of adults and children promoting fun and simple music delivery for babies and young children.

I undertook two observations of different age groups, following which I discussed and considered the questions outlined in the introduction. The sessions took place on Wednesday March 27<sup>th</sup> 2019.



The focus of the observation was on the activities and spaces M creates and how the children respond to these activities. Sessions are attended by both parents and children but I did not talk to parents on this occasion and have not previously met the groups. Each class consists of approximately 14 children.

### **EYFS Setting 2: Primary School B**

R is an experienced musician and specialist EYFS qualified teacher delivering music sessions at a number of primary schools for Southwark Music Service and Primary School B. She has developed her own Early Years music sessions which include musical activities to support gender equality in her teaching. This is particularly interesting with regards to the relationship between discrimination, bullying and quietness.

I met with R and discussed at length our thoughts and experiences of teaching quiet children. We discussed quiet inclusive activities and R planned with this in mind for her next sessions. The sessions will take place at school B with three reception classes on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019. We followed this up with a telephone conversation to reflect upon how the activities went and possible ideas for the future.

# Observations

## Session 1 – Family music session with children aged under 2 ½

Activity	Observations	Comments/Thoughts
<p>Entering the space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recorded music plays as adults and children enter</li> <li>● A large cloth on the floor to define the space</li> <li>● A variety of instruments spread across the floor separated into different categories (Hand bells, shakers, claves etc)</li> <li>● Adults offered tea whilst M greets both child and adult lowering to same height as child to say hi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As children and adults enter, the music has a strong sense of pulse at about 80bpm</li> <li>● There is lots of vocalising from children as they walk in and adults mimicking what their child does back to them.</li> <li>● Some children try out instruments</li> <li>● As the playlist changes to Debussy's <i>Arabesque</i> there is a big change in energy and a lot more listening from the children</li> <li>● Some children observe from the sides staying with their adult and seem very interested in what the other children are doing</li> <li>● The adults are put at ease and feel relaxed due to the welcoming environment and some chat to each other. This seems to also put the children at ease</li> <li>● Adults encourage children by playing instruments</li> <li>● There is no expectation of the children from M. They just explore the space</li> <li>● A lovely moment - the music changes and the bells fit perfectly with the new latin feel. Children express joy as this happens</li> <li>● Tidying up signals circle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Before the circle session has even started the children had already listened to a huge range of music and explored a huge range of instruments and there was lots of variety in their music making. The relaxed environment that allowed settling in time and cuddles with their parents, supported them to join in in a way that suited them. Those listening and observing rather than playing were extremely interested in what was happening and were at ease being able to choose how to settle in to the space.</li> </ul>

	time	
<p>Hello Song</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole group in a circle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children listened and watched M sing with parents/adults encouraging child participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults encouraged joining in on this activity</li> </ul>
<p>5 Little Ducks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children did the actions</li> <li>• Duck whistle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duck whistle used to help with intonation</li> <li>• Children called upon to count down</li> <li>• Quiet children would approach M then retreat if a lot of attention was on them</li> <li>• Loads of listening happening. Children often observed then joined in with actions then vocalised. The repetition of the activity as well as clear talking and singing allowed for this to happen as the children were confident they knew what to do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The duck whistle provided a bit of humour which made the children at ease and interested in joining in with counting</li> <li>• The repetition of the activity was vital for the quiet children</li> <li>• The actions provided a safe way to join in before using the voice</li> </ul>
<p>Dancing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing music then stopping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High energy</li> <li>• Very interested lots of children observing others dance first then joining in after</li> <li>• Often a non-verbal response was followed by a verbal one</li> <li>• Children interested in the silence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing time to observe gives children time to learn the activity and gain confidence to have a go</li> <li>• Having a non-verbal option was important for lots of children</li> </ul>
<p>Parachute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow music</li> <li>• Teddies to cuddle</li> <li>• Parachute slowly up and down with children underneath</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some children went under and some stayed with their adults</li> <li>• Lovely downtime after high energy dancing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety in energy levels helped children to process previous activities and not become overwhelmed</li> </ul>

**Family music session 2 with children aged 2 ½ - 5 years**

Activity	Observations	Comments/thoughts
<p>Entering the space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recorded music plays as before adults and children</li> <li>A large cloth on the floor to define the space</li> <li>A large variety of instruments spread across the floor separated into different categories (Hand bells, shakers etc)</li> <li>Adults offered tea whilst M greeted both child and adult lowering to same height as child to say hi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children walk onto the cloth and gather the scrapers then form a group with each other and begin improvising</li> <li>one child sorted the instruments into groups independently</li> <li>Some parents/adults stay at the edge of the cloth</li> <li>Children very aware of the routine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free play provided and excellent environment for children to be creative in a way that suited them and I was impressed with how imaginative they all were</li> <li>Being familiar with the routine put the children at ease</li> <li>There was a strong sense of continuation from the previous group so if children had attended as babies they would be well prepared for what would take place during this group and could develop the skills they had picked up in the first group further</li> </ul>
<p>Have you got your singing voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M explored a range of voice types including quiet and thinking voices</li> <li>Whilst silent she tuned their ears in to the ticking clock</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children were eager to be as quiet as possible to hear the clock and drew their attention to their listening skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making space for listening activities values a characteristic of introversion</li> </ul>
<p>Hello Song</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children tap the syllables of their names on claves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M suggests the children tap their name only to the trusted adult so even though the whole group can hear they are very supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performing just to a trusted adult provides a safe way to explore independent playing</li> <li>Adults could support their child if they lacked confidence with hand over hand or singing along</li> </ul>
<p>Actions to recorded music</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole group activity</li> <li>Playing/feeling differences in tempo</li> <li>Children very interested in this activity</li> <li>A range of musical genres used from different cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole group activities put quiet children at ease as no attention on them</li> <li>Using a variety of genres includes and speeds changes the energy and gives children an opportunity to</li> </ul>

		<p>experience which they prefer and equally to push them out of their comfort zones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using music from a range of cultures values diversity</li> </ul>
Let's make a circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole group activity</li> </ul>	
<p>Birthday song</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>when you hear your birthday month you jump in the middle of the circle and dance everyone else sings at you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quiet children reluctant to go into the centre of the circle</li> <li>Some adults supported their quiet child to enter the circle and sometimes this was enough for them to join in with the activity</li> <li>One child left the circle after entering with the support of the adult</li> <li>At the end everyone was invited to jump in the middle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This activity involves a lot of attention on individual children and two or three children found this tricky</li> <li>However, after the activity was repeated several times or they had the support of a trusted adult to do it with them, some children were then able to join in</li> <li>Children often listened and observed first, then joined in with actions and then felt able to join in verbally</li> <li>This was a pattern observed throughout the session</li> <li>Providing an opportunity for the whole group to do the activity meant everyone could join in a way they were comfortable with</li> </ul>
Singing and signing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children that felt unable to join in verbally joined in with signing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signing provides another non-verbal method by which to build up to joining in verbally</li> </ul>
<p>William Tell Overture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recording of William Tell played</li> <li>Children pretend to be horses and gallop around the room in a circle</li> <li>The cloth is changed into a horse jump and another cloth is used to create water. Children go to the water when the music is quiet and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children really enjoyed this activity and they were able to identify different musical elements by responding with the correct physical response (e.g jumping, running, drinking water)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children were comfortable with a listening activity that involved the whole group and a strong emphasis on movement</li> </ul>

pretend to drink the water		
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**Primary School B**

Activity	R's reflections on how the activity went
Physical Stretches and Warm ups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Whole class warm up</li> <li>● Jumping a number</li> <li>● vocalising (sirening, lip rolls etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quiet children are happy to join in with this activity</li> </ul>
Have you got your singing voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Whole class activity</li> <li>● Vary voice type</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quiet children were happy to join in with this activity</li> </ul>
Hello song:  Teacher: Hello what's your name? Child: My name is.....  (to the tune of <i>rain rain go away</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The quiet children are usually reluctant to join in with this activity and appear uncomfortable</li> <li>● R felt that the song can be quite exposing and has sometimes left both her and the class feeling uncomfortable when quiet children weren't so forthcoming</li> <li>● We agreed this would make sense as when we are put on the spot on our own there can be a perceived threat of losing face particularly if it is a new activity. We know introverts, stressed or highly sensitive children find this particularly stressful</li> <li>● Interestingly, R observed that she could put quiet children at ease by singing with them, or encouraging them to wave (nonverbal communication)</li> <li>● By repeating the activity each week and with each child, quiet children know what to expect and often by the end of term all children felt comfortable enough to sing their name solo in front of the class.</li> <li>● Classes differed in their willingness to engage depending on the behaviour of the group as a whole</li> <li>● When the class was noisier and more boisterous quiet children appeared to feel less safe and sometimes refused to join in with this activity</li> <li>● R reported in these classes she tended to get comments from children like "I don't like this" which made her feel embarrassed</li> <li>● In response to the boisterous behaviour, one quiet child in particular would</li> </ul>

	<p>resolutely try to do the “right thing” and became very eager to please the teacher but became very shy at singing hello song solo although had clearly wanted to do the activity and in other calmer sessions had been able to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● R sang with quiet children that felt unable to join in and they would sing with her</li> </ul>
<p>“Na” the puppet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Na is a gender-neutral puppet</li> <li>● Na is quiet</li> <li>● Na comes from a quiet planet</li> <li>● Discussed how it is ok to want to be quiet</li> <li>● In this lesson R uses Na to ask the children if anyone likes to be quiet like na?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The quietest child’s hand immediately shot up in the air then other children followed suit</li> <li>● Provides a representation of a quiet character</li> <li>● Useful to have a puppet as a prompt for discussion as children want to be like the puppet</li> </ul>
<p>Nod nod nod your head Nod your head together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Used the song as a springboard for children to create their own ideas (what can we do instead of nod?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Having previously discussed how it is ok to be quiet, quiet children felt more willing to share their ideas</li> <li>● Having choice about how to navigate the activity in their own way felt very important to the quiet children</li> </ul>

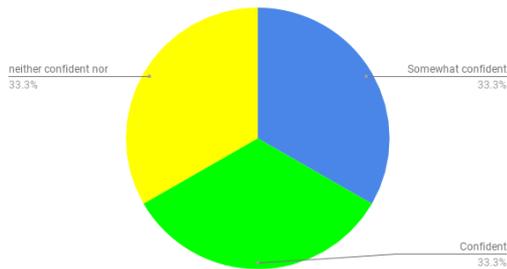
## Questionnaire

There were 9 respondents to the questionnaire. Hampshire and Lewisham do a limited amount of early years work so respondents were also made up of self-employed practitioners or school teachers. A larger sample size would be needed to gain more conclusive results, however, it has been interesting to learn from these practitioners thoughts and experiences. Some words have been used for lack of a better term. I am aware that “engaged” is a contested term and have made it clear in the questionnaire that this term is problematic.

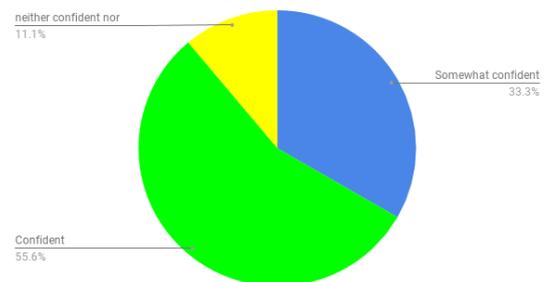
I will discuss more relevant results here (for the full results please see this [link](#)<sup>12</sup>).

### How confident did practitioners feel quiet children were during performance, composition, improvisation, listening and free play?.

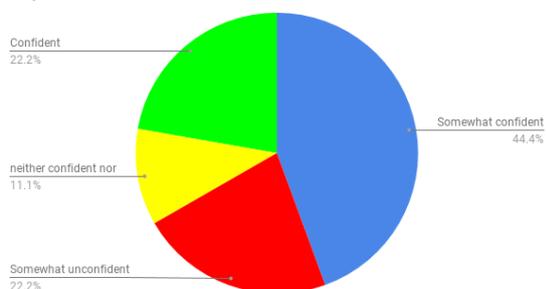
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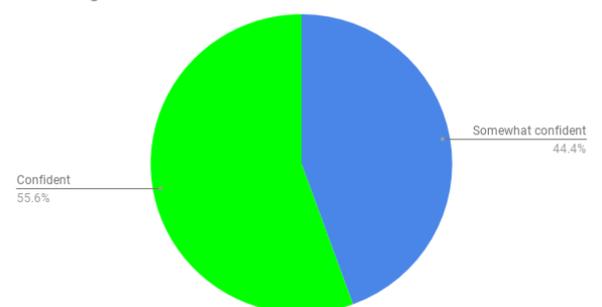
Free Play



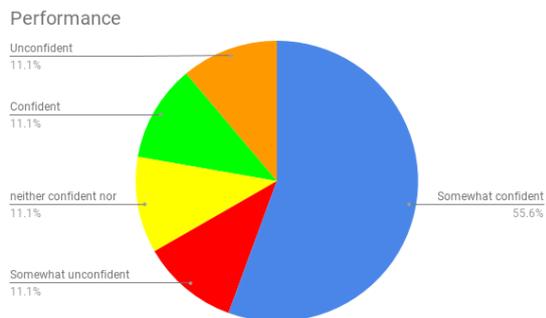
Improvisation



Listening

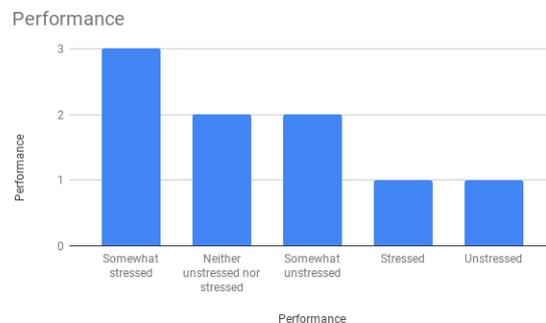
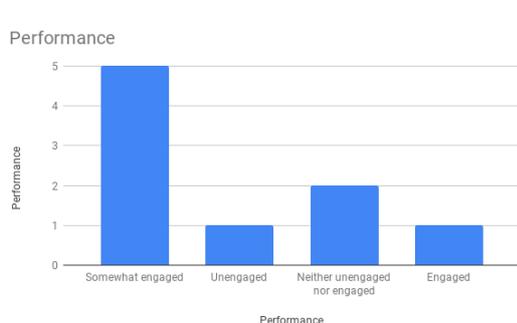


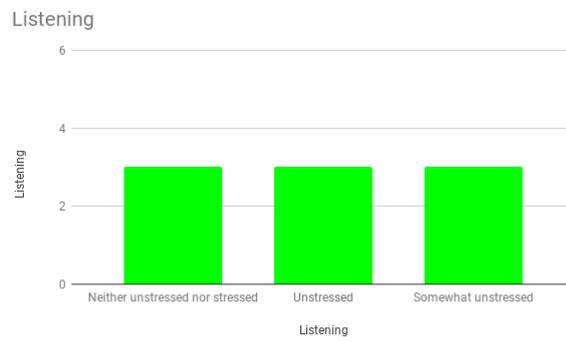
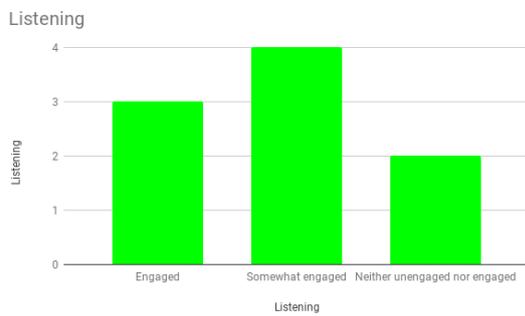
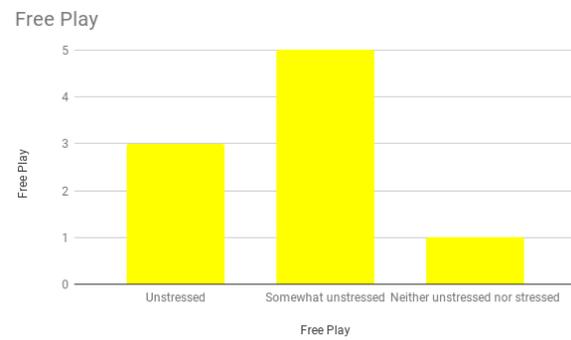
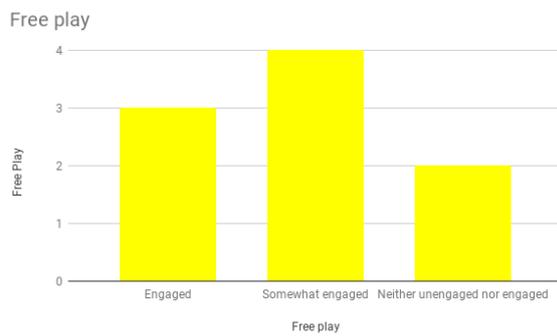
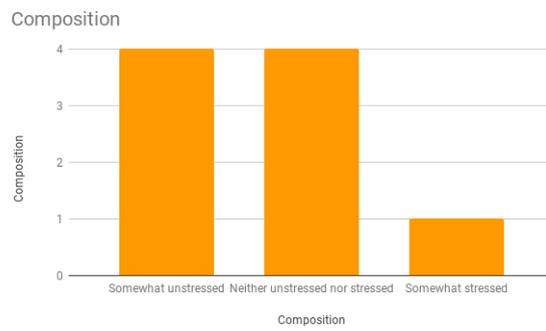
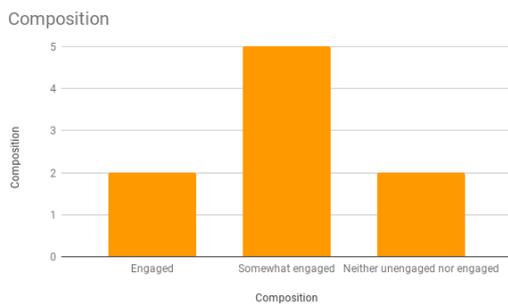
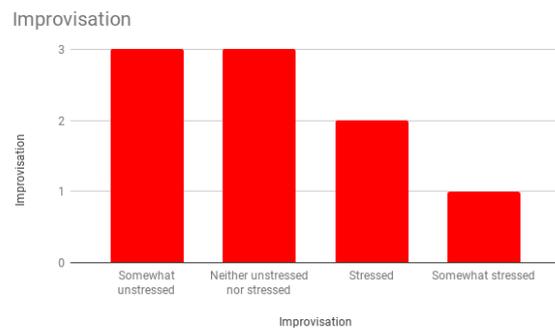
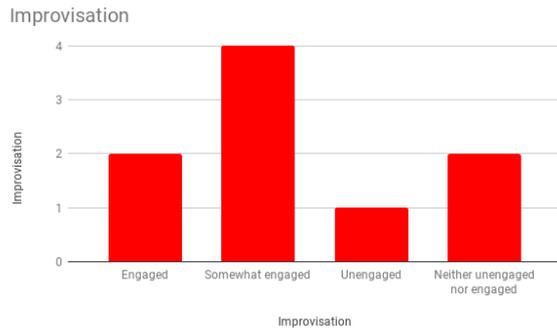
<sup>12</sup> <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1CxTb-E410ApOcaVBXWoXN3vOtG33M3kcB9cQljEtJ00/edit#responses>



Practitioners felt confident or somewhat confident during most activities with the highest level of confidence being in listening activities and one person feeling unconfident about performance activities. Four teachers commented that their confidence in including quiet children varied depending on the individual child, the group and the specific activity. This is similar to R’s observation that the more boisterous class affected quiet children’s behaviour. One person commented that they would usually find a way to involve children who did not want to do the activity, for example, during a “giant and elves” game the student could sit with the teacher and watch, listen or do the actions and may then try to join in. This is very similar to what was observed in M’s group where the repetition of an activity allowed children to observe, do actions and then join in vocally. Another teacher commented that their confidence on including quiet children depended on how well they knew the group.

**How “engaged” and stressed did teachers feel quiet children were during performance, composition, improvisation, listening and free play?**







It is interesting to compare how “engaged” and stressed practitioners felt quiet children were during similar activities:

- During *all* activities quiet children appeared engaged however most respondents believed their stress levels to be higher during both performance and improvisation. This may be because both activities *can* (although do not have to) put children on the spot.
- Free play and listening activities appeared to be the least stressful. This fits with the introverted traits outlined by Cain.

This is insightful as it indicates that quiet children have a connection with *all* aspects of music but are finding some performance and improvisation activities stressful perhaps due to how they are expected to participate rather than because a lack of interest in either. It might therefore be worth exploring alternative ways of performing and improvising that reduce stress levels and allows quiet children to “be themselves”. It may also be interesting to look at how we assess a child’s ability at these tasks as different modes of assessment may be more or less stressful. For example we could value time spent alone exploring an instrument in the setting with observation comments such as:

“B focussed on exploring the shakers for a prolonged period of time and discovered several different rhythms”

Practitioners also commented on what a quiet child being engaged could mean:

- “Engaged doesn’t have to be active engagement. It also doesn’t present clearly as to whether a child is engaged in any moment. Sometimes weeks later a shy child may share what they learnt at a time they’d appeared to be disengaged.”
- “I feel that some children require more thinking time than others and to use different spaces, for example, the outside classroom”
- “Engaged with their learning - are interested, listening, happy to have a go within their “own space”
- “Depends on the child, sometimes it's watching/listening (then joining in when ready), for others it is taking part in tasks but not able to follow ‘instructions’ (often doing their own thing)

### **How do practitioners currently include quiet children in their lessons?**

The most popular methods practitioners currently use to include quiet children were by:



- Cultivating a safe space
- Having an effective anti-bullying policy
- Ensuring the classroom is accessible
- Encouraging thinking time
- Using nonverbal forms of communication
- Avoiding labelling of quiet children
- Praising quiet strengths (e.g thinking, self-reflection, consideration)
- Low pressure modes of assessment
- Using a range of musical genres
- Actively recognising the contributions of quiet children
- Letting children get used the space before a more formal session
- Encouraging independent learning
- Avoiding putting quiet children on the spot

Sometimes practitioners:

- Provided a quiet space
- Encouraged free play
- Included downtime
- Provided a range of performance spaces including nonthreatening safe spaces
- Provided options to avoid overstimulation
- Used music for relaxation

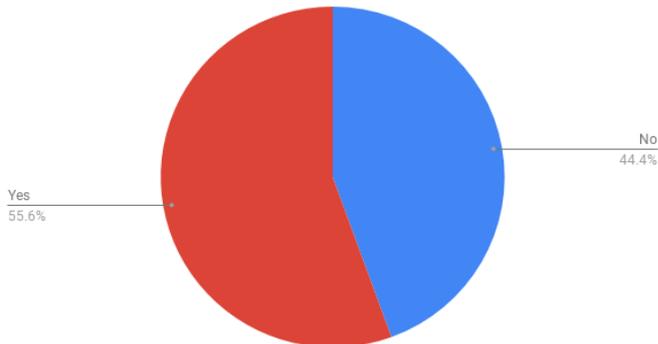
The least used options were:

- Providing a quiet space
- Providing a range of performance spaces including nonthreatening safe spaces

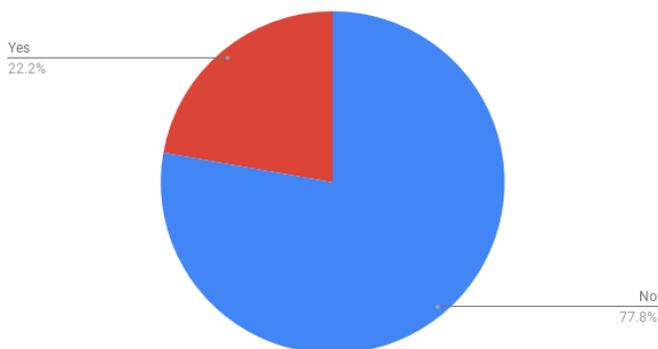
Protecting and using existing quiet spaces such as book corners, playground sheds or wendy houses and garden areas could be important for quiet children. Exploring non-threatening performance spaces may provide opportunities for quiet children to explore performing in their own way. What would a quiet performance look or sound like?

**How many practitioners had received training in neurodiversity and the social model of disability?**

Training in neurodiversity



Training in the social model of disability



This demonstrates that some training opportunities for practitioners in both neurodiversity and the social model of disability may be useful for broadening the communities understanding of quietness from the perspective of acceptance.

**Do parents of quiet children have expectations about how their child should engage with music sessions and does this impact the sessions?**

I included these questions due to the conversations I had had with other practitioners and my own experience as a parent. Susan Cain also discusses the significance of parental attitudes in her podcast *Quiet: the Power of Introverts* Episodes 2 and 3. She also notes that in education we often expect children to “participate” rather than “engage” and most assessments are based on participation. As EYFS music practitioners we often have access to



the whole family rather than just the child and it is central to consider how we can support parents to support their children musically during sessions and at home. As a parent I know I have felt anxious at music sessions if my child does not want to sing or “join in” with the activity in the expected way and it is sometimes tempting to nudge a child that is being quiet to “give it a go”. Sometimes it can be helpful to push children out of their comfort zone but as we have seen sometimes it just might not be the right environment for them. It is a hard call to make as a parent so there might be more we can do as practitioners to inform this decision making.

There was no conclusive answer from participants of this questionnaire. This would be an interesting topic of research in itself. Parenting comes with huge stresses of its own that are likely to affect not just the children’s temperament but also that of the parent. Also, whether or not a parent is introverted themselves may affect how comfortable they feel in group. As we saw in M’s sessions, when parents are put at ease children also feel more confident.

The variety of responses to this question may have been due to the diverse variety of settings. Some worked in reception classes where there would be little or no interaction with parents during sessions, others in baby toddler groups and one in a home schooling environment where the relationship with parents may be different.

**Did practitioners have any further thoughts?**

Many practitioners were keen to point out that it was hard to generalise which activities were more “engaging” or stressful for quiet children as this varies from child to child.

Some had thoughts and suggestions from their own experience. Here were some of their reflections:

“Always give all children the option to join in. Often quiet children will not participate in early stages of the lesson (but will be listening), once they see other pupils taking part, they join in. Initially this could be with adult support, then withdrawing once child is more confident.”

“Some adults ask the children to work as part of a group without the option of working by themselves.”



## Conclusion

A music session set up in a way that prioritises participation, high levels of social energy and an emphasis on performance may give the message to quiet children that they do not belong.

Music is human and belongs to everybody. We have seen in literature, both settings and via the questionnaire that music can be of huge importance to quiet children. It is therefore crucial that we understand how to give quiet children a sense of belonging and value their ways of interacting with music.

Music often reflects the socio-physical organisation of a space<sup>13</sup> and it is possible that if we organise our musical spaces in a way that is mindful of quiet children they might discover new musical worlds that are meaningful to them and others. Music is made in diverse social spaces that differ hugely from culture to culture. It is important we explore diversity and this must include neurodiversity and value a range of social energies. Not only does this ensure all children feel that music is theirs to explore, it is also more musically exciting. In accepting quiet children for who they are, I do not mean to suggest that they cannot become successful solo performers, indeed many musicians are quiet. I only advocate that we acknowledge, value and represent their existence.

We know that quiet people are often averse to taking high risks and only able to share their thoughts more loudly in spaces where they feel truly welcomed and safe. Whilst social risk taking comes with high levels of anxiety, quiet people are far from cautious in the way they think and often have vivid imaginations, creating alternative worlds in their minds. What would happen if we dared to create a quiet musical safe-haven?

Opening a conversation with other practitioners about quiet inclusion will enable us to share good practice and develop strategies for truly exploring the potential power of “quiet” musicking.

I have been inspired by the EYFS practitioners I have observed who have both already cultivated a safe and enabling environment for quiet children in many ways. I am also excited by the possibilities to explore in the future:

Quiet inclusive activities that worked well during sessions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Repetition</li><li>● A routine</li><li>● Downtime</li><li>● Wide range of genres including different tempos</li></ul>



<sup>13</sup> *Spaces Speak Are you Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture*, Barry Blesser and Linda Ruth-Salter, 2009

- Using quiet puppet characters or other quiet role models
- More focus on listening activities
- Opportunities for quiet children to observe before joining in
- Providing choice
- Free play to provide a relaxed space in which a child can choose to make music in their own way and make “mistakes” through play
- Having a trusted friend or grownup that can support the quiet child to join in with the activity
- Relaxation
- Using a calm voice
- Avoiding putting children on the spot
- Empathising when something feels challenging for the child

#### **Quiet inclusive activities to try in the future**

- Showing pictures of different music making spaces and asking the children which they prefer. It would be interesting to think beyond circle time or raised platforms (e.g. forests, tents, book corners, recording studios, bedrooms, headphones, skype call....).
- Let them imagine their perfect musicking space - what would it look like?
- More focus on whole class improvisation. Whole group improvisation is a safe way to make mistakes and be accepting of mistakes. It is important for quiet children to feel able to make mistakes in order for them to be creative. How can we effectively improvise in a classroom context where there are not enough instruments for everyone? Body percussion? DIY instrument making? Found objects?
- Show pictures or videos of different group formations (solo, ensemble, band, large ensemble etc) and ask which the children prefer
- Using or creating children’s picture books with a main protagonist that is quiet. What powers do they have? What does their world look like? What does it sound like?
- Using technology (recording, skype sessions, headphones)
- Creating secret languages with sound
- Providing opportunities to make music alone
- Personal creative projects that do not have to be shared
- Musical journalling
- Making use of the quiet spaces in the setting or building quiet spaces



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