

## PERCUSSION LEVELS EXPLAINED

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# Descriptions of assessment levels for percussion pupils.

### Level 1

Pupils can play a basic drum beat ('rock beat') in 4/4 time and can control the speed and volume of the beat.

They can play basic crotchet/quaver rhythmic patterns that are transferable to other orchestral percussion instruments.

They can read basic notation and can recognise simple structure and patterns in the music they play.

Where available/applicable, they can play an octave scale (C major) on tuned percussion and a simple melody from the scale which made up from crotchet/quaver notation.

### Level 2

Pupils can play a 'rock beat' with control at various tempi and with dynamics.

They can count and play a four bar phrase and add a semi quaver 'fill' into the phrase.

They can play basic variations of the 'rock beat' and understand the concept of playing rhythm against a pulse.

Where available/applicable, these skills will be transferable to other orchestral percussion instruments; producing a controlled sound on timpani, keyboard percussion and start to grasp reading basic pitched notation (intervals of 3rds, 4ths, 5ths and octaves on timpani and tuned percussion) which will develop their aural recognition/tuning ability.

### Level 3

Pupils can play a 'rock beat', variations of the beat and securely maintain a steady pulse against backing tracks of various tempi.

They can play more complex minim/crotchet/quaver/semi quaver rhythms against a pulse and apply these to various percussion instruments; drum kit, and where available/applicable, on timpani and tuned percussion.

They grasp basic sticking patterns (singles/doubles/paradiddles) and can transfer these onto other percussion instruments.

They can hear and identify differences between a few styles of music and how to play the basic rock beat patterns to complement these styles.

Where available/applicable they play with a sense of melody and phrasing on tuned percussion against a backing track.

They start to understand the principles of rolling and dampening on timpani and tuned percussion.

As well as extending the range of octaves on the keyboard instruments, pupils will be able to play scales/arpeggios in simple keys (C major/F major/G major) and start to play more complex melodies from study pieces within these keys.

#### **Level 4**

Pupils can identify how different markings can reflect different musical intentions and can use this to play in the correct musical style. They think about overall effect and use their technique to realise the desired effect. They can think about and put their own ideas into the music.

#### ***Drum Kit***

Pupils can incorporate the 3 basic sticking patterns into fills and drum beats. They understand the concept of stick bouncing and how to manipulate stick bounce with a view working towards being able to play an 'open stroke' drum roll. Pupils are able to change a regular quaver pulse drum beat and a semi quaver ('16s') beat to a backing track.

They have an initial understanding of the 'feel' and 'flavour' of an increasing number of styles including Blues/Swing/Jazz.

#### ***Tuned/Timpani***

Pupils have steady control of rolling techniques and can change between timpani drums/pitch ranges on the xylophone and will understand the basic principles of pedaling on timpani.

They demonstrate more expressive control over the instrument and can aurally identify simple key changes (tonic/dominant/sub dominant) in study pieces/backing tracks.

On keyboard percussion they will be able more complex study pieces introducing passing notes (leap/step).

#### **Level 5**

Pupils achieve a good overall performance with attention to detail of dynamics, articulation, tempo and style. They recognise a varied range of musical markings and can react accordingly. They evaluate their own playing and can grasp how venue and occasion can affect this. They can judge others objectively.

#### ***Drum Kit***

Pupils are able to play an open stroke drum roll and have a grasp of more advanced rudiments such as 5/7 stroke rolls, double paradiddles, paradiddle-diddles, flams, drags, ruffs, and are working towards being able to use these within various drum beats/fills.

They can play with more control and accuracy in a range of styles/time signatures. They will be able to explore the basics of improvising in various styles using skills/sticking patterns learnt throughout previous levels.

Pupils will start to explore the basics of more complex styles such as Latin/Cuban/Jazz.

#### ***Tuned/Timpani***

Pupils will be able to play pieces in more challenging key/time signatures and will be able to interpret and communicate more demanding music through expressive performance and musicianship.

They will be able to play in a range of styles and will be comfortable playing at various ranges on the keyboard instruments.

They will demonstrate controlled and near accurate pedal tuning technique on timpani and be able to do this while performing.

### **Level 6**

Pupils play with a sense of style and show good control of dynamics, articulation and tempo. They have a sense of ensemble and can react to others in group performance. They can evaluate and analyse their own performance and that of others, using this skill to improve their own playing and offer advice to others.

#### ***Drum Kit***

Pupils are able to play in a wide range of styles and can play expressively and musically.

They can incorporate the technical facilities learnt throughout previous levels and use these to improvise on a given part and can use these improvisations to start to adapt and refine their soloistic playing within ensemble playing/solos passages in pieces of music.

They will also be able to play various styles of Latin music with more control with a view to using these skills to develop independent limb control to facilitate being able to play more complex rhythms in later levels.

#### ***Tuned/Timpani***

Pupils will demonstrate more fluency when incorporating techniques from previous levels into their playing.

They will be able to sight read more complex parts at a steady pace and show a more developed sense of musicianship within group/ensemble playing.

They will be introduced to the technique of 'crossing over' on timpani and 3-4 mallet technique on tuned percussion.

They will have a good level of aural awareness.

### **Level 7**

Pupils can discriminate between different genres and can adjust their playing to be sensitive to the relevant style. They play with good melodic shape and a sense of direction and can tell where musical emphasis should lie; they can improve their playing to a high degree with minimal teacher input.

#### ***Drum Kit***

Pupils will demonstrate a high standard of musicianship and strong sense of pulse/inner pulse when playing.

They can play comfortably in various styles and can play written and improvised solos to backing tracks and within ensembles.

They will start to be able to control the dynamic of separate limbs to be able to play rhythms that complement the style they are playing to create a more 'natural' sound.

#### ***Tuned/Timpani***

Pupils demonstrate a greater level of musicianship and understanding of genres and styles when playing to backing tracks or in an ensemble.

They will be able to tune the timpani more accurately by ear.

They will be increasingly adept at manipulating four mallet technique on tuned percussion in order to be able to play more complex studies  
They will demonstrate a high level of tonal control on timpani while incorporating techniques learnt throughout previous levels.

### **Level 8**

Pupils can discriminate and exploit the expressive potential of the music they play. They pay great attention to tuning and can adjust tone and timbre to suite the desired style.

#### ***Drum Kit***

Pupils demonstrate the ability to play in various styles and within various musical situations.

They can also improvise around a given part and incorporate rudimental sticking patterns into drum beats, fills and solos.

Pupils will be able to control the dynamic level of different limbs at the same time to produce a refined sound.

#### ***Tuned/Timpani***

Pupils will demonstrate secure technique and musicianship to achieve an accomplished musical performance within an ensemble.

They will demonstrate the ability to be able to manipulate individual sticks when using four mallet technique on tuned percussion instruments.

They will be able to give a controlled and fluent performance on timpani which is sympathetic to the music/ensemble they are playing with.