

The IPC (International Primary Years Curriculum) and relevance to music education from an International Setting - A South African perspective

Mario Maxwell Müller

Venda University, Music Department, Limpopo, South Africa

Abstract: The following research paper will investigate the importance of the International Primary Years Curriculum (IPC) and the added benefits for schools to consider within an International School setting. The standard norm in most International Schools is to serve a community of students coming from around the globe with different cultural backgrounds, religious views or beliefs, and attitudes. It is important to teach learners the importance of tolerance and understanding with a focus on respect for people of other cultures. The music curriculum is diverse as you have certain assessment criteria's that have to be met for each lesson. Understanding the Entry point, Knowledge of Harvest the Bigger Picture, Research, and Recording Activities and celebrating the success of learning and inquiry with the entry point is imperative. Educational systems are constantly evolving and fundamental to the IPC approach to learning is a clear progression in skill development. This even applies to the personal learning goals, which emphasize adaptability, resilience, cooperation, and respect and which, as a result of progressive skill development, help children to become able and inspired learners. International-mindedness is embedded in all IPC learning to ensure that children grow up with a very clear global understanding. No one can properly predict the nature of work that will be available for today's primary age children by the time he or she are adults. Many of the jobs they will have simply don't yet exist, especially in the fields of ICT, technology, and science. So the principle of the IPC is to focus on personal, academic and international learning that will prepare children, wherever they may live, for the world of tomorrow. The researcher explores this further with a specific case study from Mexico where teachers share their ideas and perceptions around IPC. The concluding results reveal the need for Fieldwork Education back in England to make provision for English as Additional Language (EAL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) and differentiating for them in the one hundred and thirty units that are readily available for teachers to download and use within International Schools. The overall impression by most international teachers agreed that IPC allowed learners to develop their critically and analytical skills and offered a variety of cross-curricular activities for learners to explore.

Keywords: Assessment Criteria, Case study, Entry Point, International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Knowledge of Harvest, The Bigger Picture, Mexico, Music education, Research activities & Recording activities.

I. INTRODUCTION

The ideology behind the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) was to create a curriculum that allows learners to think more critically about their learning and foster a level of inquiry and bearing in mind a sense of International mindedness. It is slightly different from the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP) and the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB-DP) or programme. There are several schools, which is part of this international community and shares the same sentiments around the International Primary Curriculum and why it is important to implement into your own school curriculum. For this, I will introduce the reader to several case studies from around the Globe.

Mr. Gary Bradshaw, the Primary Assistant Head and IPC co-ordinator at Keystone Academy in China states (2004: 1):

Keystone Academy is one of China's flagship schools. It is a private Chinese school with an international flavor. It is bilingual and state-of-the-art, drawing from the best of Chinese, American and international learning approaches; focusing on inquiry-based learning, critical thinking and creative problem solving within a rigorous international environment. The school, located in Beijing, opened in September 2014 and has been using the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) since. It is expanding year on year and there are currently around 530 students in the primary school (Foundation to Grade 5), and 406 students in the middle and high school, with Grade 11 opening this year (2016-2017). Most of the students are Chinese although there are a growing number of international students from the United States, Europe, and Africa, particularly in the senior school. There are both expatriate English-speaking teachers, and Chinese teachers. Children progress from the IPC in the primary, to the International Baccalaureate's Middle Years Programme (MYP) in middle school, and the IB Diploma Programme in high school (www.fieldworkeducation.com/uploads/documents/Keystone-academy.pdf).

Furthermore, he concludes the following (ibid: 1).

In preparation for opening, we researched in depth the programmes and curricula to run at Keystone. Having selected the MYP and the IBDP, the leadership team looked for a primary curriculum to prepare children in the best possible way. While the IB PYP (International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme) was considered, it was a very conscious decision to go with the IPC instead and was chosen for several important reasons. We wanted a primary curriculum that could be adapted to meet the needs of our children and our teachers. As Keystone was a brand new school, the IPC was a good choice as it supplied a complete curriculum; not just a framework, but a curriculum with suggested learning tasks, so teachers new to the IPC could hit the ground running. Everything's there for teachers; all you need to do is open it up and follow it (<https://fieldworkeducation.com/uploads/documents/Keystone-academy.pdf>).

Another Case study from Germany Appel et al. (2006: 1) where the management team confirmed the following:

You will find Franconian International School in Erlangen, Germany. It was established in 1998, has an enrolment of 650 students from Early Years to Grade 12, and continues to expand. There are a diverse student and teacher body with over 50 different student nationalities attending the school. twenty-eight percent of the total student population is German and there are also significant numbers of Indian students. The elementary school currently makes up two-thirds of the school with approximately 60 staff including specialists. Curriculum Director, Carolyn Gedling; Elementary School Principal, Patricia Appel; and Elementary School Curriculum Co-ordinator, Darryn Thomas talk about the International Primary Curriculum at Franconian International School and of achieving IPC Accreditation with Mastering Level in three of the nine accreditation criteria: Franconian International School opened with a self-made curriculum in the elementary school. Over the years we felt we needed to have something more structured and more in line with what other international schools were doing. We considered the IB's Primary Years Programme (PYP) and the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). We had discussions and meetings to decide which curriculum was the best fit for our students, the teachers and for the school as a whole, and decided to go with the IPC. We introduced the IPC during the 2006-2007 academic year. (<https://fieldworkeducation.com/uploads/documents/Franconian-international-school.pdf>).

The reason why they opted for the International Primary Curriculum (ibid: 1), which suggest:

There are several reasons why we chose the IPC and why we still believe the IPC is right for our school. IPC gives us a rigorous and international curriculum with more scaffolding; more flesh on the skeleton. The International Baccalaureate's PYP doesn't always give this. There's plenty of structure in the IPC without being restrictive. It gives us a common core, but it's flexible and gives us the freedom to adopt - or not adopt - certain components, meaning we've been able to make the IPC our own. It allows us to differentiate for our children and gives us the opportunity to make sure the curriculum is accessible to all, including our non-English-speaking students. It allows us to extend learning when we need to. The IPC is great for new and experienced teachers. It provides the ideas and framework and, for experienced teachers it allows them to consider how they can modify, extend and meet their needs. There's something for everyone (<https://fieldworkeducation.com/uploads/documents/Franconian-international-school.pdf>).

The International Primary Years Curriculum has relevance to a community of just over 1800 members with over 90 countries integrating this structured curriculum. Brown (2014: 3) explains:

My experience of using the IPC is reflected by, and throughout, our 1,800 member schools in over 90 countries across the world. Each school has its own unique vision for the children in its care. Every IPC member school uses the structure and rigor of the IPC to help make this vision a reality, by building on the strengths of their context and country, whilst engaging the passion and enthusiasm of their teachers and children. (https://www.fis.edu.hk/sites/default/files/ipc_brochure_-_fis.pdf)

The difference between the PYP programme and the IPC programme is the level of support and structure for teachers with detailed lessons plans and units for each International school to explore. The IB-PYP programme allows a level of flexibility where teachers can use several resources available to them on the internet and create an elaborate on certain units.

The researcher agrees that is imperative for learners to explore their understanding of the world and how it creates a level of balance for each student to research and critically evaluate making connections within a global context.

Following a report was written by Brown (2014: 3) which explains:

I was working as a teacher and school leader when I first came across the IPC. My school was committed to making sure our children and teachers were excited by learning, through topics that enabled them to experience the breadth and depth of different subject areas. We explored many curriculum options but none of them quite matched the vision that we had for our children; until we found the IPC. One word can sum up my experience of using the IPC: transformational. My children started to think differently, question differently and learn differently. They became better enquirers, communicators, and cooperators. They developed a greater sense of themselves and others and were motivated to find out about the challenges and wonders in the world around them. The focus shifted from my teaching to the children's learning. It was no longer enough to have a lesson packed full of fun activities and fancy resources. I wanted to know what my children were learning and how, what progress had been made across their knowledge, skills, and understanding and where they were heading next, day by day, lesson by lesson. Alongside the IPC's creative and learning-focused units of work, I used its rigorous assessment tools to inform my planning as well as empower my children to become lifelong, and life-wide, learners (https://www.fis.edu.hk/sites/default/files/ipc_brochure_-_fis.pdf).

Learners are constantly challenged to inquire and display their understanding through the phases of Knowledge, Skills, and Understanding empowering their minds to find answers to questions that they might pose on certain topics. Their previous knowledge and experience in relation to what is being covered? Using spider diagrams to demonstrate their understanding of that particular topic is being covered. For instance; in music education when learners are exploring different sounds whether they are high or low they would look at the science aspect of it all through investigating how sound is created? How it is measured? How these frequencies can affect their biological system and what impact it can have on their development. Her research can be concluded by focusing on music aptitude? Whether sound actually has an effect on the social well-being of all.

II. THE AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

- *What is the International Primary Curriculum (IPC)?*
- *A discussion of the IPC learning goals?*
- *Knowledge, Skills and Understanding?*
- *The learning process and teaching an IPC unit?*
- *What are the three assessment criteria for IPC?*
- *An example of a music unit with learning objectives and detailed outcomes*
- *The conclusion of where IPC fit within an International School – Case study from Mexico?*

III. WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL PRIMARY CURRICULUM (IPC)?

The IPC is one of the fastest-growing curriculum choices in the world today, with over 1,800 schools in over 90 different countries (December 2014). It is a comprehensive curriculum for 3-12-year-olds, made up of over 130 exciting, engaging and globally relevant thematic units of work, which are designed around a clear process of learning and with specific learning goals for subject, personal and international learning.

With its own Assessment for Learning Programme, the IPC provides immediate support for teachers and learners through its comprehensive design and rigor, whilst being flexible enough for each school to adopt the planning and build on their own strengths.

The IPC also has an Early Years Programme designed for children from 3 to 5 years of age. This follows a developmental approach, providing teachers with a range of flexible learning activities to meet the learning needs of every individual child.



Figure 1 – The IPC learning model (Brown, 2014: 5)

Each IPC unit of work is designed around one core purpose: improving children's learning. Our world-class writers have created a range of cross-curricular units based on globally relevant themes that excite children and teachers alike. They are designed to nurture children's personal qualities and develop international mindedness, and at the heart of these units are the IPC Learning Goals

IV. A DISCUSSION OF THE IPC LEARNING GOALS

It is important to understand the various IPC learning goals and how they work cohesively together to create a stimulating and exciting curriculum for teachers and learners to explore within the primary school. International Schools abroad use these learning goals to integrate the philosophy behind the International Primary Curriculum (IPC).

The IPC Learning Goals are the foundation of the IPC. The IPC Learning Goals define what children are expected to know, what they should be able to do, and the understandings they will develop in their academic, personal and international learning. The IPC Learning Goals are defined in each age phase: Milepost 1 (ages 5-7 years), Milepost 2 (ages 7-9 years) and Milepost 3 (ages 9-12 years). These learning goals guide learning and teaching and help to focus assessment. The researcher believe that the IPC Learning Goals are equal to or exceed those of any curriculum in the world.

There are three types of Learning Goals:

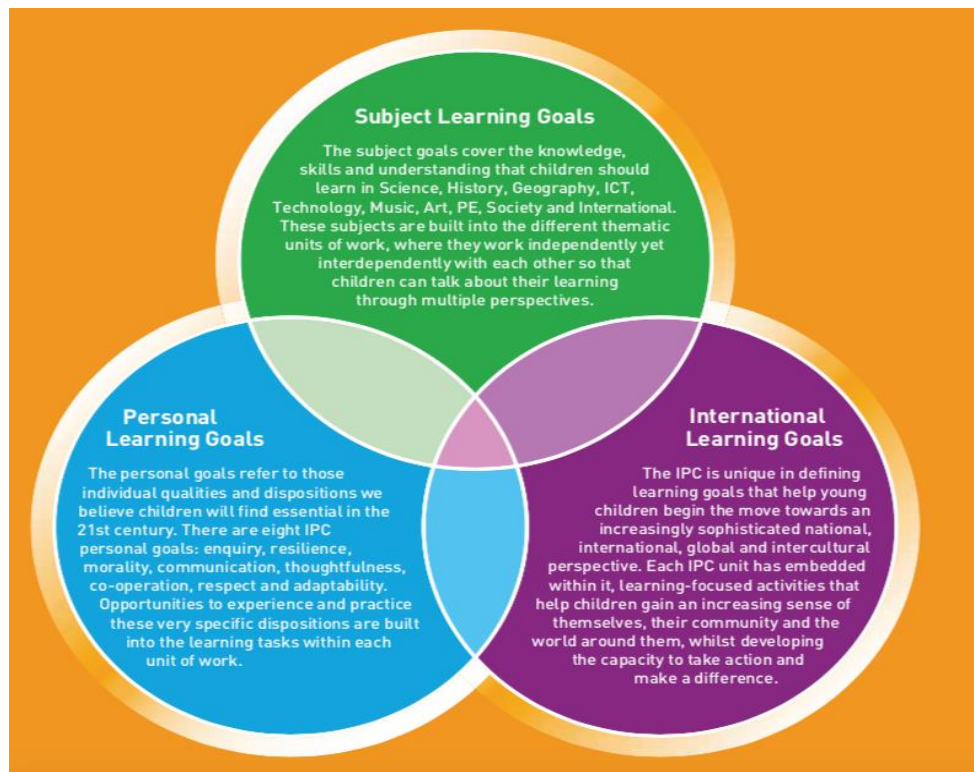


Figure 2 – The three IPC Learning goals (Brown, 2014: 6)

V. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND UNDERSTANDING

The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) Learning Goals are broken down into three different types of learning - knowledge, skills, and understanding, an essential combination to ensure the most effective learning experience.

Knowledge Learning Goals

Knowledge refers to factual information. Knowledge is relatively straightforward to teach and assess, even if it is not always that easy to recall. You can ask your children to research the knowledge they have to learn but you could also tell them the knowledge they need to know.

Skills Learning Goals

Skills refer to things children are able to do. Skills have to be learned practically and need time to be practiced. The IPC's Assessment for Learning Programme is based on the assessment of children's skills.

Understanding Learning Goals

Understanding refers to the consideration of big ideas, the 'lightbulb' moment that we all strive for. Understanding is always developing. You can't teach understanding, but what our units do is provide a whole range of different experiences through which children's understandings can deepen.

The balance of subjects and the coverage of knowledge, skills and understanding goals within each of these can be viewed and checked by our user-friendly Online Route Planner, which also allows our members to create route maps of their unit selections.

VI. THE LEARNING PROCESS AND TEACHING AN IPC UNIT

It is important to understand the learning cycle process that will take place in the classroom and how to integrate the units into the learners learning. Every IPC unit follows a distinct learning process. This provides a structured approach to the way children learn ensuring that their learning is stimulating, purposeful and rigorous.



Figure 3 – The IPC LEARNING CYCLE WHEN CONCLUDING A UNIT OF WORK (Brown, 2014: 6)

Entry Point

An exciting, memorable event launches every IPC unit. The aim of the entry point is to get learners excited about and engaged with the learning that's to follow.

Knowledge Harvest

This provides teachers with the chance to find out what learners already know about the theme and helps them to personalize the unit by finding out what learners want to learn and then tailoring their lessons accordingly. It reinforces connections between learning and allows learners to take ownership of their learning.

Explaining the Theme

This provides teachers, learners, and parents with the big picture of the unit before it is launched so that connections between existing and future learning can be made.

Research Activities

Each subject area has planned research activities which are designed to make sure that learners can access information in a way that is appropriate to them, drawing on a wide range of learning approaches such as role play, digital learning, library research and so on. IPC research activities are experiential and exploratory. Some are collaborative and others are designed to develop individual inquiry and resilience.

Recording Activities

The recording activities enable learners to process and present the information they have gained in their research activities through a range of approaches which tap into their different strengths and interests, enabling them to get better at other ways of recording. This might involve learning through digital recording, drama, musical compositions, maps, graphs, experiments, artwork and so on.

Exit Point

The exit point completes every unit. It helps learners to draw on their learning from the unit, reminding them of all the connections between subjects that they have made, and creating time and opportunity to build their understanding of their learning. The exit point is an excellent opportunity to engage with the community and involve them in celebrating the learning that has been achieved.

VII. WHAT ARE THE THREE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR THE IPC?

Assessment criteria are important to evaluate whether a learner is making progress and whether they have grasped or learned a new concept taught whether in the music classroom or any subject for that matter. It is important to understand the three levels of criteria used within IPC and with a teacher rubric example below. The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) supports teachers in assessing, and children in self-assessing, their progress with key skills from the IPC Learning Goals.

It provides:

- specific skills assessment for Mileposts 1, 2 and 3
- a system that provides learning advice
- a rubric (success criteria) for teachers and children and
- tracking through the beginning, developing and mastering

Table 1 – An example of Teacher Rubric

Beginning	Developing	Mastering
The learner can make a simple map or plan with some identifiable features in pictorial form. The features are not in their correct relative positions.	The learner independently produces a map with three or more identifiable features in correct relative positions. Features may be shown as pictures or symbols.	The learner independently produces a map with most features in the correct position relative to one another. They use symbols rather than pictures to identify features and may include a simple key.

The teacher rubric is important for the teacher to understand what the learners need to cover to ensure assessments are consistent and with clear criteria. For example; in the following Teacher Rubric could be used (see table 1) during the geography lesson?

Relevance to the learner rubric is important and to create a rubric which is directed at supporting through means of self - assessment to determine whether learning has taken place. It is imperative for teachers to design learner rubric according to their age group. It is important to be specific with the learners' rubric. The learners need to understand what is expected from them when they conclude the assessments.

Here is a detailed example of learner rubric:

Table 2 – An example of Learner Rubric

Beginning – I'm getting used to it!	Developing - I'm getting better!	Mastering - I'm really getting it!
I made a map using pictures to show different places and objects. I needed some help from my teacher to put them in the right places on the map.	I worked on my own to draw my map. I used some pictures and some symbols to show the different places and features. I knew that I drew some of them in the correct places.	I completed my map by myself. I used symbols to show where different places are and a key to show what the symbols mean. I drew most of them in the correct places.

VIII. AN EXAMPLE OF MUSIC UNIT WITH LEARNING TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

The following music unit, which is *celebrations* can be used with Milestone 1 (5 - 7 Years of age). The learners can sing a variety of songs related to celebrations for each particular culture. These can be Jewish Folk songs to celebrate the Jewish Festivals, Hindi basic songs, which could be used during Diwali or Christmas Carols which is used to celebrate Christmas during the Christian Culture.

Detailed Music Learning Targets:

The learners will be able to:

- 1.1 Know a number of celebratory songs
- 1.2 Know a number of other celebratory pieces of music
- 1.3 Know how musicians, including those from their own and host countries, have written and performed music for celebrations
- 1.4 Be able to recognize and explore ways in which sound can be made, changed and organized
- 1.5 Be able to sing familiar songs
- 1.6 Be able to play simple rhythms and a steady beat
- 1.7 Be able to compose simple musical patterns
- 1.8 Be able to perform individually and with others
- 1.9 Be able to use symbols to represent sounds
- 1.10 Be able to listen carefully to pieces of music and comment on them
- 1.11 Be able to recall a simple tune
- 1.12 Be able to suggest ways of improving their own work
- 1.13 Understand that musical elements can be used to create different effects and
- 1.14 Understand that music is used for a variety of different purposes.

Music Outcomes:

- The learners can create and record their own music they created through means of composition and using music technology for example Garage band?
- The learners can perform practical music (from a different folk song that emphasizes culture) through choral ensemble whether singing in unison or rounds?
- The learners can create their own music rhythmic patterns through means of using percussion instruments which are non- melodic or even melodic. These can be video recorded and shared with the rest of the group to assess and suggest improvements
- The learners can listen to a variety of music used during celebrations and
- The learners can be inquirers and explore various cultures through using the internet as a source of information to compare celebrations between two cultures?

The teacher can show them You-tube videos of children celebrating festivals, which are related to their particular culture or religion? The learners can imagine they are traveling to India as part of the Entry Point, whilst listening to music from India this could be anything from Hindi folk songs to the popular Bollywood music? For the Knowledge of Harvest, the learners can write what they understand about India and the Hindi Culture. Some might emphasize the Festival of the Lights or Diwali whilst others could draw upon the various clothes they wear, the climate, the pollution in Delhi or even the various foods and how it is celebrated worldwide. For example, in England, Curry is the most popular voted dish? By understanding the Bigger picture, they can see the relation to music, through means of ICT through researching India and

complete a short presentation of their understanding of the culture. Research activities could involve researching the most popular dishes in India and what is served during the Festival of the lights? Recording activities could involve them completing a map of India and the most important parts where pollution is not affected for example the lovely beaches and weather with climate conditions for Goa, the coastal area and how they have preserved endangered species currently living in the Indian Ocean? For the entry point, they can celebrate their understanding by showcasing a little presentation for their parents where they have researched a particular topic and completed these using technology and ICT lessons. In music, they can perform a short repertoire of songs showcasing their understanding of different religions and celebrations overall. They could through the help of their teachers prepare samples of foods displaying their understanding of the Indian culture. In Art, they can draw pictures related to India or even complete mosaic art using various magazines cutouts, which has been pasted on a piece of colored paper and exhibited at the Exit point where they share their ideas with their parents, friends, and peers.

IX. THE CONCLUSION OF WHERE IPC FIT WITHIN AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL – A CASE STUDY FROM MEXICO

The researcher has been fortunate to conclude field research in Mexico at an International School where they used a Holistic approach to education. Part of the programme included the SEP programme, which was the standard Mexican educational system joined with IPC and a strong focus on meditation and the holistic approach to education where students engaged in activities, which involved connecting in water, Yoga and eating healthy with specific dietary requirements with freshly prepared food by chefs in the canteen. It was important for learners to understand that there were other students from around the globe attending this school. A summary concluded that most teachers felt that despite the fact that they had no experience with IPC that Field education in England made it very easy to access and conclude their route plans. Decide in advance, which units of inquiry to implement at each level for Milepost 1 – 3, there is just over 130 units to explore. The researcher decided to include a short questionnaire for teachers to complete and most across the board agreed on the following points. The researcher concluded the following field research by asking six International teachers to conclude the following questions posed on IPC. Most of the International teachers were from Russia, Qatar, England, USA, Germany, and Mexico. The researcher wanted to understand what the seven participants understood and their personal experience within education and IPC. The teachers taught one class per grade and the questionnaire was concluded with Grade 1- 6 teachers.

The Questions posed through means of action research:

- 1 Did you have any previous experience with IPC prior to joining the International School in Mexico
- 2 What do you enjoy most about the IPC curriculum?
- 3 What can be improved to ensure IPC to be effective in International Schools in the future?
- 4 Do you think the timelines given for most units were realistic?

The conclusion from the questionnaire completed by (n=6):

- Most of them did not have previous experience with IPC before they joined this International School in Mexico
- They all agreed that it was important to explore within International Schools and offered a variety of cross-curricular activities for learners to explore
- They felt that Fieldwork education did a magnificent job by offering online training for teachers to understand IPC although not any physical training was available in Mexico through means of several workshops
- There was a variety of units to explore with detailed learning objectives, outcomes, assessment criteria and rubrics for all teachers to use
- The content of the units was good overall especially with the Early Years programme and then continuation into Primary
- The timelines for some units were adequate and teachers felt that Fieldwork education had to review the units each year to adjust and make improvements

- Teachers enjoyed the freedom given to select their own particular units they wished to cover with their classes
- A low percentage of teachers felt that the organization was well structured and met the needs of the individual learners
- There was a direct link with Science that addressed and improved the learner's research skills through making them life-long responsible inquirers and
- Most of the teachers felt that the areas of improvement would be a differentiation for students with ESL or EAL background where English was not their first native language. In the case of Mexico, most students spoke Spanish as their mother tongue and trying to conclude the units within the given timeframe was for most teachers challenging. It was concluded that more strategies were needed for teachers to use to cater to those specific students with language barriers.

In conclusion, exploring the idea of the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) was refreshing with the detailed lessons plans and resources that were available for teachers to explore and use within their classrooms. The music education programme allowed teachers to be creative and focus on composition, where learners had the opportunity to explore sound, how the elements of music worked and understanding how music consisted of various textures whether thick or thin layers through exploring monophonic, polyphonic and homophonic sounds. How learners distinguished between consonance and dissonance and how three notes being played together formed a chord. Through the means of developing their aural skills learners had the opportunity to explore music from different genres and cultures and understanding how music was used within a global context. The International Primary Curriculum allows learners to understand and appreciate music and use that as a basis of expression whether they performing as a soloist or even as part of an ensemble. The units were exciting and creating a stimulating but safe area for the learners to explore their musical talents through the introduction of technology and creating their own music by recording sounds. Sharing ideas with their peers and getting feedback from their music teachers allowed learners to improve and attain the grades they deserved.

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