

Pupils' attitudes to school and music at the start of secondary school

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Abstract

This study aims to explore pupils' affective engagement with school and music during their transition to secondary school. A gender comparison is also being made to ascertain any differences that may exist between boys and girls during this time. A sample of 182 pupils completed two questionnaires (attitudes to school and attitudes to music) three times (at the end of Year 6, at the beginning and end of Year 7). A series of one-way repeated measures Analysis of Variance tests showed that pupils' overall attitudes to school dropped significantly from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7 with their enjoyment towards school and their satisfaction with the work environment declining. Pupils' attitudes to music presented a significant fall at the end of Year 7 after a slight improvement at the beginning of secondary school. Girls held consistently more positive attitudes towards school and music than boys. It is suggested that pupils' attitudes are malleable and responsive to environmental change and, therefore, this problem can be remedied if appropriate interventions are put into place particularly regarding the teacher-pupil relationship and pupils' perceived autonomy in their learning.

Keywords

Pupil attitudes, transition to secondary school, liking music, making music, music education

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Introduction

Acknowledging students' feelings about school and their learning is important because it can help enhance student engagement which is perceived to be crucial in driving learning and predicting school success (Reschly and Christenson 2012). Students' moods and their levels of enjoyment in education have been found to influence learning (Lumby, 2011). The interplay of emotion and intellect can impact on classroom behaviour in school (Newton, 2014) and can affect students' well-being in higher education (Beard, Clegg & Smith, 2007). Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) have conceptualised school engagement as a multifaceted construct that includes behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions. In particular, emotional engagement refers to students' motivation and affective reactions to school and learning (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). Voelkl (2012) describes the role of school identification as a particular aspect of students' affective response to school. School identification refers to students' feelings of belongingness and valuing and is affected by contextual factors such as being treated fairly, feelings of safety, association with similar others and teacher supportiveness.

Affective engagement, 'direct feeling toward learning and school' that includes liking for learning (intrinsic motivation) and liking for school (school bonding), has the highest positive association with instructional contexts, more so than behavioural and cognitive engagement (Lam, Wong, Yang and Liu, 2012). Secondary school students reported being more engaged at school when they perceived their teachers adopting motivating instructional practices and they felt well-supported socially and emotionally from their teachers, parents and peers. The affective dimension of engagement is argued to be 'the engine that drives the other dimensions of student engagement' (Lam et al., 2012, p. 415) as a student's affective engagement can positively influence engagement as a whole.

Furthermore, what students feel and think about learning precedes the observable changes in their behaviour and other important student outcomes such as attendance and attainment (Reschly and Christenson, 2012). Indeed, a consistent association has been found between students' behavioural engagement and their attainment in different studies using a variety of samples (for a review of the correlation between aspects of engagement and achievement, see Fredricks et al., 2004). Therefore, in order for change in learning and behaviour to occur, an understanding of the student perspective is essential. As Wylie and Hodgen (2012) argued, 'student self-reports of engagement do provide reasonable indicators of competency levels and, probably through that link, can alter academic performance and post-school learning' (p.597). In music education, the aspect of enjoyment seems to be closely associated with achievement (Rosevear, 2008).

However, students' enjoyment of aspects of schooling can be negatively affected by lack of adequate support during important transitions in their learning, such as when they move from the 'secure and known world' of the primary school to the 'new and bewildering environment' of the secondary school (Comber and Galton, 2002). Research evidence (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 2003; Galton and Hargreaves, 2002) suggests that primary and secondary schools are now paying increased attention to making the transfer process as smooth and anxiety-free as possible and that pupils are now less worried about moving to the bigger school. Lucey and Reay (2000) argued, however, that pupils' anxiety can be useful as it is central to the

development of effective coping strategies during the transition to secondary school but that pupils often report a real sense of excited anticipation about their new school and this should not be overlooked. A certain level of anxiety, well balanced with excitement and enthusiasm, can equip students with the security and level of challenge needed to rise to the emotional, social and academic demands of the new environment. Qualter, Whiteley, Hutchinson and Pope (2007) found that pupils with high or average levels of emotional intelligence can deal with transition more effectively in terms of academic attainment, self-worth, school attendance and behaviour compared to pupils with low emotional intelligence. This lends further support to the importance of pupils' emotions and their affective engagement with school.

Nevertheless, relevant research on pupil attitudes and attainment suggests that enjoyment and motivation begin to decline following an initial sudden increase in enthusiasm during the first few weeks in the secondary school (Galton et al., 2003). The danger of positive attitudes declining or dipping after transfer to secondary school has been discussed by Galton (2002) and Pell (2009) in the case of science and mathematics and, in particular, regarding the more able pupils. In music education, Marshall and Hargreaves (2007) found that most pupils in their study experienced less anxiety about moving up to the secondary school and the various transfer events that were now common practice among primary and secondary schools resulted in pupils looking forward to the transfer with increased expectations about what secondary school music would offer. However, where specific expectations had not been met, many pupils that had previously been designated by the primary schools as 'training' (pupils who were currently involved in musical training outside class music lessons) or 'aspiring' (pupils who were not currently having training but expressed an interest in doing so) changed their positive attitudes to music to negative ones.

Regarding teachers' views of the primary-secondary transition in music education, Marshall and Hargreaves (2008) concluded that progress in many areas of transfer and transition has been limited. They found that, even though there is commonly a good level of liaison activity between primary and secondary schools, most of these activities tend to mean 'familiarisation' for both teachers and pupils through open days and joint events with little liaison in music. The focus tended to be on administration of instrumental lessons with limited records passed on regarding children's musical ability and no emphasis on curriculum continuity and progression. In subjects such as music and physical education (Capel, Swozdiak-Myers & Lawrence, 2004), much less attention has been given to addressing curriculum continuity and progression between the two phases in comparison to English and mathematics and, more recently, in science (Braund & Driver, 2005, Braund, 2007).

A number of research studies have also identified gender differences in terms of girls' and boys' attitudes to school (Pell, 2009; Lam et al., 2012), in different subjects such as in learning a foreign language (Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002) and music (Crowther and Durkin, 1982; Harrison, 2008; Button, 2006) with girls exhibiting more positive attitudes which in turn can predict their higher academic performance (Lam et al., 2012). Fortunately, it has been argued that pupils' levels of engagement with school are malleable and responsive to contextual factors, such as teachers and parents or to effects of interventions (Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris, 2004). Therefore, these problems can be remedied with increased awareness and sensitivity. This study aims to explore pupils' affective engagement with school and music during their transition to secondary school in an attempt to identify whether there is a drop

in their attitudes at the beginning of secondary school. A gender comparison will also be made.

Method

~~This study reports on data collected during the primary-secondary school transition project in music education (Kokotsaki, 2014a; Kokotsaki, 2014b).~~ Pupil responses to two questionnaires (Attitudes to School and Attitudes to Music) which were administered three times (at the end of primary school: Time 1, in November of Year 7: Time 2 and at the end of Year 7: Time 3) in three schools were analysed and are reported here. ~~...~~ Measuring pupils' attitudes at these three times has been recommended by researchers who have studied the transfer process (see Galton, 2002; Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 2003; Pell, 2009). The three schools were selected to represent geographical and socio-economic diversity within the North East of England.

Participants' anonymity has been preserved in the presentation of the findings. The study has adhered to all ethical obligations as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (1995) and approved by the Research Ethics and Data Protection Sub-Committee in Durham University's School of Education. Participants were informed about the intended use and purposes of the research. They were also assured that their participation was fully voluntary and that anonymity would be preserved. Overall, 182 pupils (92 boys and 90 girls) completed the two questionnaires as shown in Table 1.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1 SOMEWHERE HERE

The Attitudes to School questionnaire was adapted from the Enjoyment and Motivation scales as developed and used by Galton, Comber and Pell (2002) in their work on the consequences of transfer for pupils' attitudes and attainment. This scale consisted of 24 items (see Tables 5, 6 and 7) which required a Likert-type response on a 1-4 scale (1: A lot like me, 2: A bit like me, 3: Not much like me, 4: Not at all like me, with the maximum score being 96). The attitudes to music scale was adapted from the attitudes to English scale as developed and used by Pell (2009). It consisted of 15 items (see Table 13) which required a Likert-type response on a 1-5 scale (1: Strongly agree, 2: Agree a little, 3: Not sure, 4: Disagree a little, 5: Strongly disagree, with the maximum score being 75). The music scale was subjected to principal components analysis as it had not been used before (see *Attitudes to music* section in the *Findings*). The attitudes to school scale comprised three sub-scales: the school enjoyment sub-scale, the misery-loneliness sub-scale and the satisfaction with the work environment sub-scale.

The negatively worded items in the two scales were reversed so that a higher score indicates more positive attitudes ((Items 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21, 24 for the attitudes to school scale; Items 4, 6, 13 for the attitudes to music scale). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the attitudes to school and attitudes to music scales is 0.84 and 0.87 respectively which indicate a very acceptable level of reliability for the two scales (see, for example, Cortina, 1993).

Findings

Attitudes to school

Pupils' attitudes to school (see Table 2) showed a significant decline from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7 ($p < .05$). A similar pattern of falling attitudes is observed for all three schools (apart from a slight increase in time 2 for school 3) but the change is statistically significant only for School 2 ($p < .05$ from Time 1 to Time 3 and from Time 2 to Time 3). The partial eta squared value of .114 suggests a large effect size for the change in attitudes in School 2.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 2 SOMEWHERE HERE

When the three subscales of the attitudes to school scale were considered separately (Table 3), pupils' attitudes presented a significant decline for the *school enjoyment* subscale ($p < .01$ from Time 2 to 3 and from Time 1 to 3, $p < .05$ from Time 1 to 2). The partial eta squared value of .125 suggests a large effect size for the change in pupils' enjoyment of school. Their satisfaction with the work environment fell from Time 1 to 3 ($p < .05$) but feelings of misery or loneliness did not present a significant change from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 3 SOMEWHERE HERE

Gender comparison

Independent-sample t-tests were conducted to compare male and female pupils' attitudes to school for the whole scale and for the separate subscales of *school enjoyment*, *misery/loneliness* and *satisfaction with the work environment* in Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3 (see Table 4 for means and standard deviations for males and females). In Time 1, there was a significant difference in scores for males and females for the overall scale [$t(166) = -2.957$, $p = .004$] and for the school enjoyment sub-scale [$t(177) = -4.371$, $p = .0$]. In Time 2 and Time 3, a significant difference between males and females was found for the school enjoyment sub-scale [$t(172) = -2.862$, $p = .005$ in time 2 and $t(174) = -2.254$, $p = .025$ in time 3] but there was no significant difference between males and females for the other two subscales. Figure 1 offers a visual representation of how attitudes to school fluctuate from time 1 to time 3 for all pupils and for males and females separately. The drop in attitudes at the end of Year 7 was significant ($p < .05$) for all pupils from Time 1 to Time 3 but was not significant for males and females from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 4 SOMEWHERE HERE

PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 SOMEWHERE HERE

School Enjoyment, Misery/Loneliness, Satisfaction with the Work Environment subscales

Tables 5, 6 and 7 present descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for each of the attitudes to school questionnaire items in all three subscales for Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3.

In the *school enjoyment* subscale, pupils' mean responses in all 8 separate questionnaire items dropped from Time 1 to Time 2 to Time 3. The change in two of those items ('I think most school work is just to keep us busy' and 'I like school better than most other children') was not significant but the change in the remaining six questionnaire items was significant at $p < .01$. Pupils perceived their teachers as being less friendly from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7, they liked their teachers less and they felt that their teachers took less notice of their needs. They reported enjoying school and looking forward to school less as they moved on through the first year of secondary school while reporting a desire for their interests to be acknowledged more in the school environment (item 18: 'I wish we did things we like instead of being told').

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 5 SOMEWHERE HERE

In the *misery/loneliness* subscale, mean scores dropped slightly from Time 1 to Time 3 for four of the questionnaire items but increased for the remaining five items (items 10, 12, 14, 21 and 24). This change over time, even though it was not statistically significant, indicates that pupils maintained comfortable social relationships, and they maintained at least the same level of ease in telling their teachers when they struggled to understand and in keeping up with their work.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 6 SOMEWHERE HERE

In the *satisfaction with the work environment* subscale, pupils felt that they were making less progress with their work from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7 ($p < .01$). They felt less confident that they will do well in tests ($p < .05$) and they reported being able to work with people they like in class less often ($p < .05$).

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 7 SOMEWHERE HERE

Gender comparison

Female responses in the *school enjoyment*, *misery/loneliness* and *satisfaction with the work environment* subscale items were mostly higher than male responses. The majority of these differences were not significant. However, a significant difference between male and female responses can be observed for the following items:

- a. *School enjoyment* subscale:
 - Item 1 (Time 1: $p < .01$): Girls perceived their teachers as being friendlier than boys at the end of Year 6.
 - Item 2 (Time 3: $p < .01$): At the end of Year 7, girls did not feel as much as boys that most school work is just to keep them busy.
 - Item 7 (Time 1: $p < .01$): Girls looked forward to coming to school most days to a greater extent than the boys at the end of primary school.
 - Item 8 (Time 1: $p < .01$ & Time 3: $p < .01$): Girls reported enjoying school significantly more than the boys.
 - Item 18 (Time 1: $p < .05$ & Time 3: $p < .01$): Boys wished that they could do more things they liked at school.
 - Item 23 (Time 1: $p < .01$): Girls reported liking their teachers more than the boys at the end of Year 6.
- b. *Misery/loneliness* subscale:
 - Item 19 (Time 1: $p < .05$): Girls felt that they have more luck at school than the boys at the end of Year 6.
 - Item 24 (Time 3: $p < .01$): Girls felt that they have less trouble keeping up with their work at the end of Year 7.
- c. *Satisfaction with the work environment* subscale:
 - Item 13 (Time 3: $p < .01$): Boys were more confident than girls that they can do well in tests (This is the only questionnaire item where a significant difference has been found in favour of the boys).

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 8 SOMEWHERE HERE

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 9 SOMEWHERE HERE

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 10 SOMEWHERE HERE

Attitudes to music

The 15 items of the Attitudes to Music Scale were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) using the SPSS software package for statistical analysis. Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of .3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .88, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Principal components analysis revealed the presence of four components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 38.7%, 8.8%, 7.6% and 6.6% of the variance respectively. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a break after the second component. Using Catell's (1966) scree test, it was decided to retain two components for further investigation. The Structure Matrix table (Table 11 in Appendix) provides information about the correlation between variables and factors. The highest correlation between each of the variables and the four initial factors are highlighted. All variables (apart from variables 5 and 14) loaded strongly on the first two factors. Variables 5 and 14 were omitted from the subsequent data analysis. The interpretation of the two factors showed that items loading strongly on factor 1 were relevant to making music and items loading strongly on factor 2 related to liking music. The *liking music* scale consisted of seven items and the *making music* scale consisted of 6 items. The two scales are presented in tables 12 and 13 in the Appendix) where reliability information for the total scale and for each of the items is shown. The corrected item-total correlation information in the two tables indicates that all items correlate well with each of the scales.

When all schools were considered together, pupils' attitudes to music showed a slight improvement at the beginning of secondary school but fell significantly at the end of year 7 ($p < .01$ from Time 2 to Time 3, see Table 14). A similar pattern of an initial increase and a subsequent fall in attitudes can be observed for Schools 1 and 3 (significant for School 1 from Time 2 to Time 3, non-significant for School 3). In School 2, there is a significant gradual decline between Time 1 and Time 3 ($p < .05$).

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 14 SOMEWHERE HERE

When the two subscales of the attitudes to music scale were considered separately (Table 15), pupils' attitudes presented a significant decline for the *liking music* scale ($p < .05$ from Time 2 to 3) and for the *making music* scale ($p < .01$ from Time 2 to 3).

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 15 SOMEWHERE HERE

Gender comparison

Independent-sample t-tests were conducted to compare attitudes to music for males and females for the overall scale and for the separate subscales of *liking music* and *making music* in Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3 (see Table 16 for means and standard deviations for males and females). In Time 1, there was a significant difference in scores for males and females for the overall scale [$t(175)=-3.158$, $p=.002$] and for both of the subscales [*Liking music*: $t(176)=-2.184$, $p=.03$; *Making music*: $t(177)=-3.819$, $p=0$]. Similarly, a significant difference between males and females was found in Time 2 for the whole scale [$t(170)=-2.557$, $p=.01$], for the *liking music* subscale [$t(174)=-2.099$, $p=.037$] and for the *making music* subscale [$t(173)=-2.933$, $p=.004$]. In Time 3, males and females were significantly different for the overall scale [$t(175)=-2.452$, $p=.015$] and for the *making music* subscale [$t(176)=-2.731$, $p=.007$]. Figure 2 offers a visual representation of how attitudes to music fluctuate from Time 1 to Time 3 for all pupils and for males and females separately. The drop in attitudes to music at the end of Year 7 was significant for all pupils from Time 2 to Time 3 ($p<.01$) but was not significant for males and females from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 16 SOMEWHERE HERE

PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 2 SOMEWHERE HERE

Attitudes to music for the separate questionnaire items

Table 17 presents descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for each of the music questionnaire items for Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3.

The mean scores of all questionnaire items show various fluctuations in pupils' attitudes to music from Time 1 to Time 3 (Table 17). A series of one-way repeated measures Analysis of Variance tests showed that the majority of those differences were not significant but that pupils' attitudes presented a statistically significant change during this time in the following four items:

- a) *Liking music*: Item 4 (I always look forward to music lessons);
- b) *Making music*: Item 9 (I like making music with my friends in class); Item 12 (Music is a good subject for everybody to learn); Item 13 (I like playing the music that other people have written).

Pupils' mean responses in the remaining 9 non-significant items fall in one of the following four categories: 1) they increased in Time 2 but fell in Time 3 (items 1 and 10), 2) they

increased in Time 2 and continued to increase in Time 3 (items 5 and 7), 3) they remained stable from Time 1 to Time 3 (items 2, 3 and 6), and 4) they fell from Time 1 to Time 2 and from Time 1 to Time 3 (items 8 and 11).

What is interesting to note is that these pupils reported enjoying mainly the practical aspects of their music lessons as evident in their responses in items 9 and 13. In particular, ~~Similarly,~~ they liked making music with their friends in class (item 9) and they liked playing the music that other people have written (item 13). However, even though their mean responses increased in Time 2 ($p < .01$ for item 9 and $p < .05$ for item 13), they significantly fell from Time 2 to Time 3 ($p < .05$ for item 9 and $p < .01$ for item 13).

Furthermore, there is an upward positive trend in their responses in item 5 (We are finding out new things all the time in music lessons) which shows that there was a perceived element of learning in music for these pupils even though the change was not statistically significant. However, they looked forward to their music lessons less from Time 1 to 3 ($p < .01$) and from Time 2 to 3 ($p < .05$). In addition, their falling attitudes in item 12 show that they did not value music as a subject as highly as they did at the end of primary school ($p < .01$ from Time 1 to Time 3 and $p < .05$ from Time 2 to Time 3).

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 17 SOMEWHERE HERE

Gender comparison

Table 18 compares mean responses of male and female pupils at the end of Year 6 (Time 1) and at the end of Year 7 (Time 3). Girls were more positive than boys in all of their responses in Time 1 and Time 3 apart from item 5 (We are finding out new things all the time in music lessons) where their mean responses were lower than the boys' responses. A series of t-tests showed where any significant differences lay between male and female pupils' mean responses. Two questionnaire items in the *making music* subscale (8 and 9) showed a consistent statistical difference ($p < .01$) between boys and girls in Time 1 and Time 3. Girls enjoyed singing more and liked making music with their friends in class more than the boys.

In Time 1, significant differences were also found in the following items:

1. *Liking music*
 - item 2 (boys would like to have fewer music lessons: $p < .05$),
 - item 4 (girls look forward to music lessons more than the boys: $p < .05$),
 - item 7 (girls would like to get a music related job more than the boys: $p < .05$).
2. *Making music*
 - item 12 (girls feel more positively about music as a subject: $p < .05$),

- item 11 (girls would like to be given a musical instrument as a present more in comparison to the boys: $p < .01$),
- item 13 (girls like playing the music that other people have written more compared to the boys: $p < .05$).

In Time 3, the girls reported enjoying making their own music more ($p < .05$) and seemed to get tired less easily in music lessons compared to the boys ($p < .01$).

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 18 SOMEWHERE HERE

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings reported in this study form part of a larger project that explored the transition from primary to secondary school and had a main focus on music education (Kokotsaki, 2015). The project aimed to shed light on pupils' experiences during this phase of school transition which can be a difficult time for children as they may suffer losses in relation to their personal achievement, their feelings and behaviour toward school (Symonds, 2015). Other studies have shown a pattern of children's emotional engagement declining after school transition (Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 2003; Hargreaves & Galton, 2002).

The data presented in this study showed a similar picture of pupils' overall attitudes to school ~~dropped~~ dropping significantly from the end of Year 6 to the end of Year 7. Their enjoyment towards school and their satisfaction with the work environment also declined during this time. Specifically, teachers were perceived in a more unfavourable light, pupils reported enjoying school less and they felt that their interests and needs could be better addressed at school. However, the stable non-significant scores in the misery/loneliness sub-scale indicate that those pupils experienced at least stable feelings towards friends and social groupings, did not feel less secure in the classroom and maintained their levels of self-esteem and the same level of ease in expressing their lack of understanding to the teachers and in keeping up with their work.

Gender comparisons revealed girls' higher overall attitudes to school at the end of primary school but there were no significant differences with boys' overall attitudes to school by the end of Year 7. Girls also exhibited higher levels of enjoyment to school compared to boys from the end of primary school to the end of Year 7. In particular, girls reported looking forward to coming to school and liked their teachers more than the boys at the end of primary school, they enjoyed school significantly more at the end of Year 7, they felt more comfortable in keeping up with their work at the end of Year 7 and they felt that their interests were better addressed at school. However, boys were found to be more confident in their ability when they did tests at school.

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The music scale was subjected to principal components analysis which showed that the scale items loaded strongly on two factors, *liking music* and *making music*. These were appropriate and useful in measuring pupils' attitudes to music. They were also found to have high reliability. Pupils' attitudes to music presented a significant fall at the end of Year 7 after a slight but not significant improvement at the beginning of secondary school. Pupils reported enjoying mainly the practical aspects of their music lessons (performing and composing). However, their liking for music as a subject decreased and they felt less excited about their music lessons as they moved on through the first year of secondary school. Girls held consistently more positive attitudes towards music than boys at the end of primary school as well as at the beginning and end of secondary school. They also reported liking making music with their friends and singing in class more than the boys.

The gender differences found in this study confirm previous research findings about girls' more positive attitudes to school (Pell, 2009; Lam et al., 2012) and music (Crowther and Durkin, 1982; Harrison, 2008; Button, 2006). In Crowther and Durkin's (1982) study, for

example, girls were more favourable towards playing, singing and listening to music and regarded music as a worthwhile activity. Boys' attitudes to music increased, however, between the second and third years of secondary school and this led Crowther and Durkin to argue that 'in a stimulating musical environment, this negativity is not irreversible' (p.137).

What this 'stimulating' environment needs to consist of is a matter of debate. Semi-structured interviews carried out with pupils as part of the same project (Kokotsaki, 2016) indicated that they desired to be actively involved in practical and interactive work in the music classroom where they could exercise an element of choice within a supportive and comfortable teaching environment. ¶The questionnaire findings have highlighted some of the areas in general schooling and music learning that pupils reported higher or lower satisfaction with at the beginning of secondary school but cannot shed light on the reasons why girls exhibited higher engagement with school and music during this time. The difference in girls' and boys' attitudes to school was significant at the end of primary school but was slightly reduced in Year 7. The difference in attitudes to music was more pronounced during that first year in secondary school with girls showing significantly higher attitudes than boys in Time 1, Time 2 and Time 3. The findings showed that the initial trend of girls' higher engagement in school and music at the end of primary school continued in secondary school. Pupils' desire to be actively involved in music work in the classroom as reported in Kokotsaki (2016) may be one possible reason but this seems to apply to all pupils irrespective of gender. Therefore, the difference in attitudes may have its roots in earlier stages of development, within or outside formal schooling.

~~).~~ ~~In Crowther and Durkin's (1982) study, for example, girls were more favourable towards playing, singing and listening to music and regarded music as a worthwhile activity. Boys' attitudes to music increased, however, between the second and third years of secondary school and this led Crowther and Durkin to argue that 'in a stimulating musical environment, this negativity is not irreversible' (p.137).~~

~~What this 'stimulating' environment needs to consist of is a matter of debate. Semi-structured interviews carried out with pupils as part of the same project (Kokotsaki, 2014b) indicated that they desired to be actively involved in practical and interactive work in the music classroom where they could exercise an element of choice within a supportive and comfortable teaching environment.~~ The importance of participatory musical activity in helping pupils experience improved interpersonal and social relationships has ~~also~~ been highlighted by Cabedo-Mas and Díaz-Gómez (2013). Darby (2005) has emphasised the key role of the teacher in engaging pupils by drawing the students into the learning process and enabling them to understand (instructional pedagogy) and by developing a supportive relationship with them (relational pedagogy). Similarly, Lam et al. (2012) found that perceived teacher support had the highest influence on academic performance compared to perceived parent or peer support. The relationship between pupils and their teacher has also been found to be critical for pupils' engagement in the music classroom (Finney, 2003; Cabedo-Mas and Díaz-Gómez, 2013). Pupils' declining attitudes towards their teachers in this study is worrying considering the above evidence about the important role of the teacher in pupils' engagement with school. Pupils' relationship with their teachers in terms of perceived support, feelings of ease and ability to move their learning forward might be the most important factor in determining their attitudes to school.

Furthermore, pupils' responses indicated a desire to do more of what they like in class rather than being constantly dictated to by the teacher. This shows that they would appreciate an element of choice in helping create a better alignment between their interests and their learning activities at school. Increasing opportunities for input, choice and decision making have been identified in the literature as enhancing an individual's perceived autonomy which, together with relatedness, can provide the most likely route to the enhancement of a student's quality of life during the transition to secondary school (Gillison, Standage & Skevington, 2008). In music, students in higher education are in a better position to develop the skills they need through autonomous participation (de Bézenac and Swindells, 2009). Indeed, Custodero (2010) concludes that young people can thrive musically when given opportunities for self-initiated discovery and interaction with others. Therefore, a learning environment where pupils' interests are taken better into account by providing them with some autonomy and self-directed learning might be crucial as evidenced in this study.

Last but not least, pupils' emotional engagement with school at the beginning of secondary school is important as the level of pupils' engagement during that first year in senior school could determine their subsequent attitudes to school if appropriate interventions are not put effectively into place. Research indicates that pupils' attitudes are malleable and responsive to environmental change (Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris, 2004), but the problem needs to be recognised first for appropriate action to be taken. This research proposes that there is a problem which is evidenced in pupils' lower attitudes to school and music at the end of the first year in secondary school. More research needs to be done to ascertain the particular areas in pupils' school life that will help enhance their affective response to school. It is here suggested that two important factors seem to be the teacher-pupil relationship and the perceived autonomy that pupils are allowed to exercise in their learning. Additionally, particular emphasis needs to be given to the reasons behind boys' declining attitudes and to what can be done to increase their engagement with school. A particular problem with music is the low uptake of music at GCSE level. Lamont and Maton (2008) found that the longer pupils are at school, the more likely are they to view music as being of less significance compared to other school subjects and they start to perceive musical ability as a fixed entity that not everyone possesses. This is unfortunate considering the important role of music for children during the formal school years (Custodero, 2010), for higher education students' lives (Kokotsaki and Hallam, 2007; 2011) and more generally (Hallam, 2010). These studies suggest that music participation can have powerful intellectual, musical, personal and social effects on an individual throughout life. Effective instructional practices that take into account children's needs and interests within a supportive learning environment can enable authentic musical experiences well-aligned with children's musical realities. Changes to pedagogical practices which will offer children opportunities to exercise choice, autonomy and self-directed learning in the classroom can help them develop a sense of positive identification within the context of formal education, both in music learning and in schooling more generally. Such changes—It is proposed that changes to pedagogical approaches—need to be considered in order for pupils' attitudes to school and music to be improved or at least to remain stable at the start of secondary school.

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APPENDIX

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