

couple of simple tunes. In no time at all, everyone present was contributing to a five-part musical texture – and thoroughly enjoying it. The approach, with an accompanying book published by Edition Peters, is based on research presented in Sue Hallam's 2009 paper *The Power of Music*, aims to improve academic results in numeracy, literacy and linguistics for pupils across whole schools.

Other seminar highlights included Robin Hammerton, Ofsted's national lead for music, giving a keynote on curriculum and assessment, and a panel discussion on the new GCSEs, AS Levels and A Levels, with representatives from each of the major exam boards: Simon Banks (Ofqual's reform manager), Jeremy Ward (AQA's qualifications developer, art and performing arts), Marie Jones (subject specialist – music, OCR), Jo Cleary (Pearson/Edexcel's senior manager, business and creative subjects) and Catherine Webster (WJEC UK's subject officer for GCE & GCSE music).

New technologies were explored in sessions such as 'Affordable Technology for your Classroom' and 'The Music Classroom of the Future', the second of which was chaired by music education consultant David Ashworth. The panel included teachers Jane Werry and Simon Toyne discussing why the use of technology in music lessons has, until



The super-affordable Raspberry Pi

recently, been found by many teachers to be too problematic, too expensive, or too time-consuming. Cloud-based systems were hailed as an effective, flexible solution, freeing-up teaching time without great cost or complexity. Teachers found that students respond well to this system, enjoying the ability to edit their work online outside school. Also interesting teachers was the seminar led by Sonic Pi inventor Sam Aaron, who demonstrated how his musical coding device – used on the tiny, supremely cheap Raspberry Pi computer – can inspire students who might not otherwise engage with music composition.

With the election on the horizon, Expo participants flocked to hear schools minister Nick Gibb and shadow schools minister Kevin Brennan outline their visions for music education. Gibb asserted that: 'This government's plan for education has focused on raising

standards for all and narrowing the gap between disadvantaged students and their peers.' He went on: 'Through our curriculum review, music remained a statutory subject in the national curriculum, so every child in maintained schools must study it from age 5 to 14. The new national curriculum, introduced in September, is particularly important to tackle disadvantage as the focus is on setting high expectations for everyone.'

Several teachers had challenging questions for Gibb, and when asked why education secretary Nicky Morgan had played down the importance of music, he replied that a lack of jobs in the science industry had prompted the government's emphasis on the value of science A Levels. Nevertheless, he stressed that these subjects are equal: 'A strong and rigorous music education is as important a part of being well educated as learning about science, history and literature.'

However, shadow schools minister Kevin Brennan used his speech to state that: 'Under the current government there has been significant damage to arts and culture subjects, with the number of primary school children taking part in music falling from over a half in 2010, to just over a third by 2013.' He highlighted issues of inequality in music education, with the primary sector in particular suffering a lack of specialist music teachers. Referring to Labour's policy that Ofsted should not grant schools an 'outstanding' rating without offering creative subjects and cultural opportunities to their students, he pledged that: 'The next Labour government will champion the importance of a creative education... We will ensure that publicly funded schools, regardless of type, collaborate to meet the cultural needs of children.'

Again, a lively floor discussion ensued. During these events – and throughout the Expo – it was clear that whatever the coming year throws at the world of music education, the commitment of music teachers to bring a high standard of learning into the lives of their students remains strong. **MT**

Music Education Expo 2016 will be held on 25 & 26 February at Olympia Central, London. Register your interest at www.musiceducationexpo.co.uk.



Nick Gibb and Kevin Brennan deliver their addresses to the Expo