



# Musical Hydrotherapy Curriculum 25/26

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## Overview

### Introduction

This music curriculum is designed to provide an experiential, inclusive, and relaxing learning journey for young people with special needs during their school career. This curriculum consists of learning stages to be routinely applied and processed upon across the academic year. The curriculum has been curated so that it can be delivered confidently by teachers without requiring a specialist music background, making it easy to implement across the swimming pool sessions.

Sessions are intended to be relaxing, interactive (without words), and exploratory with opportunities to explore a sense of serenity, creativity, water confidence building and to connect with sound/music in meaningful ways. There are opportunities to integrate with other school disciplines like physiotherapy and swimming lessons and also cross curricular work with English, Drama and music classroom based learning. Use the curriculum as a guide as you go through the academic year rather than a meticulous weekly lesson plan. Levels of achievement should be gradually gained rather than rushed week by week

### Guide To This Curriculum Document

You have just read the introduction which will give you a brief overview of the whole curriculum plan. Throughout the document you will read through;

- **FAQs** and general Dos and Don'ts of the therapeutic practice.
- **Session layouts and ideas** of how to run Musical Hydrotherapy with advanced stages of progression and experimentation.
- **An assessment overview.**
- **An assessment tool** to monitor progress of students.
- **A guide on how to work in a cross-curricular way** with other subject areas/disciplines across the school.



## **FAQs**

### ***What is Musical Hydrotherapy?***

In Musical Hydrotherapy, speakers are placed inside the water in a hydrotherapy pool and the listeners are supported to float on the water surface. Buoyant, the listeners feel the sound vibrations on their body and perceive the music when any part of the head is placed in the water. The vibrations travel through the water and stimulate the inner ear directly, and so the listener perceives the sounds as if they are heard from inside their head.

### ***Will this replace our swimming curriculum?***

No, the intention of Musical Hydrotherapy is never to replace but to enhance and offer a new and different experience for students in the swimming pool. For some, learning how to swim, using the pool space for physiotherapy or as a sensory break from the schooldays is paramount and should not be taken away. While it may be not possible for the entire school to use Musical Hydrotherapy constantly throughout the academic year, it is advised that the practice is used consistently with selected students/class groups throughout the year. It may be that some students who need swim lessons can spend half a term experiencing the practice. Each individual school should create their own timetable of sessions that are realistically workable given their current scheduling, staff resources and students needs. A good starting point is to allocate a minimum of 1 day a week for 3 or 4 groups to have consistent sessions throughout each term.

### ***Are only staff who have been trained by liquid listening allowed to run sessions?***

To begin with yes, the team who have been trained by Liquid Listening will know best and should set the foundations of the curriculum and expectations for the whole school. It is highly advised that these teams share the practice and what they have learnt with the rest of the school community over the course of the year during inset training days and twilight sessions. The more staff you have who understand the practice and can deliver sessions consistently the better. However, the team who were originally trained should upkeep the standards of these sessions and maintain consistency with newly, internally trained staff.

### ***Is Musical Hydrotherapy for everyone? I know that some of our students won't keep quiet or behave.***

Like any subject area, musical hydrotherapy can't be universally loved by all (although we are confident most are). We highly advise that an opportunity is provided for everyone. Know that it can take multiple sessions for a student to reach a level of relaxation and regulation in the water considering their prior expectation from a pool session. For some students, their main expectation of going to the pool for years will have been to play and splash and to have fun. It's not easy to suddenly change to not talking/making noise and to relax.

Give students time to adjust and positively reinforce the expectations of how we should approach these sessions. For some students being in the pool may be impossible due to a medical condition

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or a fear of water. Later in the curriculum you will read about ways for students to be a part of the sessions poolside and/or in the classroom.

## Curriculum and Session Layout

### Overview

The discipline of Musical Hydrotherapy wears many hats, it is a therapeutic practice, a part of the music curriculum, a part of the SEMH curriculum and a part of the P.E and Swimming curriculum while being a completely unique and standalone practice. In its purest form it is a set standard of practice that should be abided by consistently whenever a session is scheduled and that will be referred to as a “**Core Session**” within this curriculum. The Core Session values are taught throughout the initial training from Liquid Listening team and will compromise about 80% of the sessions that you will be running throughout the academic year. The other sessions that are referred to within this curriculum are “**Enhanced Sessions**”. These sessions utilise additional technology, approaches, experiences and outcomes that are to be scheduled in occasionally (once every half term) to experiment with sound and atmosphere. Although they may occasionally deviate from the core values of a “**Core Session**”, they are designed to enhance the experience of the students within a musical curriculum framework.

### Core sessions

A core Musical Hydrotherapy session is primarily focused on immersive listening and supported floating in the water, creating a calm and engaging sensory environment for students. The emphasis is on non-verbal communication, with staff remaining silent wherever possible, except for essential instructional or logistical guidance, which should be delivered quietly and softly to maintain the integrity of the listening experience. Sessions are designed to be immersive, encouraging students to explore and respond to sound vibrations through both hearing and bodily perception. This session should be considered as your “go to” session and the benchmark to all Musical Hydrotherapy that you conduct.

Staff should use the aquatic body holds which were taught during the initial training to support students in the water, ensuring safety while allowing freedom of movement and gentle engagement with the music. Underwater music is carefully selected to be soft, instrumental, and soothing, creating a womb-like, immersive sound environment. Your school has been provided with a playlist curated by Liquid Listening, designed specifically to enhance relaxation, sensory exploration, and musical responsiveness. If you feel that you need additional music to use then please reach out to Liquid Listening for some more music.

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Throughout the session, the role of staff is to facilitate relaxation and attentive listening, observing students' responses and adjusting support as needed. The aim is to create a space where students can connect deeply with the auditory and tactile experience, encouraging body awareness, sensory regulation, emotional engagement, and active listening from the musical stimulus, all within the safety and comfort of the aquatic environment.

## **Enhanced sessions**

Enhanced Sessions are designed to complement the regular Core Sessions by introducing additional technology, creative approaches, and experimental sound experiences. Adapting and continuing from the "Core Sessions", which focus primarily on floating and focused listening in a consistent sensory environment, Enhanced Sessions provide opportunities for students to **explore a wider range of musical and atmospheric stimuli**. These sessions are intended to be scheduled **periodically, typically once every half term**, allowing students to encounter new and varied experiences that expand their sensory, musical, and emotional engagement.

Below are some "Enhanced Session" formats:

### **Two-Layered Sound Zones**

In this Enhanced Session, students experience two distinct layers of sound separately, creating a rich and immersive auditory environment that encourages exploration, attention, and sensory differentiation. The first layer consists of your regular underwater music playlist, played through the pool's underwater speakers. This familiar sound continues to provide the calm, supportive, and immersive listening experience central to Musical Hydrotherapy. The second layer introduces a completely different soundscape through overhead speakers or a Bluetooth speaker positioned above the water. Because underwater sound and above water sounds are experienced separately, students perceive these layers in distinct ways: sounds heard above water are inaudible beneath the surface, and vice versa. This creates an opportunity for students to focus, shift attention, or respond differently depending on where they are floating or where they direct their attention.

The 2 Layered Sound Zones session provides a safe environment for experimentation with sound, spatial awareness, and listening skills, and can inform future Core Sessions by revealing preferences, sensitivities, and emerging responses to complex auditory stimuli.

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## **Three-Layered Sound Zones**

The 3 Layered Sound Zones session builds on the 2-layer approach by introducing a third tactile and auditory layer via a vibro speaker (Adin26-W recommended). This speaker is safely contained within a sealed Tupperware box, allowing it to be placed on the pool surface. You should play soundscapes of natural or musical effects, including weather sounds, animal calls, or solo instruments. Unlike the first two layers, the vibro speaker's sound travels only a short distance above and below the water, providing a highly localised, intimate auditory experience. The session combines three simultaneous layers:

1. Underwater music played through submerged speakers (familiar core playlist).
2. Overhead music, creating a separate soundscape above the water.
3. Vibro speaker soundscape, which delivers both vibration and sound directly to students' hands and bodies while touching or cuddling the box.

This multi-layered setup encourages students to explore spatial and tactile relationships with sound. They can hold, push, or interact with the vibro speaker box, experiencing vibration as well as localised sound. The combination of layers stimulates auditory discrimination, sensory integration, attention shifting, and tactile engagement. Staff maintain a silent facilitation approach, providing only minimal guidance for safety or positioning. Observations during the session can inform individual preferences, emerging responses, and future session planning.

The 3 Layered Sound Zones session is ideal for encouraging exploration of complex sensory environments while remaining grounded in Musical Hydrotherapy principles.

## **Spoken Word Session**

The Spoken Word session is a variation of a Core Session, designed to immerse students in auditory experiences using spoken language rather than music. Instead of the usual instrumental playlists, this session uses poems, stories, audiobooks, or rhythmic spoken word recordings delivered through the underwater speakers. Students remain supported in the water through aquatic holds, floating, or gentle guided movement, allowing them to experience the vibrations and rhythms of the human voice through both auditory and tactile channels. Staff maintain a silent facilitation approach, speaking only when necessary for safety or minimal instruction, ensuring the focus remains on listening. The session aims to develop listening skills, attention, comprehension, and sensory engagement away from music.

Students are encouraged to attune to tone, rhythm, pitch, and phrasing, as well as to respond physically or emotionally to what they hear. The tactile experience of water adds an additional

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layer of body awareness and sensory integration, enhancing the connection between sound, vibration, and movement.

Spoken Word sessions provide opportunities for creative interpretation, emotional engagement, and literacy skills, while still adhering to the core values of Musical Hydrotherapy.

### **Live Spoken Word Session**

The Live Spoken Word session builds on the Spoken Word session by incorporating real-time, live reading into the aquatic listening experience. A member of staff reads aloud using a microphone connected to the underwater speakers, delivering content such as audiobooks, guided meditations, or poems directly into the pool environment. Students remain supported in the water through aquatic holds or gentle floating, allowing them to feel the vibrations of the voice through both auditory and tactile channels. Staff maintain minimal verbal interaction outside of the live reading, ensuring the focus stays on the spoken word while still monitoring safety and positioning.

A key benefit of this session is that the staff member can respond dynamically to students' movements, reactions, and engagement, adjusting pacing, intonation, or emphasis to match the students' needs. This creates a more interactive and responsive environment, encouraging students to explore attention, body awareness, and emotional engagement in real time.

Live Spoken Word sessions foster listening skills, sensory integration, emotional expression, and literacy awareness, while preserving the core principles of Musical Hydrotherapy.

### **Live Music Session (For Non Professional Musicians)**

The Live Music session offers students the opportunity to experience real-time, live-generated soundscapes while floating and listening underwater. Unlike "Core Sessions" with pre-recorded playlists, this session enables staff members without formal musical training to create dynamic, responsive sound environments using digital tools such as GarageBand (Smart Instruments), Bloom, or Soundboard apps on an iPad. Students remain supported in the water through aquatic holds or gentle floating, allowing them to feel the vibrations of live sounds as well as hearing them through the underwater speakers. The flexibility of live sound creation allows staff to respond in real time to students' movements, engagement, and emotional reactions, adjusting tone, rhythm, tempo, or layering to support sensory exploration and musical attention. Staff can experiment with layered sounds, environmental effects, or improvised melodic patterns, fostering curiosity and creative listening.

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This session supports the core principles of Musical Hydrotherapy while adding a responsive, interactive dimension that enhances sensory, emotional, and musical engagement.

### **Live Music Sessions (For Professionals)**

The Live Music Session (For Professionals) provides students with the opportunity to experience live, high quality music while floating and listening underwater. Invite a professional musician poolside to perform in real time, creating a dynamic and immersive soundscape tailored to the needs and responses of the students. Enquire across the whole school community to see if there is a member of staff (or a contact that somebody knows) to provide a live music experience. If you can't find a willing volunteer then reach out to a partner organisation, namely a local college or university to request a solo musician or small ensemble to perform poolside.

On a technical note, some instruments can play directly into the speaker system (with the musician monitoring through headphones) like a Digital Keyboard or an Electric Guitar. For acoustic instruments like a Violin, Saxophone or Voice, you can use a microphone. Please consult with your head of music, IT department or as a last resort, the Liquid Listening team to learn how to safely set this up. Students remain supported in the water through aquatic holds or gentle floating, allowing them to experience vibrations through their bodies as well as hearing the music through underwater speakers. The live performance can include improvised or composed pieces, varied instrumentation, and layered textures, offering a rich, multi-sensory listening experience.

This session allows the musician to respond directly to students' movements, engagement, and emotional cues, adjusting tempo, dynamics, or instrumentation in real time. Students are encouraged to explore auditory discrimination, body awareness, and emotional engagement as they react to the live musical experience. If you have a less confident musician, it is fine for them to purely provide a recital that is non interactive for students to listen to underwater.

Live Music Sessions (For Professionals) enhance the principles of Musical Hydrotherapy by providing high-quality, responsive live sound, fostering curiosity, creativity, musical appreciation and sense of participation in a communal music activity.

### **Audio + Video Session**

The Audio-Visual session combines immersive sound with synchronised visual imagery to create a rich, multi-sensory experience for students. A projector is used to display visuals that complement the underwater soundscape, which can be cast onto the ceiling, walls, or even

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across the surface of the water. This allows students to explore the relationship between sight, sound, and movement in an engaging and novel environment. Please consult with your IT department or the Liquid Listening team to learn how to safely set this up.

The audio component may include instrumental music, natural soundscapes, or recorded ambient textures, delivered through the underwater speakers. Visuals can range from abstract patterns and flowing animations to nature scenes or calming environments. Many suitable visual soundscapes are available online via YouTube. Staff are encouraged to pre-screen content to ensure it is appropriate, safe, and aligned with the sensory needs of the students. It is also advised to download videos to a hard disk rather than streaming them via a website. Streaming can lead to connection issues and unsolicited advertisements being played during the session. Students remain supported in the water through aquatic holds or gentle floating, allowing them to experience the vibrations, auditory textures and visual stimuli simultaneously. Staff maintain a silent facilitation approach, offering guidance only when necessary for safety or positioning.

This session encourages sensory integration, attention, body awareness, and engagement, providing a unique opportunity to explore how visual and auditory stimuli interact.

## **Cross Curricular Learning**

### **Overview**

As previously highlighted, Musical Hydrotherapy intersects with a wide range of subjects and disciplines, offering opportunities for cross-curricular learning. The immersive, sensory nature of pool sessions makes it a versatile tool that can naturally complement classroom teaching, reinforcing concepts, themes, and skills in an engaging, multi-sensory way. Equally, the principles and ethos of Musical Hydrotherapy — relaxation, focused listening, sensory exploration, and creative expression — can be transferred from the pool into classroom practice, supporting students' engagement, emotional regulation, and attention across other areas of learning. This would have been explained in detail during the final stage of your initial training with Lawrence Bradshaw. There are plenty of ways that classes will already be using the Liquid Listening ethos during classroom sessions (Tac-Pac, Intensive Interactions, Quiet Listening Times) but below are a few Liquid Listening specific, short activities to incorporate.

Integrating classroom topics into pool sessions allows students to connect familiar subject matter with music, movement, and sensory experience, deepening understanding and retention. For example, history topics, cultural studies, or thematic projects can inspire carefully selected

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musical soundscapes, rhythms, or spoken word materials in the pool. Conversely, experiences from Musical Hydrotherapy can be reinforced in classroom activities, such as using music, movement, or rhythm exercises to consolidate learning, stimulate discussion, or extend creative projects.

This reciprocal approach ensures that Musical Hydrotherapy is not an isolated therapeutic activity, but a holistic, curriculum-aligned practice that bridges classroom learning and aquatic experiences. By planning thoughtfully, staff can maximise the educational, sensory, and emotional benefits for every student, ensuring that pool sessions enhance both curriculum outcomes and individual wellbeing.

Another way in which classroom based learning can crossover and enhance Musical hydrotherapy sessions is through Music Production in which students can create the soundscapes for underwater listening. If your school has a Music teacher it is highly advised that they dedicate a topic cycle to compose and record with students for this. Alternatively you can get in touch with Liquid Listening who offer a Music Production course.

### **Classroom Topics In The Pool**

Musical Hydrotherapy sessions offer rich opportunities to reinforce and extend classroom learning through sensory and musical exploration. When a class is engaged with a particular topic or theme, that subject can be integrated into the pool sessions, allowing students to make meaningful connections between their classroom studies and the multi-sensory experiences of Musical Hydrotherapy. For example, if a class is exploring a Pirate topic, staff can select sea shanties, maritime rhythms, and nautical soundscapes for the underwater listening session, encouraging students to connect movement, sound, and thematic imagery. Similarly, during Black History Month, musical selections could feature works by Black composers, performers, or culturally significant pieces, providing students with an immersive way to engage with history, culture, and creativity.

This approach supports listening, sensory engagement, body awareness, and emotional expression while also enhancing subject knowledge and curiosity. It encourages students to make cross-disciplinary links, connecting music, movement, and thematic learning in a highly engaging and memorable way. Staff are encouraged to plan sessions collaboratively with classroom teachers, selecting music and soundscapes that align with ongoing topics and curricular goals, ensuring that Musical Hydrotherapy contributes to a holistic and inclusive educational experience.



## **Focussed Listening Sessions In The Classroom**

Following on from the Training provided by Lawrence Bradshaw, there is need for moments of decompression and aural resetting throughout the school day. These are moments, not of silence but of a group focus on a singular aural activity that students and staff can attend together. It is advised to integrate these activities at the end of a lesson, or the end of the school day or as an interjection when a lesson becomes over excited or over stimulated to reset.

Each activity should start with an explanation of what is about to happen, an expectation of silence (from the staff group and as close to silence as the students can manage) and lights being turned off. Then lead by example to the room in a moment of silence before an activity is introduced. The activity doesn't have to be quiet, in fact, a loud aural focal point can very powerful, so long as the staff group can refrain from talking and silently support the students in actively listening or passively/actively creating sound to fill the silent space.

Listed are some activities that you can incorporate into your quiet listening moments:

### ***Silence***

Create a calm atmosphere in the classroom. Reduce any environmental sounds to a minimum. Announce to staff and students that as a group you will attempt a 2 minute silence. If students make a noise it is fine, this is an activity to be repeated over time to gain listening skills. After the silence is completed, calmly announce that we have ended and provide feedback to students.

### ***Single Sound Source***

Following on from "Silence", create a quiet classroom environment. Throughout your silence introduce a single sound from a soft instrument (Bell, Chimes, Guitar etc...). Repeat the sound of this instrument every 30 seconds interrupting the silence. After a short while, move around the room so the sound source comes from different locations. If students reach out to actively participate, encourage this non verbally.

### ***Multiple Source Sound***

Similar to the Single Source Sound, create a quiet classroom environment. Throughout your silence introduce two alternate sounds from soft instruments (Bell, Chimes, Guitar etc...). It may be best to have another staff member help with this one and position yourselves in different parts of the room. Again, if students reach out to actively participate, encourage this non verbally.

### ***Active Music Making***

After a minute of silence, use an interactive music app like Bloom, Trope, Air or GarageBand to offer students the chance to tap the touchscreen of an iPad to generate sounds for everyone to



listen to and collaborate with. The music curriculum provided by Liquid Listening has more suggestions for these cross curricular moments at the end of each music lesson plan.

### **Physiotherapy And The Extended Therapy Provision**

Most hydrotherapy pools are utilised by physiotherapy teams to run individual physio programmes for students who have specific mobility needs. It can be a sensitive issue when introducing Musical Hydrotherapy into a school that has a physiotherapy department. Liquid Listening does not have the outlook of replacing physiotherapy programmes and will always prioritise the therapy departments programmes. However, Musical Hydrotherapy does provide a unique and powerful learning environment to collaboratively work together. Where we can, Liquid Listening will always involve the therapy teams during training but if that isn't possible then we advise that they get in touch with us to communicate and collaborate on how the two disciplines can cooperatively work together.

It is also recommended that the school Music Therapist (or outsourced provision) is notified of the Musical Hydrotherapy provision. This can create an additional member of the pool team as well as a potential link to the music therapist providing 1:1 sessions with their students in a Musical Hydrotherapy environment.

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*This Musical Hydrotherapy Curriculum has been written and developed by Lawrence Bradshaw  
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