7. Reflecting on CREATIVE STRATEGIES in composing (coded DARK BLUE in the 2014 report)

	Pedagogical Issues/Learning Issues (numbers in the left hand column correspond to the 2014 report)	Question	Suggestions/Discussion
21	Pupils are too frequently asked to simply 'compose' without understanding what this actually entails.	How can we support pupils to understand composing as a practice with different stages and develop the necessary skills for each stage?	Composing is complex and needs deconstructing so pupils view it as a *process* which has different stages. Teaching composing needs to reflect this. Plan lessons on: generation of ideas, development of ideas, organization of ideas, refining ideas etc. Composing is a slow process and it is important for pupils to learn how to stay with the process.
24	There is a lot of discussion in music education about whether pupils, when composing, should start with what they know and their own musical experiences and what existing, often unfamiliar, musics/repertoire might offer pupils composing.	What is the relationship between composing stimulated by unfamiliar musics and that, which starts with what the pupils already know?	Pupils bring their own musical experiences into any given composing task. When presented with and immersed in unfamiliar music, material and processes, pupils will make it relevant through appropriation and assimilation.
19	Existing repertoire contains a myriad of composing strategies and processes that can be used to support pupils own composing.	How can existing repertoire, contemporary and other, be used to support pupils' composing?	Extract materials and compositional strategies from established contemporary works. Work intensively with pupils to assimilate the new material and explore unfamiliar compositional strategies.
3	The use of notation in the teaching and learning of composing with young people can be a contentious and polarizing issue.	How can we support the effective and appropriate use of notation in pupil's composing?	Notation does not just need to be traditional western manuscript. Collect and share with pupils different kinds of music notation. This will allow pupils to: explore the whole idea of what music notation is for; help them to think about what might be an appropriate notation for their music; and, present it in a way that it could be revisited at a later date and or that would allow another person could perform it.

28	Teenagers very aware of style and genre and have strong opinions that can put teachers off presenting composition tasks that relate to unfamiliar music.	What can working outside of style and genre offer the teaching and learning of composing?	Being outside of style and genre can have strengths in the teaching and learning process. Style is not important. Compositional models really work, but it's not about imitating style. The really useful skills are to understand compositional fundamentals that may apply to all forms of music-making - the material elements of composing.
32	Developing initial musical ideas can often a solitary or small group activity with pupils limited to their own experience, knowledge and skills.	What other strategies can be used in the classroom to effectively support and encourage the development of initial ideas?	Include whole class creative ensemble improvisation lessons as preparation for composing tasks. The creative ensemble format provides a critical starting point for the development of ideas and the challenges of judging the value and worthiness of ideas.
33	Improvisation is an important strategy for the development of musical ideas and is one which many professional composers use. Increasingly composers, as well as improvising on their own, also find working in groups to develop musical ideas with a fruitful route into composing.	How can improvisation be encouraged in the classroom as a way into composing and what does it offer pupils?	The creative ensemble workshop format positions composing as an activity of experimenting, trialing, exploring, developing and combining ideas. It offers teachers/composers the opportunity to model open-ended participatory exploratory processes which reflect the real world practices of professional composers.
38	Pupil's initial musical ideas and their developments, especially those created in improvisation can be lost and forgotten.	What strategies can be used to help record and retrieve these initial ideas?	Use audio recording throughout the composing process not just at the end to help pupils build on, develop and refine musical ideas.
35	The teacher is an often under-exploited musical resource in the classroom frequently underplaying or not revealing his or her own instrumental or compositional ability.	Do you model being a composer to your pupils and make visible your own processes?	Remember that you can be and are a model to the pupils of what a contemporary composer can be. '*The composer provided a model of a contemporary eclectic creative individual – an inspired, enthusiastic, engaged contemporary composer whose taste spanned a wellspring of styles and an expansive range of musical genres. He didn't portray himself as the exceptional creative genius but rather acted as a collaborator and facilitator...who modeled composing as an activity and a process, and valued the emerging music as music emerging*'.

36	Composing is a process that needs daily practice.	How can we embed this idea with pupils?	Encourage pupils to compose something every day even if very short. Encourage the use of sonic notebooks for this.
39	With curriculum restrictions such as a style-based approach, pupils rarely are given chance to really think about what they would like to compose. Teachers can also be unaware of what pupil's motivations might be for their creative work.	What strategies can be used to support young people to think about, clarify and refine their composing intentions and how is this useful to teachers?	Give the pupils time to think about and discuss their composing intentions before starting. Think about using the schools intranet for these discussions. This allows the pupils to support each other, make comments and suggest ideas to their peers and refine their ideas. It can create a sense of community, create cohesion in the group and allow them to critique their work outside of the classroom. After lesson, pupils also 'thought out loud' using intranet Not only is this useful to the pupils but also to the teacher, allowing them to have a clear idea of what inspires their pupils and to support their planning. *'Because many of them used quite emotive adjectives, there was a certain understood language that they created themselves about the kind of pieces they wanted to write' – This gave the composers an understanding of their personal language from the inside which informed the way they got the pupils to think about their work and the language they then used to talk to the pupils.'* This may seem like time away from composing *per se*, but remember the Ofsted notion of 'do more of less'.
40	Professional composers spend a lot of time researching before actually starting to compose. This might take many different forms from exploring and extra-musical starting point to finding out about the sound, character and personality of the musician or musicians they are composing for.	Is research part of the composing process for your pupils and what benefits do you think this might produce?	Encourage pupils to do research as a pre-composing task. This encourages peer-to-peer learning, pools existing pupil knowledge and allows the teacher to build upon pupil prior knowledge. For example, pupils knew they would be composing for a solo saxophone before they started. Using the internet they were able to source information about the possibilities of the instrument (range, extended techniques etc.) the kind of music it performed and the performer who they were writing for. This approach allows those who know already to find out more, and those who know little to start appropriately.
45	Visiting expert performers whether musicians from a local professional orchestra, peripatetic teachers are an excellent resource for composing in the classroom.	What does composing for an expert musician offer pupils that is different from composing for themselves and/or peers?	Pupils working with an expert musician can use them to figure out ideas, explore different options through giving the performer specific instructions. This fosters independent learning and adds a level of excitement at hearing their music played by an experienced performer.

LISTEN IMAGINE COMPOSE

Reflecting on CREATIVE STRATEGIES IN COMPOSING

			'I am really just trying to give her an idea of what it sounds like, so she can see if it sounds like what she thought it was going to sound like.' professional musician
48	Pupils, who can be advanced musically, are often reluctant to stick with or develop their initial exploratory ideas, often dismissing or discarding them if they are not of the highest rank can very be extremely self critical of their initial musical ideas and easily reject them without fully exploring their potential.	Why do pupils so readily give up on initial ideas?	Young people are used to being presented in popular music culture with fully-formed musical artefacts in which the processes are often invisible. Frequently the impression is given that the process involved was simply getting together and having a jam. This could be one of the factors that makes pupils give up too easily. Encourage pupils to stick with and value their own initial ideas and contributions.
49	Pupils' initial musical ideas can be fragile and pupils can feel very unconfident in them and their potential.	What strategies can be used to give pupils confidence in their initial ideas?	Valuing pupil contributions is crucial at the beginning of the composing process. Sometimes using an external generative system, for example magic squares to generate melodies, dice, letters from poems, removes initial ideas from the personal, and, therefore, if the results are not immediately felt to be useful, the problem can be located with the system rather than the individual.