

# Listen Imagine Compose

Sarah Henton

A pupil's composing journey.



# My LIC journey

## My starting points

I had been teaching 7 years and not completed any specific CPD on composing.

I did not specialise in composing at university but did complete the compulsory modules.

I was confident in the way I delivered and assessed composition in KS3.

## LIC happened

**Starting points** - working with a composer.

**Practical Ideas** - Each speaker whether lecturer, composer or performer provided me with a practical idea to try in the classroom.

**Working with Professionals**  
*'I would swap all my ICT facilities to have a resident professional performer like Kyle'*

## End in mind

To improve my repertoire of strategies for teaching composition.

To push myself out of my comfort zone (ACTION RESEARCH on top on full time job...you must be mad!)

Network with other musicians.



# Then the questions started...

- HOW do kids compose?
- It intrigued me that given the choice would all groups chose the same starting point?
- Do pupils follow the same journey?
- Can they identify the steps they take or is the process innate?



# REALISATION 1

I had been asking KS3 pupils to compose to an assessment grid with success criteria.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- My piece describes most of the story.</li><li>- I have used some of the musical elements in my composition to add expression.</li><li>- My piece has 3 sections.</li><li>- I have combined different sounds together.</li><li>- I performed to an audience.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- My piece describes some of the story in detail.</li><li>- I have used the musical elements and musical devices in my composition.</li><li>- My piece has three clear sections.</li><li>- I have <u>thought</u> about how the different parts fit together.</li><li>- I have improved and refined my piece.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- My piece tells the story in a descriptive and imaginative way.</li><li>- I have used musical devices.</li><li>- My piece has three contrasting sections.</li><li>- I understand the importance of each of the parts.</li><li>- I have thought about the purpose of my piece and tried to match my composition to this.</li></ul>



# My Research

A composition map will improve yr 7 pupils understanding of the composition process and the teachers understanding of the pupils as composers.



# Context

- Year 7 pupils were taught a number of lessons where they explored music from different communities through performance

African A Capella

African drumming

Indian classical

Indonesian Gamelan



# Questionnaire 1: Highlights

Q1: What does composition mean?

6 students could not describe this clearly

15 seem to understand this.

Do pupils learn how to  
compose first and then understand  
the concept later?



Q3: Which of the tasks below do you complete when composing?

Revising work we have scored the lowest.

Discussing ideas and Listening to our work scored highest.

If you were to ask a composer this question would the results be the opposite way around?



# What do you normally do first in composition?

1. Select instruments

2. Discuss ideas

3. Think of ideas

I wasn't surprised by this, however when asking pupils why they did this. The response was - 'Well, then we know what we can work with Miss'



How do you know your composition is finished?

All the instruments stop at the same time.

We'll run out of ideas.

The start and finish is obvious.

When it sounds good

I am not sure

As teachers,  
how do we teach  
endings?



How do you know your composition is successful?

Everyone would applaud

The audience will clap.

Miss will say its good.

It fulfils the requirements.

When it is liked by others.

How we reinforce ideas  
without knowing.

Composing to a brief -  
do we ever allow  
completely  
free composition?  
Is there a place for this  
in KS3?



# Composition task

Pupils were asked to compose  
a multi-cultural mash-up in groups.



Create a  
polyrhythm

Create an  
idea

Change the  
instrument



Add a  
drone

Use a canon

Add new  
ideas

Use a raga

Create  
layers

Choose  
instruments

Call and response  
section

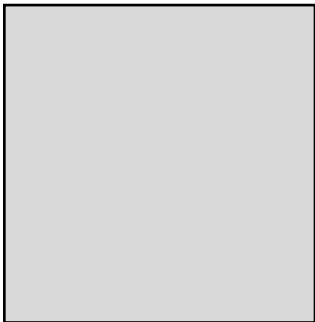
Composing for a  
Community

Vary the  
rhythm

Perform our  
piece

Use a chord

Discussion



Add  
Vocals.

Make a  
change

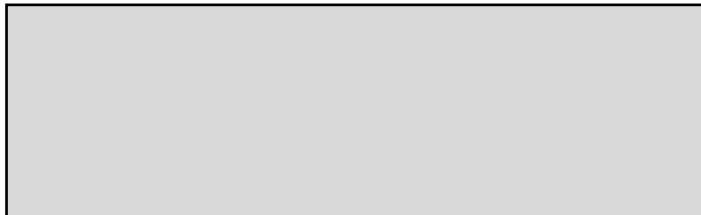
Use a repeating  
Rhythm.

Play it all  
together

Use the  
Pentatonic  
Scale.

Plan

Combine  
ideas  
together



Add  
dynamics



# THE RESEARCH

Wallas (1926):

Preparation, incubation,  
illumination, verification.

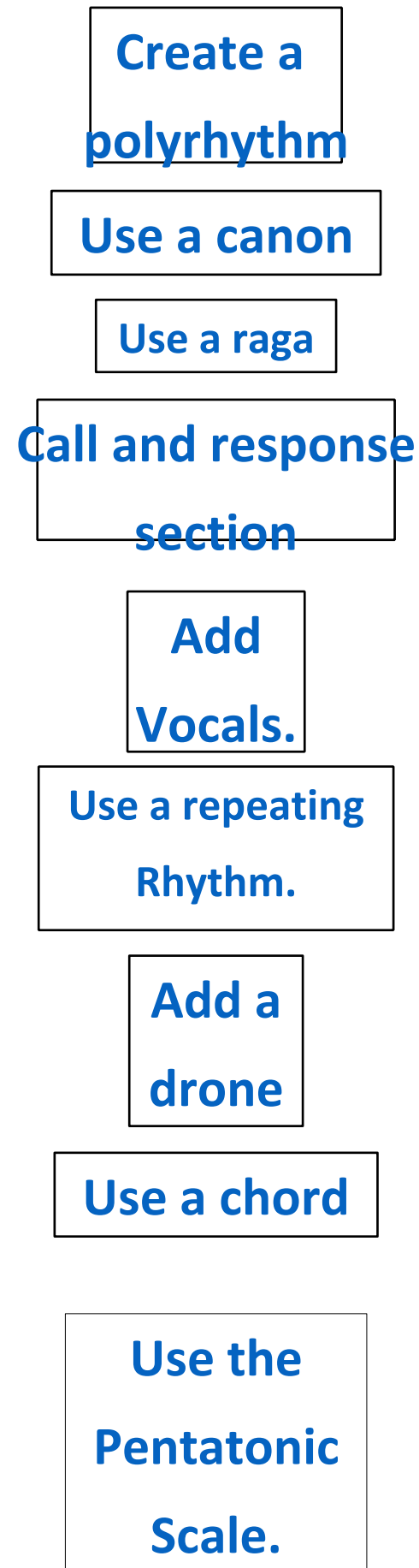
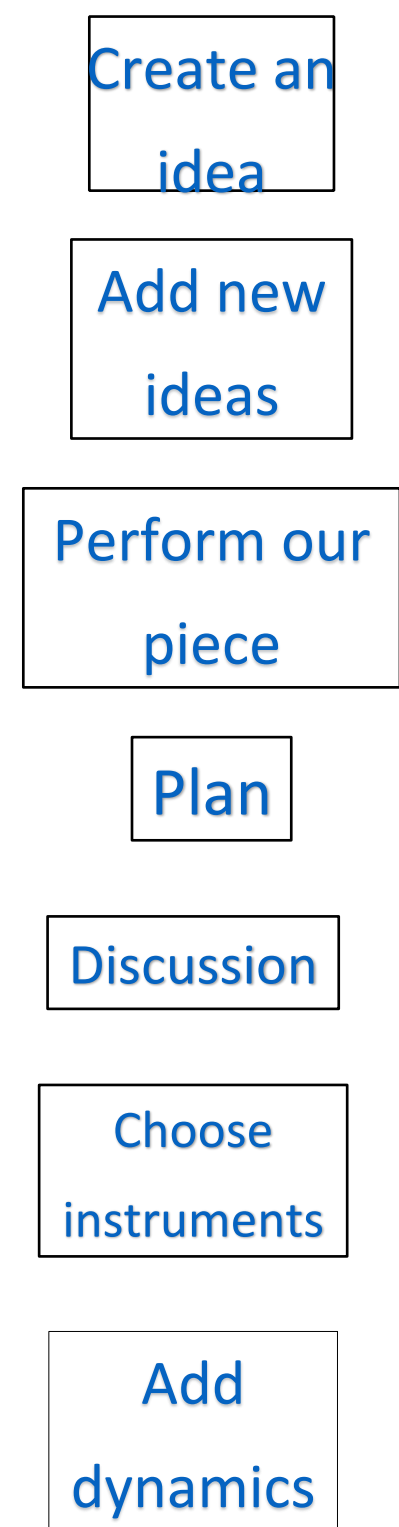
Stages rather  
than processes  
- Cross 2000

Fautley:

1. Initial confirmatory phase.
2. Initial stage of music generation.
3. Manipulation of material.
4. Refinement work on piece.
5. Trial Performance + refinement
6. Preparation for final performance

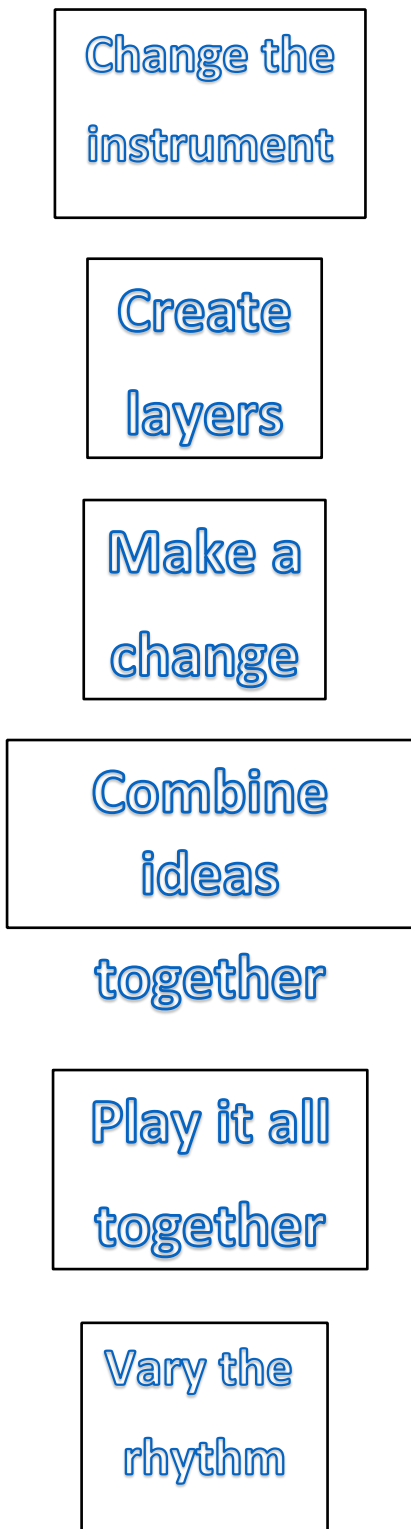


# Initial stages



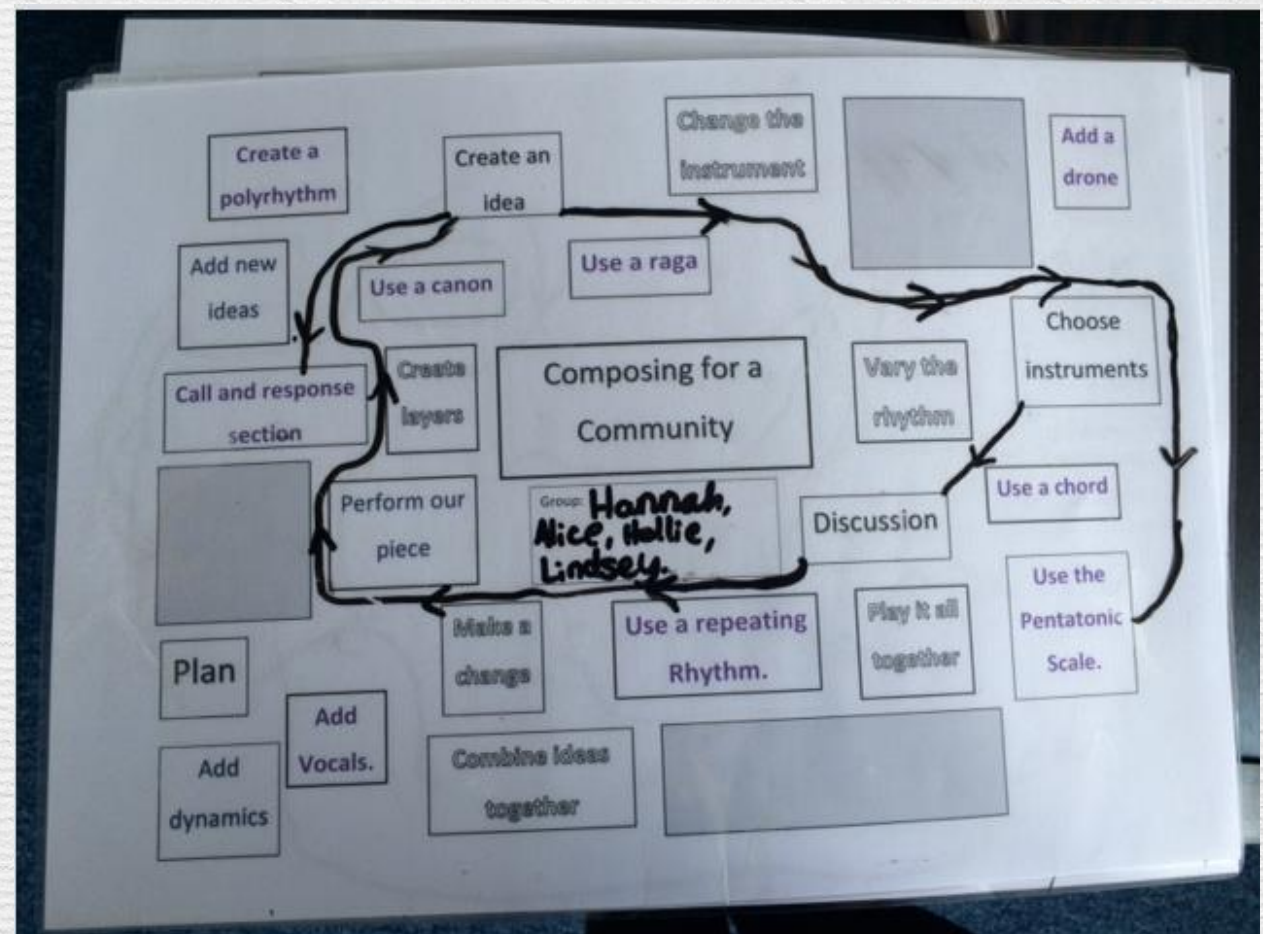
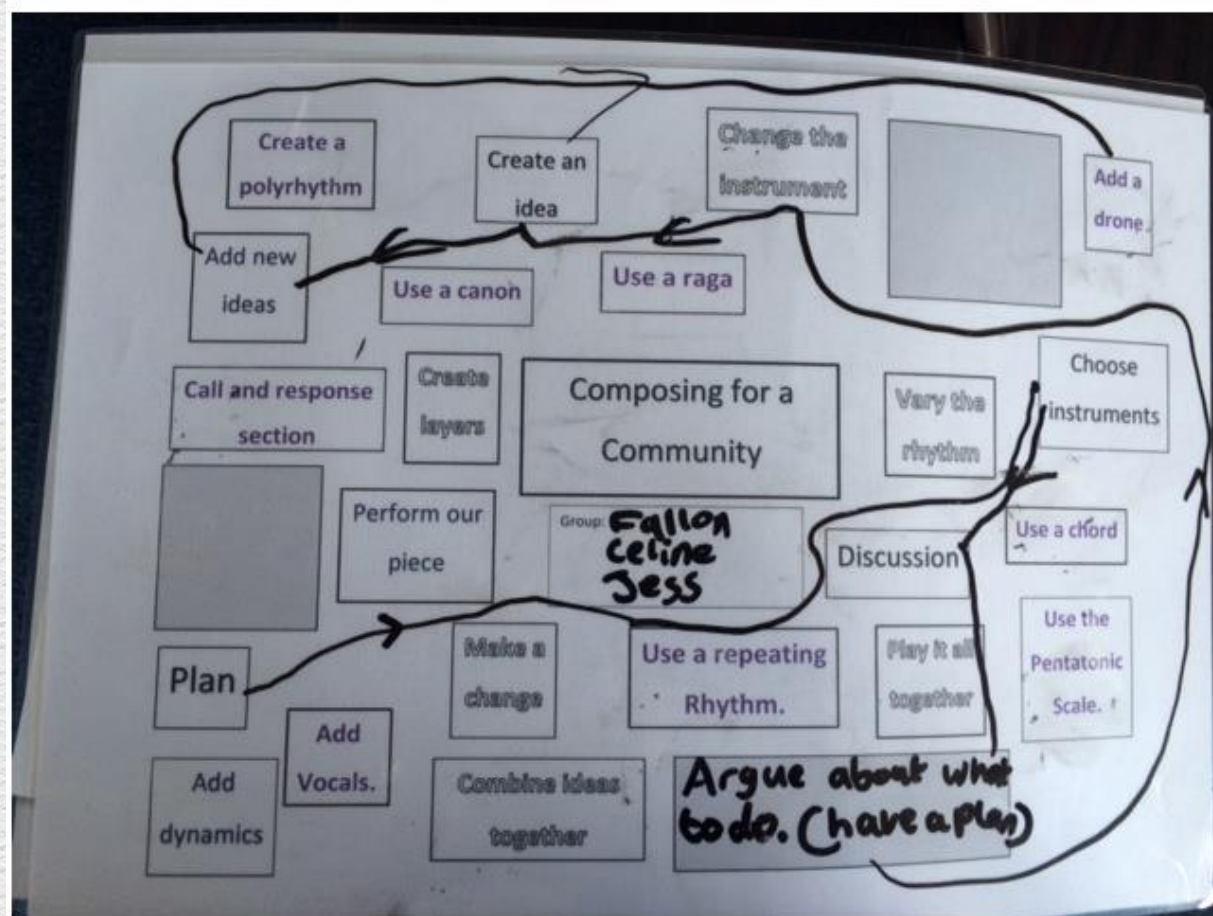
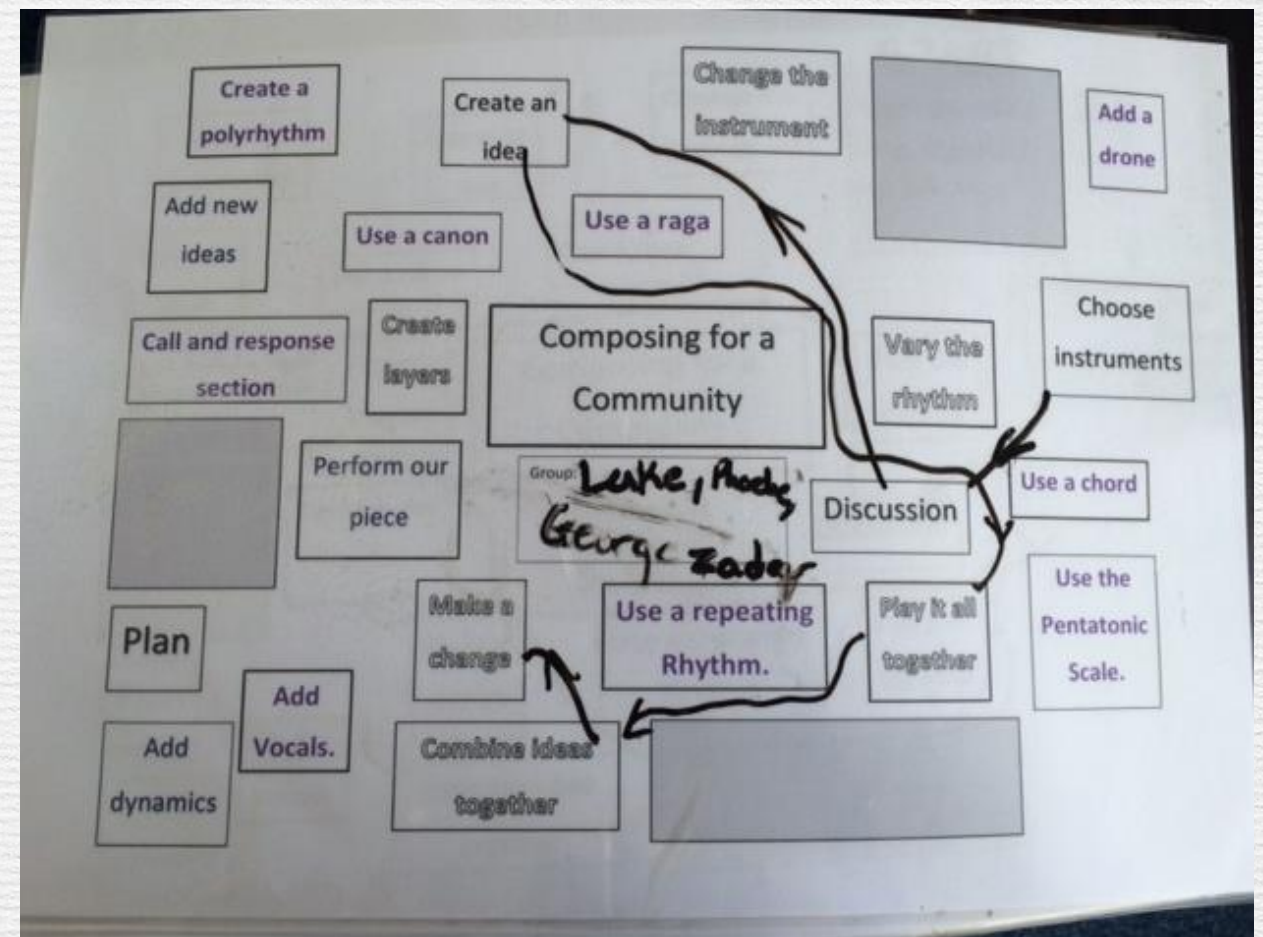
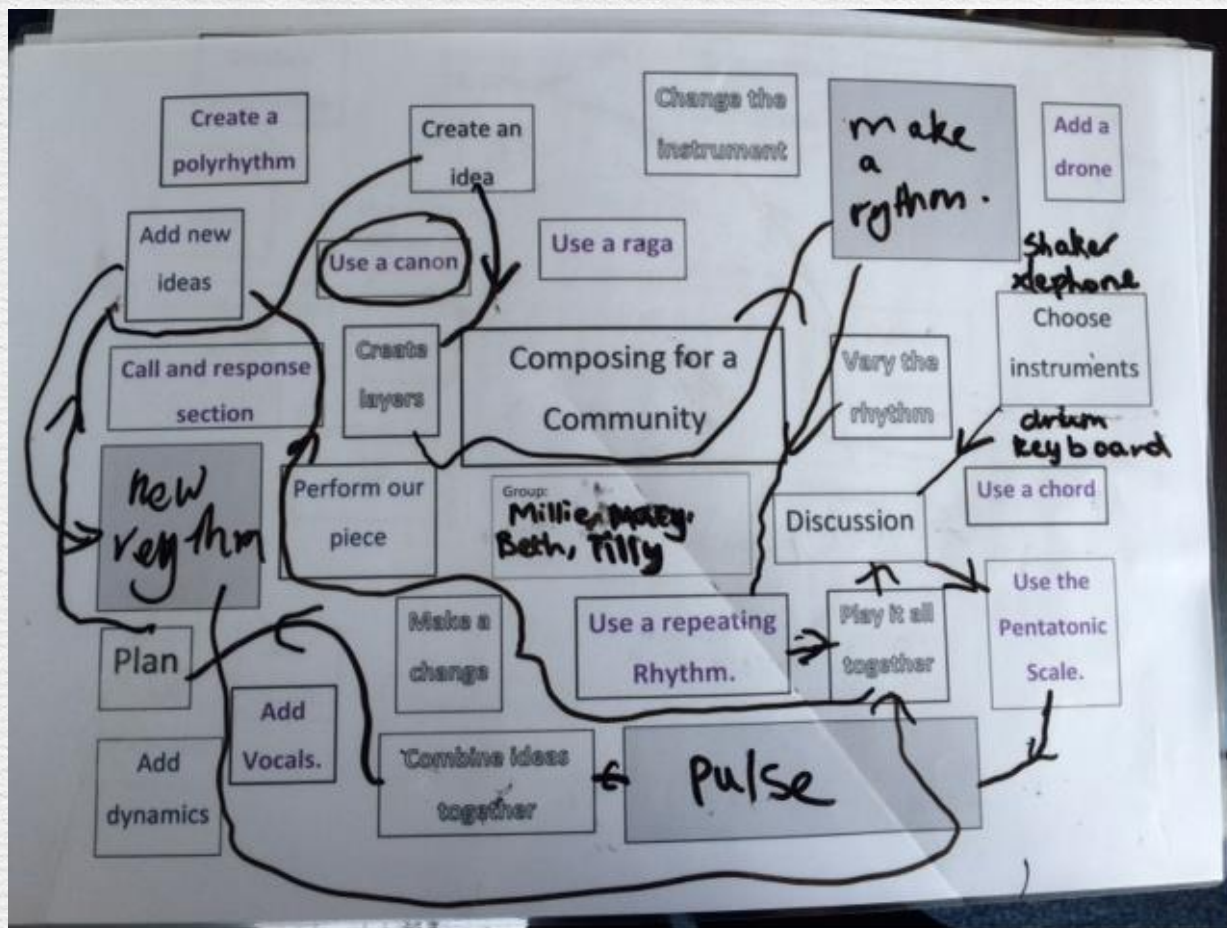
# Musical features

# Revising Refining

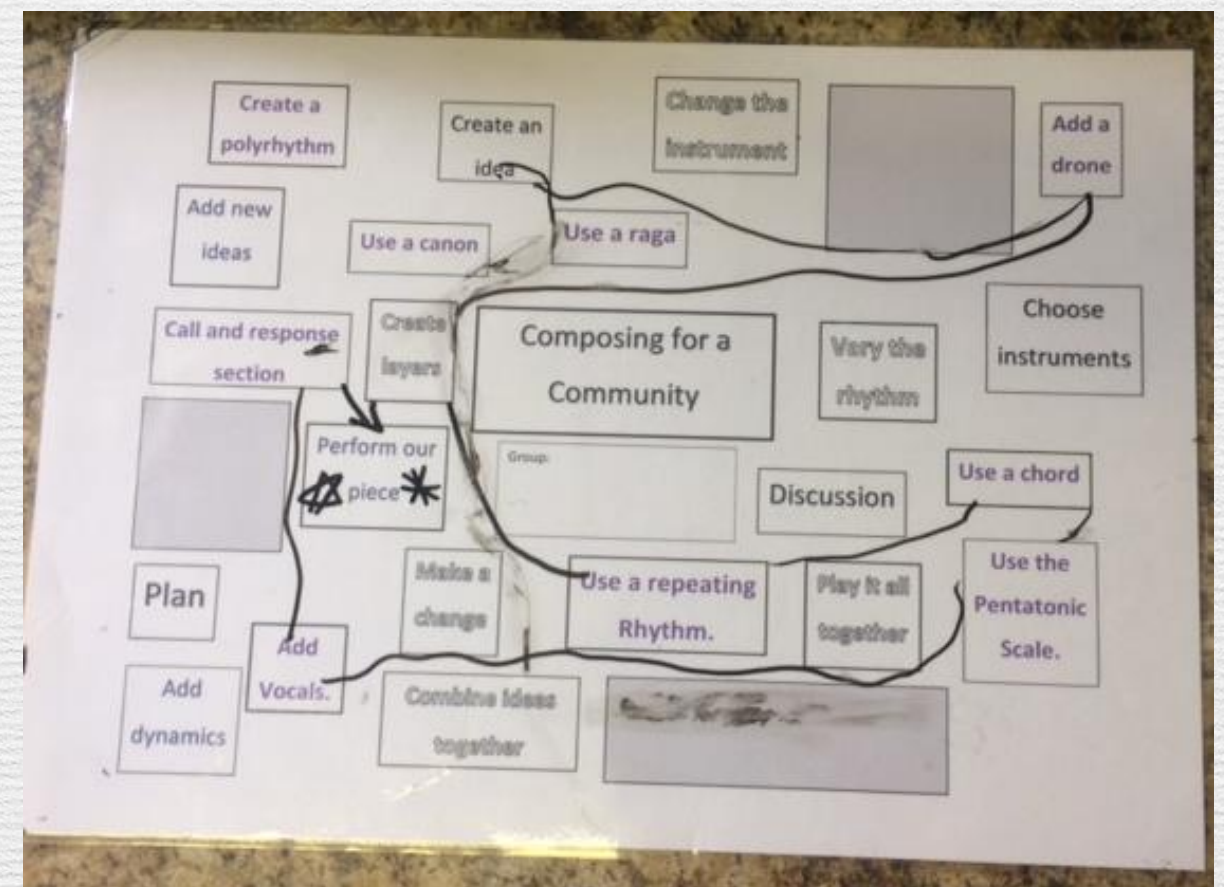
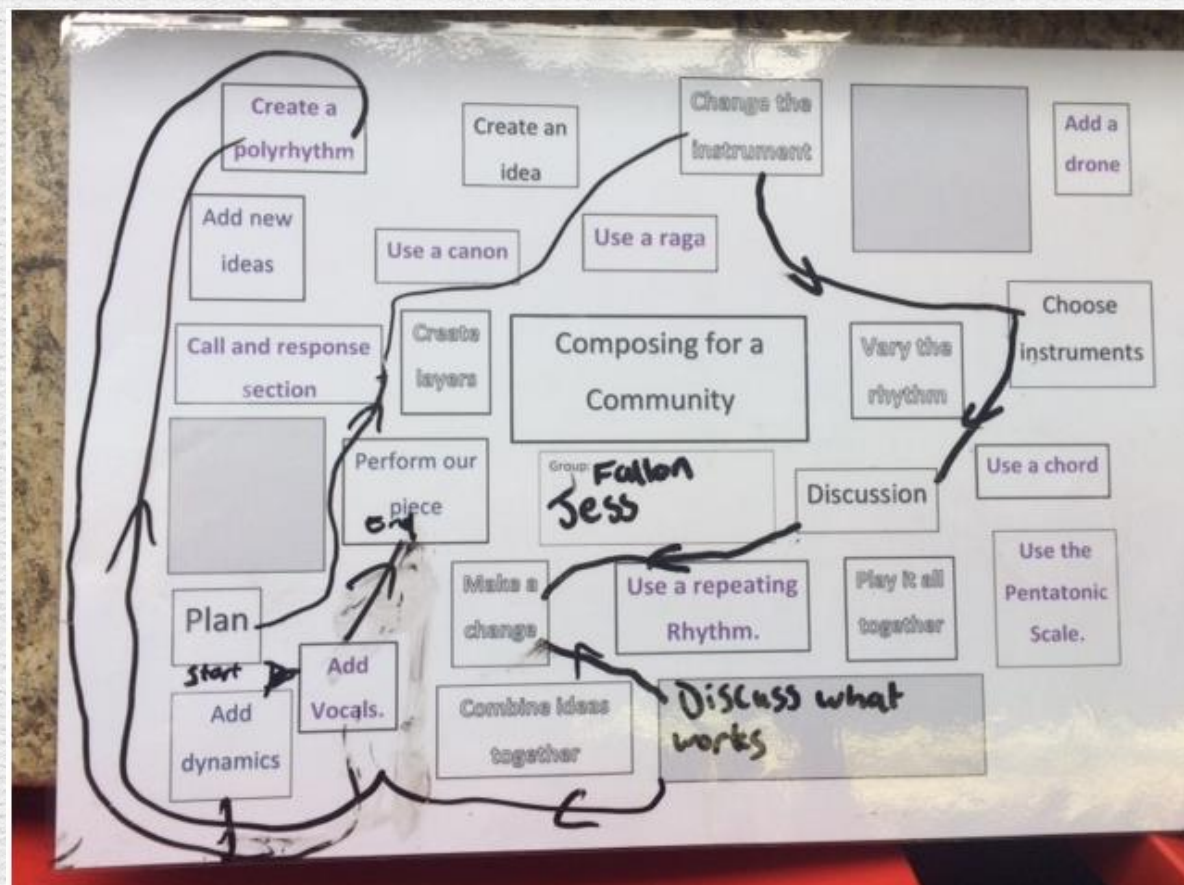
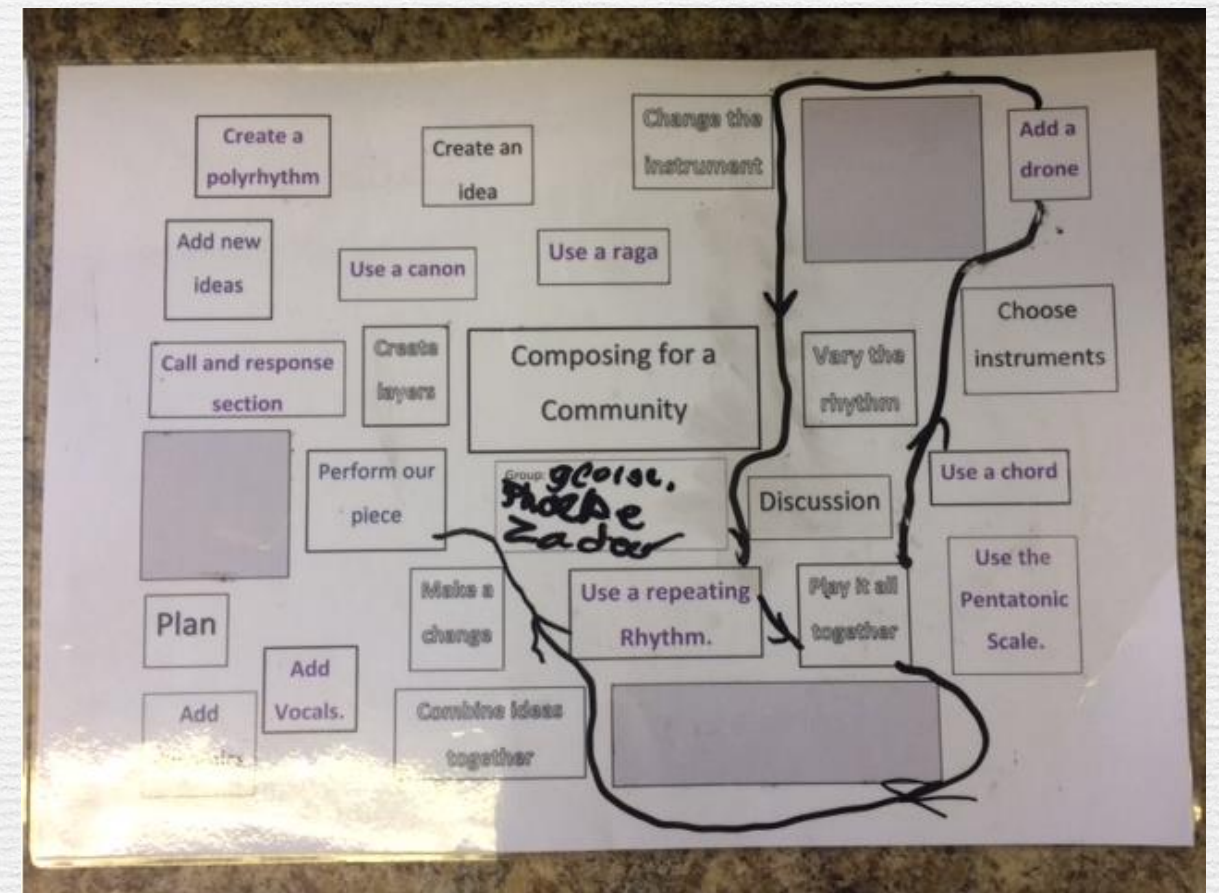
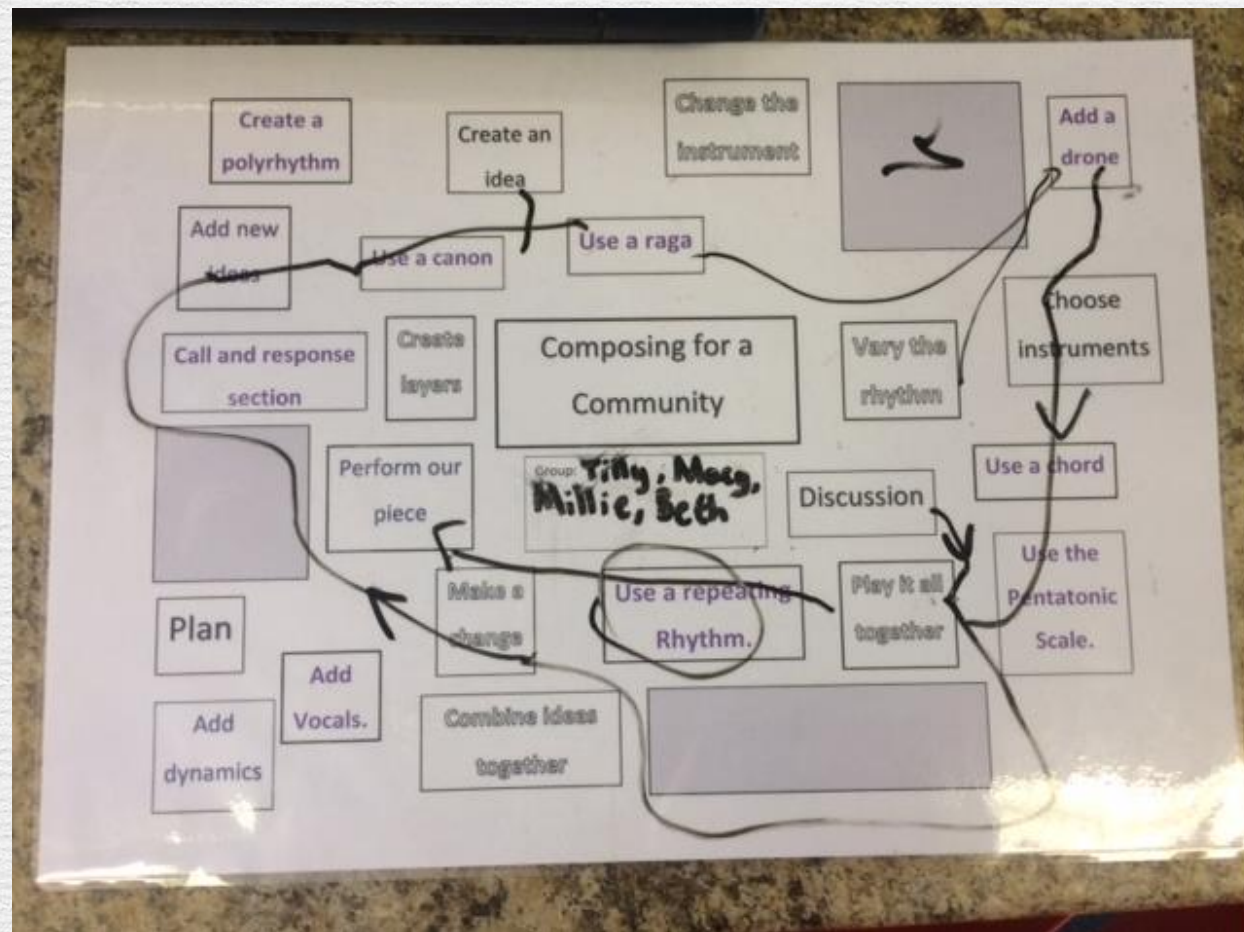


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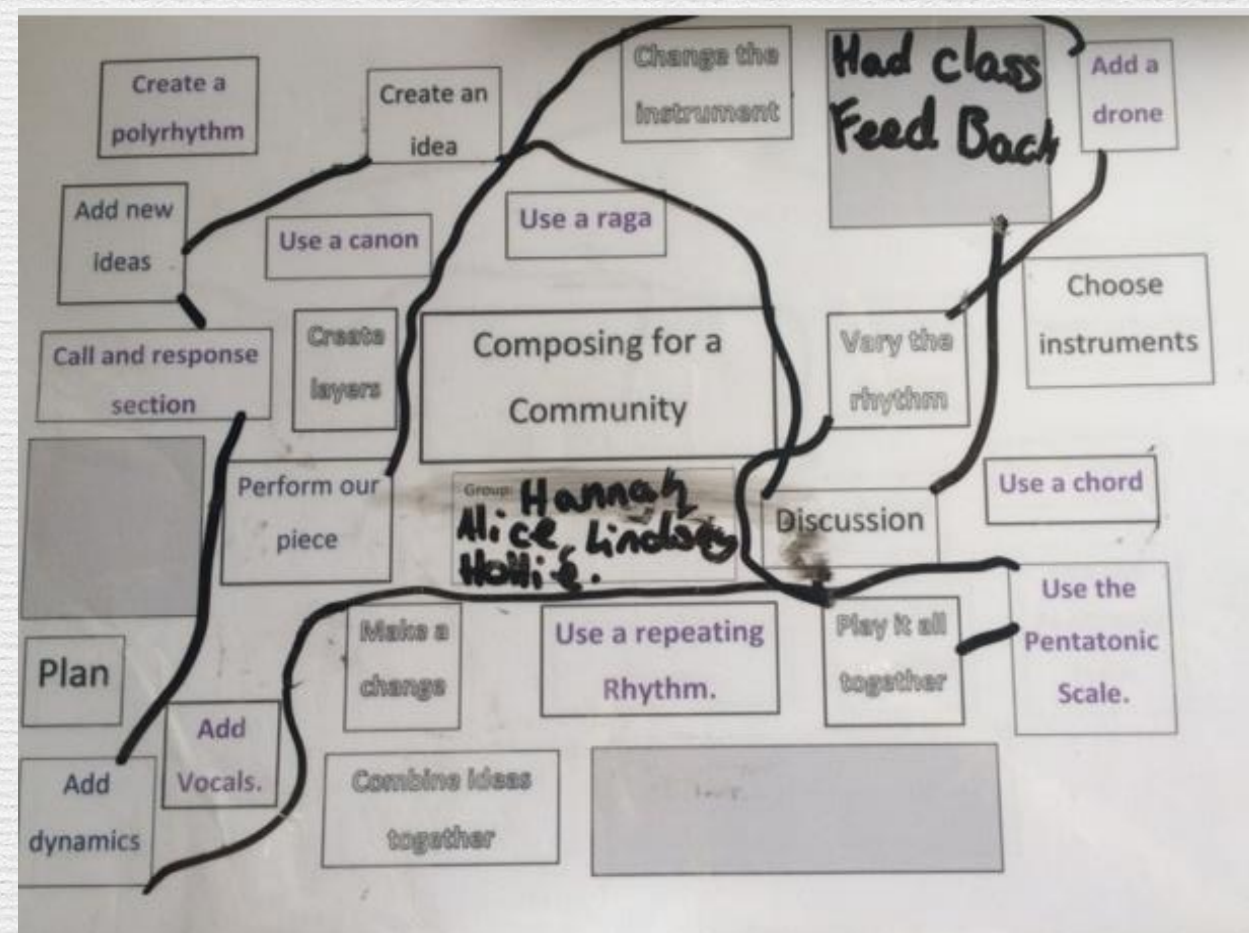
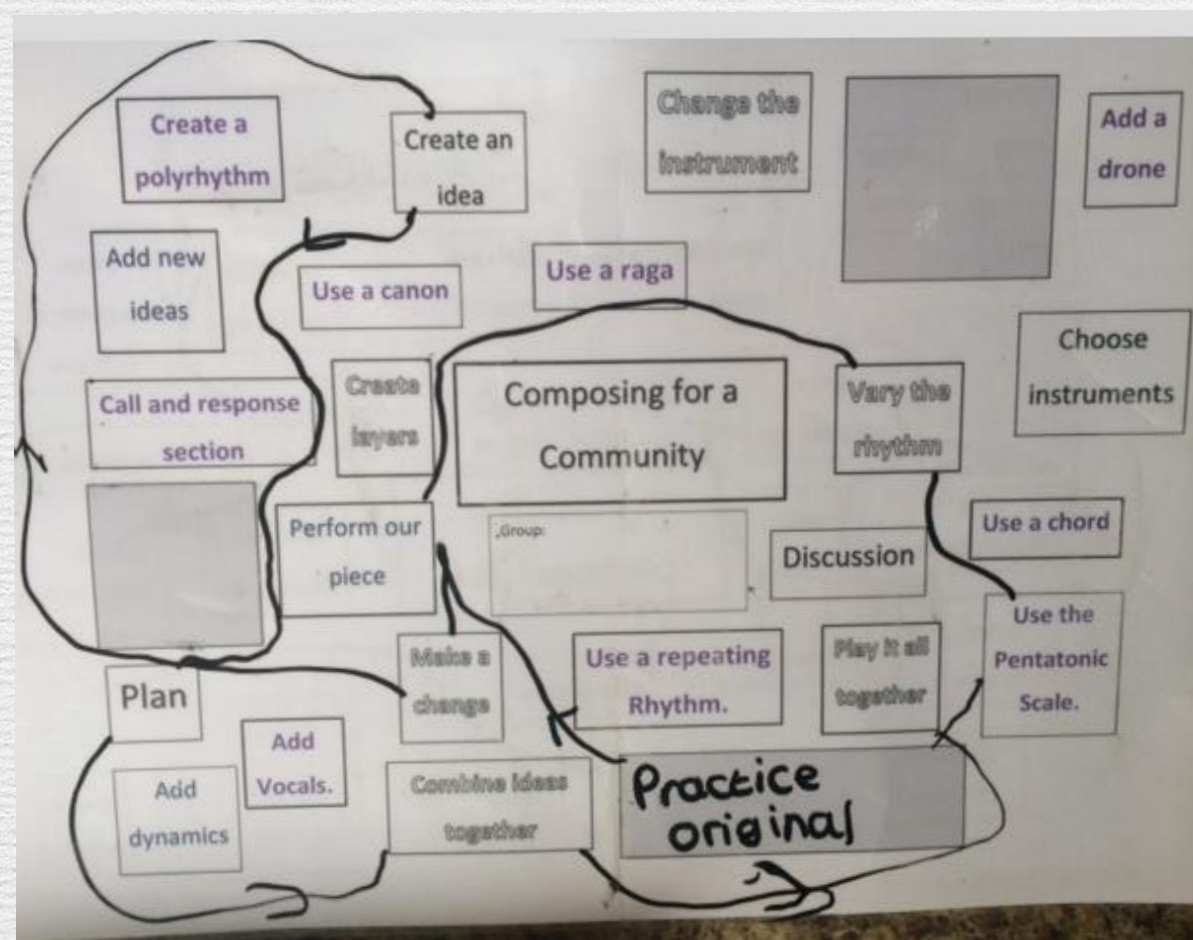
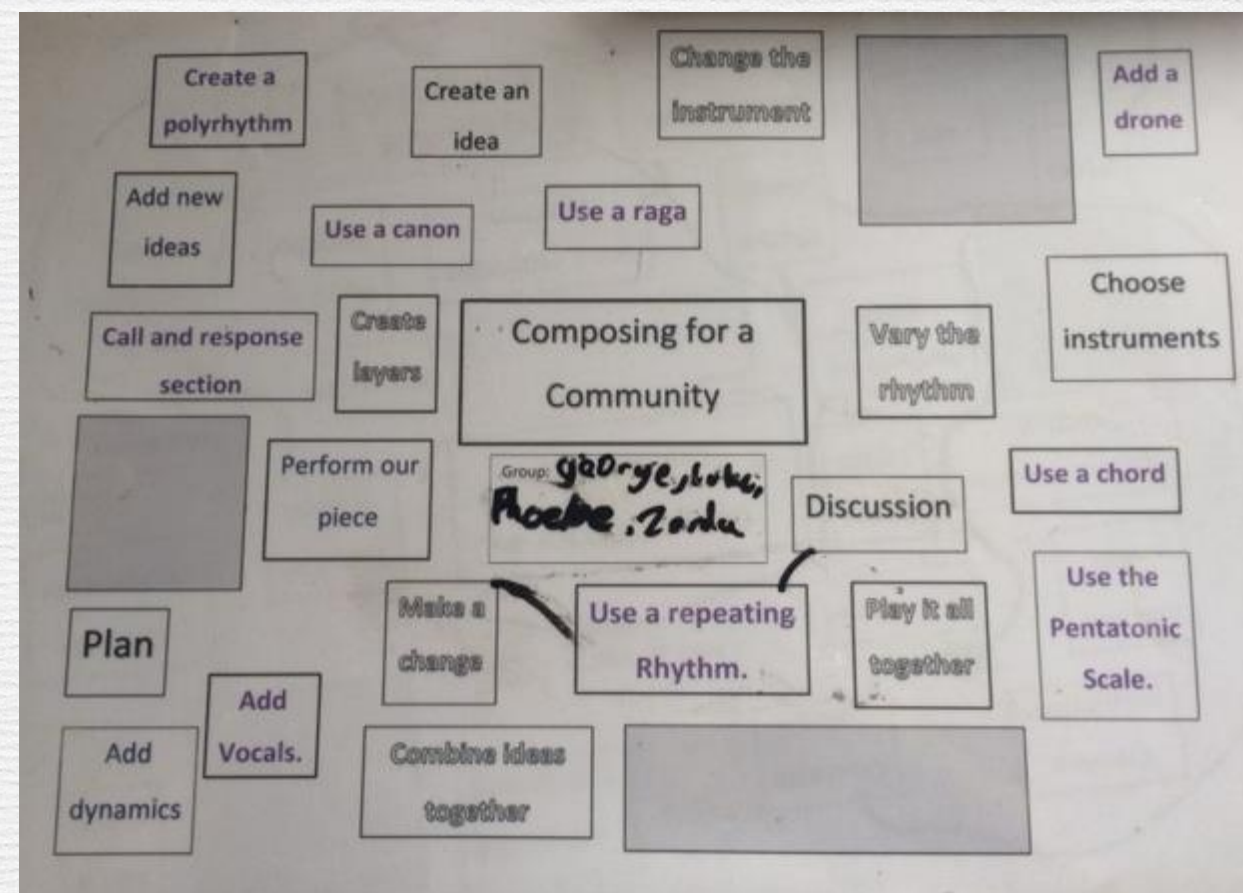
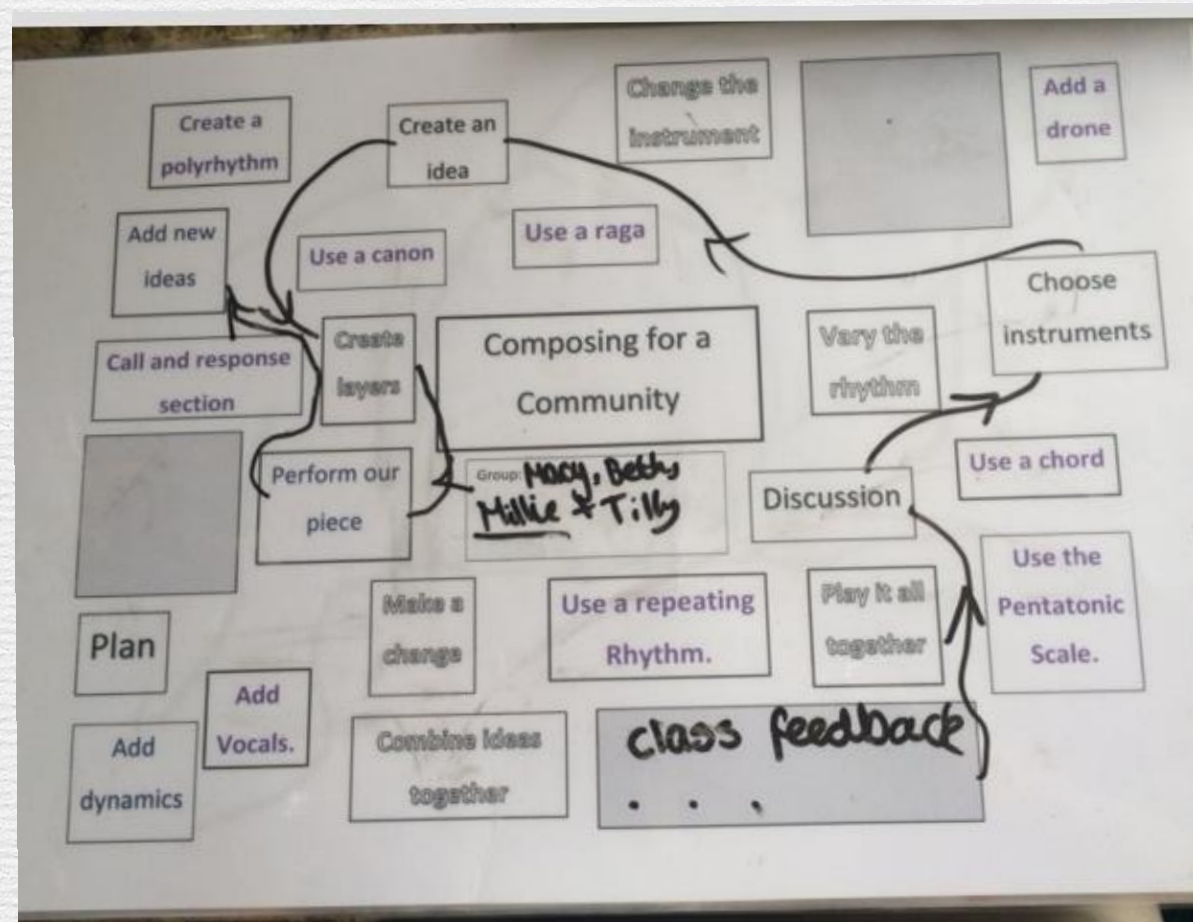














# Analysis

Category	Initial	Musical features	Revising Refining	Blank
Week 1	56%	24%	20%	0%
Week 2	33%	19%	44%	4%
Week 3	41%	37%	13%	9%



# Findings so far

- It has improved pupils use of language when talking about their compositions.
- I have a greater understanding of how and the reasons why pupils work in the way that they do.
- They have more confidence to compose independently.
- It resulted in rich group conversations around the task.



# My LIC journey...so what?

## My starting points

I had been teaching 7 years and not completed any specific CPD on composing.

I did not specialise in composing at university but did complete the compulsory modules.

I was confident in the way I delivered and assessed composition in KS3.

I have grown in confidence in my own compositional skills.

I question myself more deeply about impact of how I assess composition

## LIC happened

Starting points - working with a composer.

**Practical Ideas** - Each speaker whether lecturer, composer or performer provided me with a practical idea to try in the classroom.

**Working with Professionals -**

'I would swap all my ICT facilities to have a resident professional performer like Kyle'

## End in mind

To improve my repertoire of strategies for teaching composition.

To push myself out of my comfort zone (ACTION RESEARCH on top on full time job...you must be mad!)

Network with other musicians.

I am still working on this one. Perhaps an area Music Mark could access.

Happy being challenged about my practice.

My students more adaptable as they compose through different processes