

THE INVENTOR AND US!



Over the past couple of years, MacIntyre School in Wingrave has had the privilege of collaborating with an inventor, for the development of assistive music technology.

Philip is a volunteer at the National Museum of Computing in Milton Keynes as a **STEM ambassador**. Prior to which he was a senior development manager in the computing and communications industries before changing careers into health and social care. Over the past years, he has launched the Accessible Music Project, setting out to develop music technology for people with physical and learning disabilities. He has collaborated with other “Open Source” developers (DM Labs, MK Makerspace) with an interest in assistive music technology, and more recently got in touch with MacIntyre School, with the idea to design some devices that could support students to engage in music making.

Philip visited school regularly, to discuss potential projects that could suit the needs of the young people supported at MacIntyre. He very patiently took in staff suggestions, however ambitious or impractical they might have been, and over the course of the months produced some devices which could be tested in school, very kindly free of charge. Philip was also generous in donating the first prototype of his “Sound Blanket”, a portable and sturdy MP3 Player with in-built speaker, to a pupil when he moved from MacIntyre School to Adult Services. The student used to enjoy listening routinely to the sounds of various electronic devices in school, and the MP3 player featured his favourite jingles and tunes, recorded directly from the original sources, for him to listen to once he no longer could access the school grounds.

Following this first project, Philip designed the “Touch Sensitive White Board”. The device is similar to an interactive whiteboard, but instead of having a touch-screen, the wooden board features various touch-sensitive areas (capacitive sensing technology) which can be programmed for different auditory activities. Sam chose from different animals sounds for the song Old MacDonald during a music therapy session. He has been taking part in music therapy sessions for over a year, and was definitely captivated by the new technology!

Music therapy adopts a very facilitative approach, in which Sam’s lead is followed in the exploration of live music making. Sam’s confidence has been growing whilst learning to make choices, take turns, share instruments, and attune to different dynamics of sound. Philip has certainly enhanced the creative process of play in sessions, and we would like to thank him sincerely for his dedication, resourcefulness and generosity. We hope to collaborate with Philip again in the future, and wish him all the best for the Accessible Music Project.

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