



Real Stories of Success in Music Education

# A Strategic Deployment of Cloud Technology

St Augustine's College – Sydney

**Welcome to our MusicFirst Lighthouse series**

Inspiring stories capturing how institutions have implemented online learning into their curriculum using innovative technology and creative thinking.



ST AUGUSTINE'S  
COLLEGE - SYDNEY







## Background

**St Augustine's College – Sydney is a comprehensive 5-12 Catholic school for boys in New South Wales with both Primary and Secondary Schools. The school is passionate about rigour and high achievement, creating a culture of learning and respect, with the students at the heart of everything the school does. Music is an important part of the school's daily life as an academic subject and a co-curricular opportunity for students.**

The Music Department aim to improve student outcomes in music, especially in terms of academic achievement, student engagement and growing elective class sizes. There is an active BYOD laptop program in the school which provides an ideal setup for MusicFirst.



### Michael Paton B. MUS. (Ed), G. CERT. LeadTh

Michael is one of the lead music teachers at the college. He studied at the Sydney Conservatory of Music gaining a Bachelor of Music majoring in Composition and Music Education graduating in 2017. Following a year out as a Church Choral Director, he joined St Augustine's College – Sydney as a music teacher. Within the first year of joining, Michael was instrumental in the drive for change in the integration of technology into classroom music alongside his colleague Alan Caulfield.



### Alan Caulfield B. MUS., GRAD. DIP. ED., M. MUS., M. EdLead

Alan is Head of Music at the College and has taught primary and secondary music for over 20 years. Following his graduation in music he became a member of the Royal Australian Navy Band. Throughout his career in music education, Alan has conducted a variety of bands, orchestras, ensembles, as well as directing many musicals. He continues to perform professionally as a bassist and brass player, performing in a range of ensembles.

# Development

## The Plan

When Michael joined the school in 2019 there were high quality technology facilities in the Music Department with various software applications available to students. He was pleased to learn that they were using both Soundtrap for Education and Noteflight Learn as their primary software applications for composition which were working well.

Although a vast array of other music software and learning management systems have been available for many years, the team decided to invest in the MusicFirst Classroom which proved to provide them with exactly what was needed and what Alan described as “a comprehensive suite of music tools and content, along with a highly functional, user-friendly music learning management system”. Furthermore it would be a central place to map out a complete curriculum.

## The Implementation

In 2020 the MusicFirst Classroom was in place and they were accessing their existing software from the central platform ready to begin building their curriculum into it. Fast forward to 2022 and their platform is now filled with resources ranging from exam listening assessments to structured lessons.

One approach that has worked particularly well for Michael is recording student instructions and embedding the video into every task for the students. He was keen to ensure that teacher instruction was only a portion of a lesson, and the rest was practical whether online or in-person. MusicFirst has allowed him to achieve this and move away from an entirely teacher-led lesson.



## Summary

- A central place with an embedded curriculum.
- All software working through a single classroom hub.
- Ability to collate student recordings seamlessly.
- Highly-functional, user-friendly LMS.



# Forced Remote Learning

When schools in NSW went into lockdown in 2020, the approach to teaching and learning that had already been taken using MusicFirst prior to this meant that the switch to remote was not a sudden period of panic but instead, adjustment. The groundwork was done and students were already in a position to rise to the challenge of home-learning with the tools they had already been using and the practical nature of lessons.

**“It goes without saying that flipped learning is a breeze and it made for a seamless pivot to remote learning during the pandemic.” Alan**

Soundtrap for Education and Noteflight Learn were their practical tools providing engagement and the opportunity to explore and be creative during an extremely challenging time. All the assessments that had been created provided a ready-made way of setting meaningful homework either auto-assessed or available for teachers to review and feedback.



**I aspired to find some way of helping all students succeed. MusicFirst has given me the tools to make this a reality.”**

Michael Paton

## Promoting success

Alan has always advocated for the infusion of digital tools in teaching and learning to make music relevant to the 21st Century learner. Of particular importance was the ability to enable music teachers to capitalise on the energetic nature and digital competence of students to increase interest in music.

**“I have noticed that the scope and capacity of MusicFirst has continued to expand rapidly and creators now place emphasis on the development of community which in turn encourages learners to see the big picture and the value of their music education and opportunity for success.” Alan**

For Michael, rather than just focusing on achieving grades, he had a genuine hope that students would leave his lessons adjusting their mindset from ‘I’m not musical’ to ‘maybe I can’. There was no need for them to aspire to become a virtuoso, but instead appreciate music differently from how they had started. With such creative tools and structured lessons to work on independently as well as with guidance, all students now had a way to find their inner musician and succeed in their own unique way.



# The Impact

Over the last few years since MusicFirst was implemented, the school has seen more tech-minded students at the top of the school than ever before. Students have been immersed in the use of technology as part of their music lessons and homework from the beginning, which has also helped to raise musical literacy. Engagement has improved as have the numbers studying Music as an elective subject post-14, and more students have made the academic commitment to develop their skills in this area.

**“Virtually all classroom teaching and learning activities are now centralised in MusicFirst and this has been a critical ingredient in maintaining learning continuity for the generally disorganised teenage boy. Furthermore, MusicFirst can be easily tailored to suit any context. We have customised it to suit each of our primary, middle and senior music courses.” Alan**

## Alan’s Top 5 benefits to the Music Department

- A one-stop shop centralised platform.
- Ability to address all the mandated syllabus learning experiences of listening, composition, performance with feedback to students in real-time.
- Increased formative assessment informing teaching and differentiation strategies.
- Teachers can collaborate within a school and in the worldwide MusicFirst community.
- Students like using MusicFirst increasing engagement and progression.

From a teaching perspective, one of the key impacts of using MusicFirst has been the ability to free up more time in lessons for those who are struggling – to achieve greater individualised support.

**“The Music Department’s implementation of MusicFirst has laid a firm foundation for the delivery of music in the future. Becoming a MusicFirst Lighthouse Institution has provided us with a stage to showcase what we do to help inspire others.” Michael**



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**Although we are in our third year of implementation, I feel we have only scratched the surface of the potential of MusicFirst to reinvent music education for the contemporary learner.”**

Alan Caulfield

### **Contact Us**

For further information about MusicFirst  
or how your school can become  
a Lighthouse Institution contact:

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