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Singing Group Starter Pack

(revised July 2017)

- Handy Hints
- Starter Lesson Plans
- Resource List
- Practicalities



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

What are the benefits of having a School Choir or Singing Group?

The Greater Manchester Hub actively supports the National Music plan. The National Music Plan makes the following statement:-

“Music benefits the wider life of the school, and so each should have a choir”

Choirs can be a great way to bring together children from across a school community and can improve an individual’s self esteem, confidence, concentration, team work and generally enhance well-being.

“Having a choir has given a new lease of life to school community events and assemblies. Starting each day with a song really lifts everyone’s spirits. The confidence that the choir members have gained now transfers across into classrooms, where both staff and children are braver and happier to sing in lesson time, helping to make learning much more fun...”

Salford Primary School Music coordinator

Positive teacher attitude is vital if singing is to succeed. Be ‘prepared to have a go, to want to do it, as children respond best to a teacher who obviously enjoys singing. Try to find out more about the voice and build up a bank of warm-up games and activities. The more knowledge you have about the voice, the more you will be able to help them find their voices and to improve the sound.

But we can’t because.....

We do not have anyone to play the piano

Many resources and Materials are now available with CD backing tracks. They often have a performance track as well, so that if the lead member of staff cannot read music they can learn the piece by rote. There are also lots of unaccompanied songs.

Students will not commit to after school or lunchtime sessions

Before setting up a choir, start to sing regularly in assemblies or with full classes. Try using a special event as the motivation to join the choir, e.g. Choir members will be invited to attend their authority ‘Big Sing’ or perform in a school talent show.

Music clashes with Sport

In order to give your choir the best chance of success, try to ensure that it is not put on an evening when sports training or matches take place. Children will be torn between these activities and this will impact on numbers and a regular commitment from children.

Practicalities to Consider

- Who will run it? You need someone with the confidence and plenty of enthusiasm, time and energy. There may be a parent or other person willing to take it on, but you will need to consider supervision too.
- Will it be a regular event or just meet from time to time? A regular rehearsal will certainly pay dividends and improve the quality of singing throughout the school.
- Will it take place in school time or after school? If it is in school time, this raises issues of timetable and possibly of cover for staff. If after school, will it clash with other activities?
- Where will you hold it? Is there a suitable space available and benches or chairs for the children to sit on?
- What will the age range be?
- What will you call it? A 'Choir' or a 'Singing Club'?
- Is there a budget? You may need to buy some music.
- Have you access to equipment in case you use material with a tape or CD?
- How long will practices last? Don't forget to include time to set up, plus time for a warm-up as well as the time for practising songs and learning new ones. Aim for 30-45 minutes.
- Do you need a piano/keyboard? Sometimes or always? Is someone available who can play?
- We recommend that Singing Groups are non-auditioned and inclusive. While you may feel that not all the singers have yet found their voice, singing with others, positive role models and lots of encouragement will soon help them to do so.

Once you have decided on the above, make sure that:

- You allow plenty of lead in time. Try to raise the profile of singing first, perhaps by having some workshops as a taster and to gain the children's interest, e.g. Singing Assemblies
- You need to consider your choice of repertoire. Try to include a varied diet of songs to keep the children's interest. Please refer to information provided later in the booklet or contact your local Music Service for advice.
- Plan your rehearsals so that there is plenty of variety, and keep them pacy!
- You try to have a goal to work towards or an event in which you can take part. Make sure that there are opportunities for the children to perform to others and also to hear others perform too.
- Try recording them so that they can hear their own voices and evaluate their performance.
- While the aim should be to encourage the children to sing as well as they can, you need to start from where they are and try to take them forward. Whilst quality and improving the quality should always be an influencing factor, remember that if it is not 'fun', the children will not come.
- There are lots of courses available to help you. As well as contacting your local Music Service, please look at the Hub Website for courses such as "Successful School Singing" and organisations such as Sing for Pleasure who run invaluable courses for choir leaders.
- Enjoy it yourself!



Session Menu

Make sure that you have a clear plan for the whole session, so that you can use your time most effectively.

- Start with a physical warm up to help focus attention and relieve tension, but make sure that other warm ups are relevant to the technical skills required in the songs that you will be covering.
- Try to finish the warm up with a short catchy song, which may have actions or require call and response whilst working on pulse and rhythm.
- Consider the styles and tempo of songs so that the session contains some variety e.g. a fast, lively song to follow a slow one.
- Recap and consolidate any new work from the previous rehearsal.
- Include new work towards the beginning of the session whilst the children are fresh and finish with something successful, or well known and enjoyable.
- Have a clear idea of what you want to achieve for each song and what you need to do to get there.
- Always aim for a good quality of sound from your singers. Be careful that enthusiasm and volume of singing does not become “shouty” and with young voices, do not expect too much volume!
- Always try to finish with something complete and confident for a “feel good factor” which will leave your singers wanting more!

Starter Lesson Plans

We have put together starter lesson plans for the first three sessions based around specific resources some of which you would need to purchase. Please download the relevant plans and resources from the GM Music Hub website www.gmmusichub.co.uk

KS1 Choirs	Singing Sherlock Book 1	Supplementary Sheets
KS2 Choirs	Singing Sherlock Book 2	Supplementary Sheets
Boys' Choirs	Supplementary Sheets	
KS3 Choirs	Novello Youth Choral Anthology SSA	Supplementary Sheets
SEND Choirs	Two songs from Music Unlimited	Supplementary Sheets

Warm-Ups

Warm-ups do not need to take long. Plan a little 'Warm-Up menu' choosing one quick activity from each section, e.g.

Physical	To energise the group, focus attention and relieve tension
Posture Check	As good posture promotes better vocal quality
Breathing	To promote deeper breathing and supported singing
Facial	To ensure face is tension free, to enable expression
Articulation	To encourage the children to sing clearly and expressively
Warm-up Song	Usually a fun, lively song or chant to start you off!

- Healthy singing involves the whole body. Athletes warm up their muscles before a race, and in the same way, singers need to warm up both the body and the vocal folds before singing.
- A good warm up helps to get rid of any tension in the body, and should always be fun!
- Songs and warm ups that involve actions help to focus children's attention and improve their concentration.

Physical Warm-up Activities:

A physical warm up is essential at the start of a rehearsal as it either gets rid of the excess, pent up energy or energises those children that are feeling a little sluggish! Look for enthusiastic actions, big movements and stretches and encourage everyone to join in.

- Shake out hands, wrists, elbows, upper body, hips, legs, feet, ankles, so that the whole body feels "floppy".
- Put your shoulders up to your ears and then relax them. Do this two or three times, feeling the tension build and enjoying the moment of relaxation.
- Rotate the shoulders, one at a time then together, in opposite directions.

- Shake out! - Vigorously shake right hand in the air for 8 counts. Repeat with left hand, then right foot and left foot. Next halve the counts and repeat the cycle to 4 counts. Halve again to 2 counts and finally do 1 count ending with an energetic 'hey!'

Posture

Always aim for good, relaxed posture, sitting or standing tall. A good stance or sitting position is important, because the body supports the voice, so not sitting or standing well will affect the quality of the vocal sound. Explain this to the children and once they understand why good posture is important they are more likely to stand or sit well!

It is also important that you model good posture yourself at the front, so try not to sit on your hips or stand with your legs crossed.

Use the following as a posture checklist:

- The feet should be slightly apart (roughly shoulder width) so that the balance is secure. Check that the knees are not locked.
- The weight should be slightly forward onto the balls of the feet rather than the heels – check for children standing with the weight on one leg.
- Spine long and gently stretched.
- The shoulders need to be back and down, but at the same time relaxed, but not hunched.
- Head level and floating free – no chins sticking out as this constricts the neck.
- Always think of the crown of the head leading and rather than the forehead. Use the image of a 'puppet on a string' imagining a string from the top of the head and pulling upwards.
- Check for tension in the necks – imagine a nodding dog on a car dashboard!
- The arms should be loose at the side – not hands clasped behind or in front.

Breathing

Ask any group of children to take a big breath and the majority of them will gasp air in, lifting their shoulders and puffing out their chests. We need to train them to breathe using their abdominal muscles and the following exercises will begin to endorse the basics of good breathing technique. It is important to check that shoulders are not raised on the 'in' breath and that the children don't 'flop' as they breath out but maintain a good, tall posture.

Exercise 1

- Breath out through your mouth releasing all the air from your lungs.
- Once your lungs feel completely empty, relax your stomach muscles, open your mouth and let the air flood back in.
- Do this several times.
- Now breathe in again and when you release the air add an 'sss' sound. See how long you can hold it.
- Try this again using 'shh' and 'fff' sounds. This will help to build different vocal muscles.

Exercise 2

- Breath in for a count of four, ensuring the breath fills the bottom of the lungs and no shoulders are raised.
- Hold for a count of 4 with a relaxed open throat.
- Hiss the whole breath out for a count of 4. This will engage the abdominal muscles and help to make it clear where the support comes from for the inward breath.
- Relax then repeat the cycle twice more.
- This can then be gradually increased by a count of 2 each week.

Exercise 3

- Counting four, breathe out whiles you bring your left ear down to your shoulder.
- Counting four, breath in and bring your head up to the starting position.
- Repeat with the right ear.

Other ideas and analogies

- Drink in a thick milk shake or a glass of air. The throat should remain open and relaxed & you should feel a stream of cold air on the back of the roof of the mouth.

- Blow up an imaginary balloon then gently let the air escape with a hiss.
- Blow out the candles on a cake; first one at a time then try blowing them all out in one breath. (This engages the abdominal muscles.)
- Blow air out gently onto your index finger. This encourages an even flow of breath controlled from the abdominal muscles.
- Copying individual sounds with hands on the ribs so that you can feel the muscles working, e.g. ff, gg, kk, tt, sh, ch, ha, vv,
- For younger children they could be bumble bees zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz or steam engines shhhhhhh ch ch ch ch. They could laugh ha ha ha ho ho he he all with hands on tummies to feel the muscles working.
- For longer breaths you could make long animal noises, baaaaa, moooooo, grrrrrr, neeeeeigh, ssssss, Ta-wit twoooooooooo etc.

Facial Warm-ups

If the face muscles are exercised and warmed up the children will articulate better and will use more facial expression. They will be more inclined to smile.

To warm up the face muscles:

- Tap lightly with fingertips all over the face or massage it using small circular movements with the fingertips.
- Imagine you are chewing a treacle toffee. A piece has got stuck in a tooth and you are trying to remove it.
- Scrunch up the face to make the smallest face you can and then make a really big face. Make an angry face, a sad face, a happy face, an excited face, surprised, bored, proud etc.
- Let the lips become very loose and blow through them ('Horse lips').
- Flick the tongue in and out like a snake.
- Yawn and stretch (several times).
- Explore the mouth with the tongue, rolling it round inside.

- Say 'oo-ee' several times, exaggerating the lip shapes.

Articulation

Words need to be clearly enunciated and crisp, so say or whisper tongue twisters such as:

- Busy brown bees are buzzing in the blue bells.
- Unique New York
- Eleven lemon lollipops
- My mother made me mash my m n m's
- Ten tiny tottering turtles
- Red lorry, yellow lorry
- Sizzling sausages
- Fluffy, floppy, puppy
- The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue

Repeat slowly at first, then increase the speed as the children learn to get their mouths around the words.

Remember we are looking for clarity and encouraging the children to move their mouths more.

Try: mee nee lee thee vee zee

Then move it up and down a 3 note run singing every sound on each note.

You can also mix it up by changing the vowel sound e.g.

ma na la...

mo no lo....

etc.

Or you could try it backwards zee vee thee lee nee nee.

This is a very good exercise for both articulation and concentration!

Warm-Up Songs

Chants, raps and warm-up songs

These are excellent for motivating children and energise the teeth, lips and tongue. Chants and raps provide a valuable link between talking and singing voices and can particularly encourage more reluctant singers. Encourage a physical response to the music and try to keep the pulse with the feet/tapping knees. Here are a number of recommended resources that work particularly well.

Title	Where to find it	Publisher	Aimed at
Mr Wiggly Waggly	Young Voiceworks	OUP	KS1
Warm up & Stomp Canon	Young Voiceworks or Sing Up Songbank	OUP	KS1
Plasticine Man	Sing Up Songbank	-	KS1
Going on a Bear Hunt	Sing for Pleasure Book 10	Sing for Pleasure	KS1
Tony Chestnut	Sing Up Songbank	-	KS1
Train Coming	Sing Up Songbank	-	KS1/2
Boom Chicka Boom	Sing for Pleasure Book 1	Sing for Pleasure	KS2/Boys
Kumala Vista	Sing for Pleasure Book 2	Sing for Pleasure	KS2/Boys
Kelele	Sing for Pleasure Book 11	Sing for Pleasure	KS2/Boys
Here comes Sally	Sing Up Songbank	-	KS2
Ken and Barbie Beatboxing Groove	Sing Up Songbank	-	KS2/Boys
Scoo-be doo song	Junior Voiceworks	OUP	KS2/3/Boys
Pizza Hut	Junior Voiceworks	OUP	KS2
The Hand Jive	Junior Voiceworks & Sing for Pleasure Book 1	OUP & Sing for Pleasure	KS2
The Human Drum Kit	Banana Splits	A&C Black	KS2/Boys
The Weird Sisters Rap	Sing Up Songbank	-	KS2/3
Grandma Rap	Singing Sherlock 2 or Sing Up Songbank	Boosey & Hawkes	KS2/3/Boys
Doo bi doo	Sing Up Songbank	-	KS2/3/Boys
Chicken Tikka CD	Tom Wakeley	Writers of Note	KS2
S!ng Warm Ups	Out of the Ark	Out of the Ark	KS1/2
Vocal Warm-up Activities	Charanga online resource	Charanga website	KS1/2
Find Your Voice	Online resource	Musical Futures	KS3

Please choose any of the material that you feel would be appropriate when working with SEND choirs.

Resources

We have made a small number of recommendations for each choir to get you started.

	Title	Publisher
KS1	Singing Sherlock Book 1	Boosey & Hawkes
	Apple Tree, Sing for Pleasure Book 13	Sing for Pleasure
	Young Voiceworks	O.U.P.
KS2	Singing Sherlock Book 2	Boosey & Hawkes
	A Clang and a Clatter/Don't Forget to Feed It	Alan Simmons Music
	Junior Songscape Stage and Screen	Faber Music
Boys	This type of choir is a little more difficult to purchase music for, as no one book will do the job! www.sheetmusicdirect.com will allow you to search for music and transpose the key to make it sit comfortably for boys' voices	
	Sports Cantata	National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCoS)
	Roller Ghoster	Alan Simmons Music/Sing
		Up/Singing Sherlock Bk 2
KS3	Songscape	Faber Music
	Novello Youth Choral Anthology SSA	Novello
	Individual Sheets available from Alfred Publishing, Hal Leonard or www.sheetmusicdirect.com	



Top 10 Sing Up tried and tested songs.....

- Roller Ghoster
- Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around
- Good to be me
- Can you hear my voice?
- Magic Travel Machine
- Pirates!
- Sunshine in my heart
- Gospel Medley
- Janie Mama
- Ain't No Mountain High Enough

www.singup.org.uk - this site requires a subscription to access resources.

Top 10 Charanga tried and tested songs.....

The Sing out! selection mostly 3 part songs for more advanced use:

- Something Inside So Strong
- One Love

Friday Afternoons 2014:

- Baiskeli by Gwenyth Herbert
- Orford Lighthouse by Zoe Dixon

Little Voices series (2-part songs):

- Matilda - When I grow up
- Over The Rainbow - Wizard of Oz
- Consider Yourself - Oliver

Pop songs:

- Three Little Birds
- Lean on Me
- Happy

Charanga's exciting new Vocal Coach video resource provides a fascinating insight into the importance of vocal health with inspiring ways to engage pupils with vocal warm ups. Suitable for both non-specialist and specialist teachers, it uses the expertise of Kim Chandler in a series of short videos. 'Exploring Vocal Health' teaches you how to look after your voice, how your voice works and how to keep it safe and 'Vocal Warm-up Activities' guide you through a series of fun yet rigorous activities to warm up vocally with your class.

www.charanga.com - this site does require a subscription to access resources.

Top 10 Out of the Ark tried and tested songs.....

- It's Good to be Me (part singing) - Songs for Every Happy, Healthy School
- A Healthy Life (a great round) - Songs for Every Happy, Healthy School
- S!ng Together (optional short & simple harmonies) – S!ng Together
- We're So Proud of Our School (optional harmonies) – S!ng Together
- Give it all You've Got (rap) – Songs for Every Assembly
- We Like Joyful Music (part-singing) – Songs for Every Assembly
- Life is a Wonderful Thing (a classic!) – Song for Every Easter
- Spring Chicken (simple, fun with a dance video online) – Songs for Every Easter
- Every Brand New Day (call and response) - Songs for Every Body (free on Song Calendar)
- Clap Hands! Stamp Feet! (fun action song) - Songs for Every Body

www.outoftheark.com for Out of the Ark publications and for access to their Singchronize player.

All of the S!ng Series of Songbooks are suitable for choirs, especially

- S!ng Something Silly
- S!ng Together
- S!ng a Joyful Assembly

'Total Vocals' SEND Projects

Total Vocals is the GM Hub's flagship inclusion project. Piloted in 2014-6 with funds from the National Foundation for Youth Music, the hub is committed to finding ways for special needs students and their mainstream peers to sing and celebrate together. To this end there are three strategic themes:

- Partnering with major venues such as The Bridgewater Hall and the Lowry Centre to stage regular high quality inclusive performance events
- Training vocal leaders to encourage and improve singing in special schools
- Commissioning new works to support inclusive singing

Our specialist consulting partner in Total Vocals is Music Unlimited. They work closely with us and provide a range of services including musical direction of large-scale events. They may be contacted via www.music-unlimited.org.uk or by email: musicunlimited@me.com

Other Useful Resources

www.gmmusichub.co.uk

Greater Manchester Music Hub Song Source – a list of songs to link in with different areas of the curriculum

For further ideas try:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sing/learning>

For more ideas about how to warm up your voice and some top tips for singing.

<https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/world-voice/world-songbook>

The World Voice Songbook is an e-resource produced by the British Council, which allows children from all over the world to learn about other cultures through traditional songs. It contains songs that you can explore in the classroom with downloadable teacher guidance notes to learn how to use the songbooks effectively in your class.

www.alansimmonsmusic.com

Composer Alan Simmons spent many years as Music Adviser for Kirklees before deciding to take up composing full time. Look here for lots of great repertoire, especially for KS2 pupils. There are collections of individual songs such as in 'A Clang and a Clatter & Don't Forget to Feed It' and also musicals on a theme such as "Farewell Admirable Queen" about Katherine Parr.

www.singforpleasure.org.uk

This National Choral Organisation runs courses for teachers and choir leaders to improve their song teaching skills, gesture and conducting, as well as publishing a fantastic series of Songbooks for both Primary and KS3 pupils as well as Youth choirs. All repertoire is tried and tested before publication. They also run singing days and residential courses for young singers.

www.voices.org.uk

The mission of the Voices Foundation is to help children and young people aged 0-18 to learn to sing and develop as musicians. They help teachers and schools to ensure that music is an integral part of education from the Early Years onwards, transforming lives through singing. As well as running training courses for teachers, they also publish 'Inside Music', a progressive framework for teaching and assessing musical skills and concepts from Early Years to Key Stage 2. The series of three books form a complete resource for class teachers and music educators to support singing-based musical learning from the Early Years to Key Stage 2.

How to Contact Your Local Music Service

Bolton Music Service

Telephone: 01204 333533

Email: music.service@bolton.gov.uk

Bury Music Service

Telephone: 0161 796 9910

Email: mail@burymusic.co.uk

Oldham Music Service

Telephone: 0161 770 5660

Email: musicservice@oldham.gov.uk

Rochdale Music Service

Telephone: 01706 926750

Email: rochdale.musicservice@rochdale.gov.uk

Salford Music Service

Telephone: 0161 778 0256

Email: mapas@scll.co.uk

Stockport Music Service

Telephone: 0161 483 7636

Email: music.service@stockport.gov.uk

Tameside Music Service

Telephone: 0161 882 9548

Email: musicservice@tameside.gov.uk

Trafford Music Service

Telephone: 0161 911 8659

Email: music.service@trafford.gov.uk

Wigan Music Service

Telephone: 01942 776169

Email: musicservice@wigan.gov.uk