

WHY BECOME A SINGING SCHOOL?

Becoming a Singing School motivates the whole school community to work together towards a common goal while taking part in an activity that everyone can do and enjoy – singing. Singing improves learning, confidence, health and social development. It has the power to change lives and help build stronger communities.

Take a moment to think about an ideal school environment. You might imagine a calm, well-operating and friendly, happy school, where:

- Children feel welcome, safe and secure
- Children arrive focused, enthused and ready to learn
- Children support each other's learning
- Learning achievements are joyfully celebrated by the wider school community
- Learning challenges are met with determination, optimism and self-belief
- There is a strong sense of teamwork in each class and across the school among staff and pupils alike
- Children are attentive listeners and productive learners
- Children and staff take pride in their school
- There's a strong community ethos in the school
- Behaviour and attendance are good
- Newcomers to the school are welcomed and integrated quickly
- Children with additional needs are supported, valued and included
- Parents, carers and the wider school community feel part of the school and are positive about its achievements and ethos.

"Singing threads through the life of this school and has created a positive ethos around the whole school. Our results are the result of the music that threads through the school."

Ann Golding, Head
Teacher, Highfield Infants
School

Embedding regular singing into school life is a way of ensuring that all these attributes develop over time. At Sing Up, we have seen countless examples and collected many case studies where the school community themselves believe that it is singing that has transformed their school. From head teachers to pupils and parents, all have reported the change they have seen take place as the result of regular singing happening in the school. You will find examples of these case studies throughout the book.

"The students have gained so much from music and singing beyond just the singing itself."

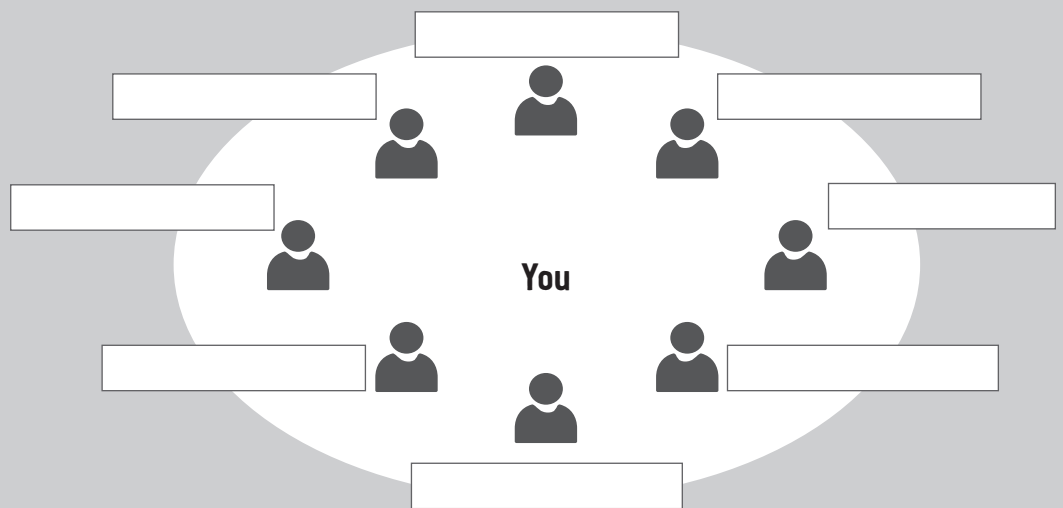
Stephen Whittle,
Principal, Hayes School

2. THE SINGING SCHOOL JOURNEY

3. Decide on a timeframe for achieving your goals. Make sure it is realistic and achievable but is challenging enough to be motivating and galvanise action.

| | | | | |
|--------------|------|---|------|---------------|
| START | Year | → | Year | FINISH |
| | Term | → | Term | |
| | Date | → | Date | |

4. Who might be in a small working group with you to help with the planning?



5. What barriers do you think you will encounter? For example, pressures on time or teachers' lack of confidence in singing with their pupils, or in leading singing with their class.

Barrier 1



Barrier 2



Barrier 3



Barrier 4



in relation to work-ethic, inter-personal respect and other professional expectations.

The school singing leader

So, what can we learn from the example of the orchestral conductor that might help us to define the role of a singing leader in a school context? Quite a lot, in fact. Do you need to be a trained conductor to be a singing leader? No, but here is what we can learn from the comparison.

Teaching and learning

As a teacher, you already know how to do this which is good, because it is the main difference between your role as a school vocal leader and the role of an orchestral conductor. Unlike the orchestral conductor, you will need to teach your pupils the songs you are going to sing, and help them to learn to use the instrument in question – their voices. Later in the chapter, we will look at some techniques and approaches to help you do this. And in chapters 7, 8 and 9 we will look at:

- Singing to develop musical learning (Chapter 7)
- Starting and developing choirs (Chapter 8)
- Making progress and improving singing (Chapter 9)

Keeping time

As a vocal leader, one of your responsibilities is to make sure the singers know when and how to begin singing, and to keep them together once they have started. You might be singing with a piano accompaniment, with a backing track or unaccompanied (*a cappella*) and you'll need to do different things to achieve a clean start and keeping together in each of those contexts.

Singing with a piano or instrumental accompaniment

When singing with a piano or other instrumental accompaniment, you need to be able to communicate the pulse to the instrumentalists as well as the singers. If there is an introduction before the singers come in, you could leave the initial tempo to them as long as you have agreed what it is beforehand, and you are confident that they can set the tempo on their own. If your piano accompanist or instrumentalists are pupils, it might be safer to set the tempo yourself, particularly for a performance. It is quite common for young or inexperienced performers to rush when they are nervous.

Ensuring that the instrumentalists and singers can hear each other will help keep the ensemble together but you may need to keep reminding them to listen to each other – this will also help your singers with tuning.