

Unit 15 Ongoing skills

ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit highlights the musical skills that require regular practice and ongoing development throughout the key stage. It focuses on the development of the singing voice and other essential musical skills, *eg listening skills, aural memory and physical skills*, which should be a regular part of classroom work week-by-week. All the activities in this unit are designed so that they can be taught in short periods when opportunities arise.

The unit is designed to be used flexibly throughout the key stage. The material given in this unit can be used in any order. The 'Points to note' column includes suggestions about how the activities could be extended when the material is revisited.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

The intention is that this unit will form the heart of the music programme for years 5 and 6. It builds on units 1 and 8. It will be extended by, and support, all the other units for this phase. When teaching material from this unit, attention should be given to the learning objectives of the other units being used at the same time.

This unit can make a significant contribution to literacy by developing confidence in the use of the voice and the ability to use and perceive expression in language. It also contributes to all other learning through the development of listening skills and aural memory. Singing, in particular, can lift spirits, focus concentration and develop group identity, and therefore has much to contribute to children's overall development.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children and teachers have:

- sung a variety of songs
- developed their skills through the activities described in units 1 and 8

VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- singing techniques, *eg breathing, posture, articulation, sound projection*
- musical elements, *eg pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture*
- structure, *eg phrase, sections, verse, chorus, round*
- context, *eg venue, occasion, time and place, intended effect*

RESOURCES

Stimulus:

- songs
- music
- words

Sound sources:

- voices
- body percussion
- classroom instruments

EXPECTATIONS

at the end of this unit

most children will:

sing confidently in tune with awareness of breathing, diction, dynamics, phrasing and pitch control; identify where to place emphasis and accents in a song to create the intended effects; perform songs from memory with confidence and with an understanding of the meaning and impact of words

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

sing confidently, following the contours of the melody, but will need help with rhythmic detail; communicate and perform for others; maintain a part in their own group with the support of others

some children will have progressed further and will:

sing confidently, alone and in a group, displaying a variety of vocal techniques; take a lead in class in group singing; sing expressively and in tune, both alone and in a group; perform showing expressive control of the musical elements

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

SINGING SONGS WITH CONTROL AND USING THE VOICE EXPRESSIVELY

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> about breathing, dynamics and accuracy of pitch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhythmic chants: Sing songs or chants either to warm up at the beginning of a lesson, or in short spaces of time during the day. Choose short rhythmic words, <i>eg zip zop na na</i>. The teacher or child says the words and the class echo. Keep the pulse going throughout. Posture: Encourage good posture by asking children to stand tall, knees loose and feet apart. Everyone should breathe together through their mouths. Encourage low breathing (that is, without breathing into the chest and without raising the shoulders) by asking the children to take a drink of air that goes right down low, 'as if your tummy is a tank of air'. To stop the shoulders rising, children should imagine carrying heavy objects in each hand. Ask the children to try singing a simple, short, well-known song at half speed. <i>Can you still breathe in a sensible place?</i> The singing face: Encourage the children to lift the face by smiling. To help them project the sound, use a follow-my-leader activity. Humming phrases of songs will also encourage an unforced, well-blended sound. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sing songs with increasing control of breathing, posture and sound projection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always watch for tension in the children's singing, <i>eg tight neck muscles (veins standing out in the neck), protruding jaws, or singing through clenched teeth</i>. Always aim for a balance between poise and relaxation. When breathing, children may think they are opening their mouths more than they actually are. They should try putting, or imagine putting, two fingers in their mouths to feel the size of the opening needed. They should also look into a mirror. To prevent children from forcing the sound, refrain from asking them to 'sing up!' If the song needs to be louder, ask the children to take a deeper breath to support the sound.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how to improve tone production and use diction and other vocal techniques, <i>eg legato and staccato</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diction: Continue the work begun in year 3/4 on vowel sounds. Try singing 'Do you chew blue glue?' ('oo'), 'Ah, there's Pa's car!' ('ah') and 'We three bees need trees!' ('ee'). To develop clear diction use tongue twisters. To develop staccato sounds, the children should practise repeated patterns, feeling their tummy muscles contract, <i>eg ss ss ss or ss hh ff tt</i>, or imagine blowing out a candle in short bursts, <i>eg fff fff fff</i>. To encourage legato sounds ask the children to imagine a long piece of chewing gum coming out of the middle of their forehead as they sing, which carries all the words. Legato and staccato: Teach the children a variety of songs that require legato and staccato singing. Discuss with the children how these particular techniques help create the desired mood/feeling/texture, etc. Discuss the words of the song with the children to decide which are the key words that portray the setting and mood of the song. <i>Can you find a way of singing these words to create the right effect?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sing confidently as a class, in small groups and alone, and begin to have an awareness of improvisation with the voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions can help with recall of words for longer songs. Words should be memorised, so that the children can focus on singing musically. Copies of words/music form a barrier between the performer and the audience. [Link with literacy]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> about pulse, rhythm and metre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metre: Metre is the grouping of the pulse into stronger and weaker beats. This could be linked with literacy, <i>eg try saying the nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty without any stresses</i>. Now discuss what felt wrong. Sing a known song. While singing, the children walk the pulse and clap their hands on the strong beat. Sing an African or gospel song and encourage children to move with the pulse, <i>eg stopping, swaying or finger clicking</i>. Improvise 'scat' patterns over a steady pulse provided by hand claps, a keyboard, drum machine or 'sequencer', <i>eg doo be doo be wop wop</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify the metre of different songs through recognising the pattern of strong and weak beats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will build on earlier work where the sense of pulse has been developed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> about phrase and other musical structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phrase: A phrase in music is the same as a phrase in English – it is a group of sounds that make some sense. Divide the class into two groups to sing alternate phrases. Ask the children to sing the song walking in a circle in one direction, changing direction for the next phrase. Small groups devise their own set of movements for the phrases of the song. Revisit the 'Traffic lights' game (see unit 8). Sing a simple song and work out how many phrases are in the song. Label each different phrase with a letter, <i>eg ABCD</i>, etc. A song may have a rhythmic phrase structure as follows: ABAC or ABAB, etc. Help children analyse the phrase structure of songs. <i>Can you identify any repeated melodic sequence in songs you are singing?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify phrases through breathing in appropriate places and recognise structures, <i>eg the repetition of phrases in known songs</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where a phrase repeats, discuss with the children if it would be appropriate to sing the repeated phrase at the same or different dynamic, <i>eg louder/softer level</i>.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to extend their control and understanding of pitch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the children to sing up and down eight-note scales, <i>eg C to C</i>, or five-note (pentatonic) scales, <i>eg C D E G A</i>. Half the class sing the first note of the scale and hold it as a drone while the other half sing slowly up the scale to the sound 'oo'. Ask children to listen to the effect. Swap over. Ask the children to sing rounds and part songs. Ask them to listen to how their part fits with others. Using a simple backing, <i>eg one-note chord accompaniment on a keyboard</i>, ask the children to improvise sung phrases. Continue to use songs written in staff notation. Remind the children constantly how the notes reflect how the voice goes higher and lower. Use the top number of the time signature to say how many counts or claps should be made before they sing. Point out the different notes highlighting the long (two-beat minims ♩) and the very long notes (four-beat semibreves ♩), the short (half-beat quavers ♪) and very short (quarter-beat semiquavers ♫) notes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sing songs in tune and with awareness of other parts sing songs using staff notation as a support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some countries notes are described in relation to the longest commonly used note, the semibreve (♩). This is then the whole note, and minims (♪) become half-notes, crotchets (♫) become quarter-notes and quavers (♫) become eighth notes.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

- how to make expressive use of elements and techniques and develop their performances

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

- **The acting face:** Choose words from a known song that tells a story. Ask the children to walk round the room in any direction. On a given sound, eg a cymbal, each child turns to a partner, and speaks the words of the song with expression, as if telling a story. The cymbal is played again, and the process is repeated. Later, perform the activity by singing the song using as much expression as before. *Did your partner reflect the story in his/her facial expression?*
- **How do I add variety to the song?:** Take a song and decide whether certain verses would be effective if sung by a small group or solo. Discuss with the class what tempo/dynamics would be appropriate. Try humming a verse of the song, or singing to a chosen vowel such as 'oo'. Try a tapped rhythm, tuned/untuned percussion or a guitar accompaniment. *Would it be effective to try one verse unaccompanied?*
- **How can the children accompany their songs?:** Sing a song and take a short rhythmic or melodic fragment from the song for the class to sing or play. This can be used as an introduction or ending to the song. If it is repeated throughout the song it becomes a vocal or instrumental ostinato.

LISTENING, MEMORY AND MOVEMENT

- to listen with sustained concentration
- to remember longer pieces of music
- about metre

- Play the memory games described in unit 8, eg 'Copy cats', 'Put a pattern in space', and extend the complexity and length of the phrase to be repeated.
- Play 'Hear and play': Ask the class to copy a given rhythmic or melodic pattern, and this time start the new pattern as the class is repeating the last one heard, eg

Teacher (or pupil) 
Class

- Create as many opportunities as possible for children to see and hear other instruments, eg instruments that children learn outside the classroom, recital groups, orchestral projects, parents who play in bands or orchestras.
- Choose excerpts and complete pieces that last between five and ten minutes. Ask children to try and remember three or four main features and place them in order.
- Play 'Metre switch': A leader taps and claps a four-beat metre, eg tap, clap, clap, clap. The rest of the class joins in when they have 'caught' the pattern. The leader says 'switch' and changes to a different metre, eg tap, clap, clap. The class listens and joins in again.
- Play 'Metre mix': In this game the class shares the beats. Some beats are played by everyone, some by different groups, some by nobody, eg

	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4		1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
Group 1	X - X -	X - X -	Group 1	1 - - 4 - -	1 - - 4 - -
Group 2	X - - X	X - - X	Group 2	1 2 - 4 - -	1 2 - 4 - -
			Group 3	- - - - 5 6	- - - - 5 6

- Help children improve their work. *What was effective? Why? What could be better? How? What features were most effective? How did they create an intended effect? What features were similar/different in the performances?* Encourage the children to make comparisons within and across performances.

- respond physically to music with understanding of musical features

- Create dances from music to reflect how sound has been used, the structure of the music and the mood created.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

CHILDREN

- sing with expression and rehearse with others

- listen to longer pieces of music and identify features
- identify different metres and perform an independent part, keeping to a steady pulse
- improve their own work through analysis, evaluation and comparison

- create dances that reflect musical features

POINTS TO NOTE

- Encourage children to get into the character or mood by feeling the music throughout the body.
- When rehearsing a song for a performance, do not simply sing through the song without a specific intention. Always have a purpose for singing the song.
- Some children will write their rhythm compositions using mnemonics or playwords. Others will use conventional rhythmic notation, especially if they play an instrument.
- By sharing performance opportunities, children can be encouraged to appraise their own and other people's singing.
- This activity, which explores accompaniments, is the focus of units 11, 17 and 20.

- Children will need help to sustain their concentration at first and will find it easier if they are asked to focus on smaller sections at first. These can be joined together.
- **Extension activity:** Ask the children to identify the metre of recorded music by tap clapping an appropriate pattern. Ask children to improvise clapped rhythms while others tap clap in a given metre. Create a human drum kit, eg stamp for bass drum, knee slap for side drum, clap for high hat cymbal.

- Dance can provide a clear demonstration of musical understanding and will enable the children who find language more difficult to show how much they can hear and recognise.

EXTENSION AND FUTURE LEARNING

In addition to the examples given in the 'Points to note' section, children could go on to:

- apply skills learned through singing in their English work, eg *clarity of diction and use of the expressive voice in drama activities*
- apply skills learned through physical response to music in their dance activities
- celebrate their singing through providing class performances for assembly time and school concerts

ENRICHMENT

- The class could attend concerts given by a variety of different singing groups.
- Professional singers could be invited into the school to perform and sing with the children. They could also provide some coaching for children and staff.
- The class could meet members of the cast from an opera company and discuss voice production, clarity of diction and breathing.

REPERTOIRE

The suggestions given in the unit are only examples that could be used within the activities given in the unit. Wherever possible, teachers should use their own repertoire.

GLOSSARY

Accompaniment: Adding rhythmic and/or melodic material to a song or melody.

Legato: Full, long and flowing notes.

Ostinato: Repeated material.

Phrase: A group of sounds that make musical sense.

Scat pattern: Improvised singing using invented words such as 'doo be wap'.

Staccato: Short, bouncy notes.

Staff notation: Notation that uses lines and spaces to show pitch and differently shaped notes to indicate duration, eg

◦ *semibreve – four beats*

♪ *minim – two beats*

♪ *crotchet – one beat*

♪ *quaver – half-beat*

♪ *semiquaver – quarter-beat*

