

## Unit 5 Taking off

### Exploring pitch

#### ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit develops children's ability to discriminate between higher and lower sounds and to create simple melodic patterns.

During this unit they learn to control the pitch of their voices and instruments by moving higher and lower both in steps and leaps and holding the same note. They create simple melodic patterns and use changes in pitch expressively to respond to the stimuli of stories.

This unit should be revisited during the key stage.

#### WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit links to the ongoing skills unit (unit 1) by reinforcing and extending understanding of pitch, that is, higher and lower sounds. It leads to unit 12.

#### PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children and teachers have:

- begun to recognise and control higher and lower sounds with their voices
- become familiar with the words 'high' and 'low' and be able to use them appropriately
- played tuned percussion instruments
- listened to a wide range of music

#### VOCABULARY

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

- pitch, eg *high, low, higher, lower, going up, going down, steps, jumps, slides*
- structure, eg *phrases of a song*

#### RESOURCES

##### Stimulus:

- stories
- songs
- recorded music
- dot cards (symbols)

##### Sound sources:

- voices
- classroom instruments

#### EXPECTATIONS

##### at the end of this unit

*most children will:*

identify and control changes in pitch and use them expressively; create short melodic patterns; use changes in pitch expressively in response to a stimulus

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

imitate and respond to changes in pitch; recognise and create melodic patterns with some help

*some children will have progressed further and will:*

sing and perform with accurate control of pitch; create melodic patterns to respond to a stimulus

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**POINTS TO NOTE**

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

**INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS PITCH?**

- what is meant by pitch
- Talk about high and low sounds in the environment and imitate them with voices, *eg low: some animal noises, some people's voices; high: some animal noises including bird song, squeaking hinges, machine bleeps, some people's voices.*
- Play 'High and low': Prepare two chime bars an octave apart, *eg middle C and the C an octave higher.* Tap the low C and sing: 'Have you got your low voice?' The children respond by singing: 'Yes I've got my low voice' on the same note. Repeat with the high C. When the children are skilled at playing this singing game, introduce the middle note, G. Use hand position to reinforce high, middle, low.
- Tape and play back the children's high, middle and low voices so that the children can hear themselves using these different voices.
- Teach the children songs with specific reference to pitch, *eg Hand on your head.*

- follow pitch movement with their hands and use high, low and middle voices

- Remember there is a language confusion for young children with the terms 'high'/'low' and 'loud'/'quiet', *eg turn the TV up.* Pitch is a demanding concept for young children and needs constant reinforcement.
- Use hand movements to demonstrate changes in pitch, *eg notes getting higher or lower when singing.* This should be constantly reinforced, as it is a vital part of the learning experience at this stage.
- Encourage children to listen very carefully so that they match the notes exactly using their voices. Notes that sound exactly the same are 'in tune'.

**EXPLORATION: HOW CAN WE MAKE SOUNDS HIGHER/LOWER?**

- how to control the pitch of the voice
- Revisit those activities in unit 1 which are concerned with controlling the pitch of the voice. Pay attention to posture, breathing and the quality of singing. The games 'Blast off', 'Switchback', 'Hump bridge' and 'Upstairs and downstairs' will help the children to control the pitch of their singing voices.
- Play other singing games in which children sing phrases alone. Make use of 'The singing puppet': A child wears a glove puppet and makes the puppet sing a song, so that the child sings solo, often unaware that they are doing so.
- Ask the children to sing known songs at different pitches, ie starting on different notes.

- sing a melody accurately at their own pitch

- If the child cannot sing back at the same pitch as the teacher, try repeating the question at the child's pitch. (For male teachers this may need to be one octave lower.)
- Encourage children to show pitch with their hand. As the pitch of the sound goes up, the hand is raised and vice-versa.
- **Extension activity:** Sing songs which involve longer phrases and encourage children to build their confidence by singing solo for longer.

- to respond to changes in pitch
- Play a pitch game in which children must respond to changes in pitch. Use two chime bars, one high pitch, one low, *eg G and C.* The children stand when the teacher plays low to high, and sit when the teacher plays high to low. They stay in the same place if a note is repeated. Repeat using a swanee or song whistle which slides up and down.
- Listen to music that has well-defined changes in pitch, *eg Wild asses from The carnival of the animals.* Discuss the pitch of the first three sounds (a very high sound followed by two lower ones). Ask the children to match the pitch of the first of the first three sounds with their hands. When the children listen to the piece again, they should match the phrase each time they hear it.
- Stand a xylophone vertically with the lowest (largest) notes at the bottom. Illustrate stories or nursery rhymes, *eg Jack and Jill, Humpty Dumpty, Hickory, dickory dock,* by playing up or down the notes at appropriate moments. Discuss how the playing reflects the action, *eg running up the notes for the mouse, jumping from high to low for Humpty's fall.*
- 'Voice walking': Demonstrate to the children how to move their hands upwards while sliding their voices upwards. The children then try this themselves. Repeat with a downward movement accompanied by voice sliding down, and hand moving horizontally accompanied by voice holding a steady note. See if the children can make their voices follow a hand as it moves up and down or stays on the same level. Keep it simple.
- 'Hunt the tune': Prepare a xylophone, glockenspiel or set of chime bars with the notes of C major, that is, C D E F G A B C'. Ask the children, one at a time, to try to find phrases of well-known songs, *eg the first three notes of Three blind mice, Hot cross buns, Twinkle, twinkle little star.* You may need to provide the first note. The children should sing as they play.

- move up or down following changes in pitch

- **Extension activity:** Play 'Swampee'. Put out two notes, *eg C and G.* Choose one of these to be the magic note. Line up a few of the children (explorers) at the end of the room. To reach the treasure they have to cross a swamp by treading on imaginary stepping stones. The stones only appear when the magic note is played. Play a note. If it is the magic note the explorers can take one step forward. If it is not they should stand still. Keep playing the two notes, sometimes changing them, sometimes repeating them. Explorers who make a mistake are swallowed up by the swamp. Increase the number of notes as the children become more skilful at hearing the magic note.
- **Extension activity:** Invite children to work out each phrase of a simple up and down song, *eg Once a man fell in a well.* When all the phrases have been worked out ask one child to play the whole song while the class sing, following the movement up and down on the xylophone with their hands. Note that the xylophone could be placed so that it stands with the lowest (largest) notes at the bottom.

- to relate sounds to symbols
- Make a set of dot cards. Provide the children with three consecutive notes, *eg C D E or D E F,* and two beaters, and ask them to play the three-note tunes shown on the cards. They should be able to find their own starting note. Encourage good quality sound production. The children should sing as they play, either with 'la' or with made-up words.
- Encourage the children to make up and score their own three-note tunes.

- play and sing phrases from dot notation
- record their own tunes

- **Extension activity:** Extend the length of the melodies – play/make up five-note melodies using three notes. The children may wish to write in the letter names of the notes. If the children have difficulty following the notes in the right order, add arrows to show the direction of the melody. Remind the children that the notes can be repeated. They can include silences (rests). (Remember that when reading dot notation the horizontal spacing can have great significance as it can show how long to play the sound.) They may want to try to indicate the duration of the notes by placing the notes closer or further apart.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

## POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

### BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: HOW CAN WE USE HIGHER/LOWER SOUNDS?

- that pitch can be used to describe action

- Make up/tell a story that provides creative opportunities to use a range of pitched sounds, eg Goldilocks, The three billy goats gruff, Rapunzel, Jack and the beanstalk, Rumpelstiltskin. Using pitched instruments, make up melodic sequences for characters, eg *the three bears*, *Goldilocks*, *three goats*, *troll*, *cow*, *giant*, and events, eg *climbing stairs/tower/beanstalk*, *Rumpelstiltskin jumping up and down with rage*, *rocket taking off and returning*. Think about the *pitch* (high, low, in-between), the *melodic direction* (getting higher/lower, staying the same), the *melodic movement* (slide, step-by-step, leap), and the expressive elements (tempo, duration, dynamics).

- create and choose sounds in response to a given stimulus

- Make a note of those children who use pitch sounds confidently and sit them next to those who find it more difficult.
- Note those children who find pitch work difficult and remember to give them plenty of reinforcement in later units.
- **Extension activity:** Children can make up short tunes to represent the characters in the story. They should match the pitch of the tune to the character.

## EXTENSION AND FUTURE LEARNING

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

- extend pitch work using dot cards to include rhythm and create simple melodies with interesting rhythms
- listen to the sitar and eastern singing and recognise some features in the way high and low sounds are used
- make connections between the use of pitch and the other elements when sounds are being used expressively

When this unit is repeated, the focus will remain the same, that is, understanding pitch, but the content and the expectations should change. Content is changed easily through the use of different examples of music, stories and other stimuli, which could be used to explore pitch. Expectations are changed by expecting more to achieve the 'most children' and 'some children will have progressed further' statements and by placing a greater emphasis on the extension activities in the 'Points to note' section.

## ENRICHMENT

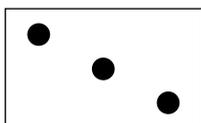
- Percussionists could be invited to perform on tuned percussion to show how quickly a performer can move by step and leap.
- The class could work with a storyteller to explore the use of high and low voice sounds to create atmosphere.
- Children could attend a live concert, in or out of school, and listen to ways in which pitch is used expressively, *eg to describe different characters or actions*. Learning would be reinforced if the performers highlighted this through focused demonstration.

## GLOSSARY

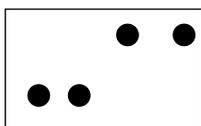
**Moving by step:** Melodies that move up or down using adjacent notes, *eg the first three notes of Three blind mice*.

**Moving by leap:** Melodies that use bigger distances between notes, *eg the first few notes of London's burning*. Note: Most melodies use both step and leap.

**Dot cards:** Cards that have three (or more) dots placed higher and lower to describe higher and lower sounds, *eg*



*Three blind mice*



*London's burning*

Children who wish to write down longer and more complex tunes may need to add the letter names under the dots, *eg*

