

# **Sing Up Awards**

A Qualitative Evaluation based on Field Visits



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## Evaluation Brief

Luise Horrocks, Associate Chief Examiner with Trinity Guildhall having special responsibility for singing, was commissioned in May 2010 to investigate the relationship between a school's engagement with the Sing Up Awards and the quality of the singing activity and singing leadership within the school.

The evaluation brief required that the data collected provided information about how the Awards framework could support and develop both singing activity and singing leadership within the school.

## Evaluator Biography: Luise Horrocks

After graduating from Oxford University, Luise Horrocks studied singing on an Advanced Studies course at the Royal College of Music. As a Soprano soloist her career took her across the UK and Europe and to America and South Africa. She specialised in Oratorio but also sang in Song Recitals and Opera and made broadcasts and recordings.

More recently she has developed her teaching career working at Birmingham Conservatoire and Birmingham University, in schools and in private practice. She is a vocal coach on residential courses for singers, leads workshops for children and adults and also travels extensively as an adjudicator and mentor.

In 2010 she was appointed as an Associate Chief Examiner for Trinity College London where she has special responsibility for singing, which includes working on syllabus setting, training new examiners and leading Teacher Workshops.



Sherborne House School in Hampshire achieve their Platinum Award in 2011

## **Evaluation Method**

The study was conducted through a series of visits to schools. In the original plan 12 schools were to be selected to take part in this evaluation – three schools which had achieved the Silver Award, three which had achieved the Gold, three Platinum Awards schools and three schools which had pledged to the Awards but had not continued working towards one. The evaluation was to have taken place over the Summer and Autumn terms in 2010.

However, owing to the difficulties of agreeing dates with individual schools the study as it is now presented has findings from 10 schools and includes visits that were made in the Spring term of 2011. It should be pointed out that schools who had achieved an Award were much more willing to arrange a visit than those who had pledged to an Award. As a result only one visit to a pledged school could be arranged.

The pledged, Silver, Gold and Platinum schools were carefully selected to represent as broad a spectrum as possible within the framework set out above. Represented in the group were different sizes of school from below average intake to above. Geographical location was varied to include inner city schools and also rural schools from across England. Some schools had pupils from all year groups of Primary age while others were Infants or, in one instance, a First School. Community schools were visited alongside voluntary aided schools, one independent school and one school for children with Special Needs.

The study relies mostly on observation of singing activities within the schools with some additional input via conversations with staff and, in some cases, pupils.

The standard of the singing was assessed with reference to an understanding and expectation of what can be achieved by each age group. This is an experiential understanding and measures include such things as an ability to produce a well-rounded sound, to sing in tune, to tackle music in rounds or parts and to show an understanding of the text and musical context of the chosen songs. It also includes an assessment of the enthusiasm and willingness of everyone to participate and to demonstrate development through engagement and ownership of the material and an ability to use self-assessment as a developmental tool.

The standard of leadership was looked at in the context of effective teaching of the material, the level of encouragement given, how improvements were sought and how healthy safe use of voices was promoted. Music Specialists were observed alongside non-music specialists. The development and engagement of pupil leadership was also assessed.

## Sing Up Awards – the process

The Sing Up Awards aim to support, recognise and celebrate schools that put singing at the heart of their school lives. There are Silver, Gold and Platinum Awards.

The Awards process is simple and inclusive, encouraging and supporting schools and teachers to access all aspects of the Sing Up programme and to develop singing activity throughout their whole school.

Schools pledge to Silver and Gold Awards by accessing the Awards Tool via the Sing Up website. This pledge marks their commitment to putting singing at the heart of their school life and they can download a pledge certificate to indicate this. The school nominates an Awards Champion to lead their Awards journey. This is most often the music coordinator, but could also be a class teacher or Headteacher.



Derby High School in Derby celebrate their Platinum Award in 2009

The Awards criteria are linked to Sing Up's definition of a singing school. All three Awards cover criteria in the following categories – Headteacher, Staff, Pupils and Whole School Community and the main themes include - involvement and support by school leadership, engagement of all members of staff, singing opportunities for every child, singing involved in whole school planning. Figure 1 and figure 2 above show the Silver and Gold criteria in the form of two posters that schools can display to pupils and visitors. The Awards Champion sets objectives for their school context, tailoring the criteria and setting their very own Awards journey. This makes the Awards flexible and appropriate for all types of schools for primary-age children. The school uploads evidence of their singing activity in the form of video or audio clips, photographs, documents or links to other websites. A minimum amount of evidence is required before the online Award process can be completed. The Awards Champion also needs to report on the school's progress before submitting their

Award for endorsement. The endorser reviews the information and evidence submitted and endorses the Award. Once the school achieves the Award they receive an Award certificate or banner and they are able to download their certificate and specially-designed Sing Up Award logo.

The ethos of the Awards is strong and well considered. They are a framework for schools to follow - a set of guidelines to develop singing at the heart of a school life rather than a benchmark or quality standards indicator, as is the case with other awards schemes for schools. No two Awards look the same because each school can tailor their Awards journey. To remain accessible for all types of schools, the Awards focus on the engagement of staff and pupils in singing and the place of singing within the school. The process of achieving an Award supports improvements in the quality of singing and the national music curriculum objectives for singing in primary school but do not measure them. Schools are awarded a Platinum Award on the basis of their singing activity and ability to inspire their communities through singing - a process rather than an output. It is essential that Special Schools are equally able to achieve a Platinum Award as a mainstream primary school with an excellent choir.



Figure 1: Silver Award poster



Figure 2: Gold Award poster

## The context of the Sing Up Awards

It must be pointed out that the Sing Up Awards framework has always been focussed on increased inclusivity, opportunity and provision. It is vital to stress that qualitative judgements about the standards of singing do not form part of a pre requisite for the Awards. This study, however, sets out to seek further evidence to support current research being undertaken by the Institute of Education which is uncovering evidence that 'vocal quality and technique is measurably improved by engagement with Sing Up and that schools with Awards demonstrate an even higher level of qualitative achievement'<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Welsh, G, (ongoing). Reports showing these findings can found here [http://www.imerc.org/research\\_nsp.php](http://www.imerc.org/research_nsp.php)

## **Detailed findings**

This section explores the outcomes from all of the school visits. Full details of each individual school visit with notes on singing activities observed and summative comments about each school can be found in the Appendices 1-10.



**Key Finding 1:  
The level of Award is a reflection of the quality of singing activity**

The quantity of singing going on in all the surveyed schools is impressive. Participation and enthusiasm for singing can be observed in all schools right from the school that has not yet committed to an Award to the Platinum School that had completed all three Award journeys. However, it is notable that the schools which have reached the higher levels in the Awards scheme show a higher level of singing quality. The following evidence suggests that an engagement with the aims and goals set out at each level of the Awards scheme does result in this corresponding higher level of singing.

Even in the schools in the early stages of the scheme, good singing practice was evident with good posture and good breath control explained and encouraged. Much use of 'warm ups' was noted showing an understanding of how the voice works. In Platinum schools, though, there was a sense that this technical foundation had become so firmly embedded as to be automatic and natural. This led to very good sound quality being developed. In Platinum schools, especially, a 'singing' sound rather than a 'shouted' sound is heard even from very young singers. A greater range of dynamic and tonal colours was also noted allowing for very expressive singing.

Unaccompanied singing was observed in all schools and with all age groups. In Silver schools a good standard of tuning was apparent but by Platinum level this had become very secure indeed.



Five Platinum School sing at the Voices Now festival in the Roundhouse in 2011

While a good variety of material was used in all schools, the complexity of the singing notably increased in the Gold and Platinum schools. In Silver schools there was evidence of singing in rounds and two-part work but by Gold and Platinum singing in three parts was tackled confidently. In these schools, more challenging songs were learnt, encompassing greater vocal ranges and rhythmic difficulties. Even young children were trying a range of repertoire demanding part-singing. Older children often sang solos with excellent performance skills. It is through the fulfilment of the Award criteria and the collection of evidence towards a whole school achievement that these schools can take time and space to work on and develop

their singing skills and quality. As schools progress through each of the stages they are supported at the appropriate level to develop their singing skills.

Creative engagement with songs also developed as the schools progressed through the Awards Scheme. There were more instances of children choosing repertoire and making their own choices about how to perform songs. Creativity also grew with greater awareness of musicality and style, for example children adapted songs by using their own words or actions.

A note about the school for children with Special Needs that was observed must be added here. The standard of singing within this school cannot be judged using the same set of criteria as for the other schools involved in the study. Many of the children within this school had severe learning difficulties and for some there was both limited mobility and speech. Nevertheless, the children sang in parts, chose their own songs, maintained focus and concentration throughout singing activities and produced good quality tone as far as they were able to. Undoubtedly, as it had with other all schools, the structure of the Silver Award had helped in bringing on the standard of their singing.

## **Key finding 2: The level of Award is a reflection of the quality of leadership**

In all the schools surveyed, there was a strong sense of commitment to singing and to the Sing Up Awards scheme. This is not surprising as nine of the ten schools observed had already completed at least one stage of the scheme and the one school that had not, was pledged to the scheme and was indeed already well on the way to collecting the evidence required for Silver.

It is interesting to note at this point that it was schools which were pledged to the scheme but had not yet achieved an Award who were the most reluctant to agree to a visit. It was hoped that this report would have included data from three schools that had not yet achieved an Award but in the end only one visit was completed. This alone suggests that that Awards scheme encourages a sense of commitment to singing and confidence in outcomes. Headteachers who had supported their school's progress through the scheme were very willing to share their experiences and to show how well their pupils could sing. It is indeed notable how much backing had been received from Headteachers in all the schools visited. This strong sense of support meant that teachers within the schools were able to develop their leadership skills with confidence. All schools visited, with the exception of the one school which had not yet achieved an Award, had a designated music coordinator. These music coordinators were all exceptionally dedicated and the level of leadership from these teachers, not all of whom were full time, was outstanding. The three Platinum schools all benefit from music co-ordinators who are simply inspirational.

With the support of Headteachers and the energy of the music co-ordinators, non-specialist teachers in all the schools visited are becoming confident and strong in



Constantine Primary School in Cornwall celebrate their Platinum Award in 2010

their own singing and in encouraging and developing the levels of singing skills in their pupils. The structured band of criteria at each level of the Awards scheme has given this process focus and clarity. The ethos of encouraging everyone to join in has helped many teachers who would not consider themselves to be musical to 'find' their voices. As a result, the workshops and twilight sessions on offer through Sing Up's training programmes have been enthusiastically attended and this means that, as the adults have effectively explored their own singing, they have been supported and encouraged to share their discoveries with their pupils. In every school that was visited, teachers spoke again and again about how enriched they felt at being able to develop the confidence and ability to lead singing effectively.

However, in Platinum schools it is notable that these qualities of leadership are also being developed in support staff and parents. Singing is so central to these schools that teaching assistants, administrators, playground supervisors and parents are all happy to take on a role in fostering singing. It is perhaps the focus that the Award

scheme puts on the development of singing in the wider community beyond the school that has encouraged these Platinum schools in their development of leaders. Each one of the three Platinum schools surveyed has forged very strong links with the community through different activities. These beacon/ambassador schools bring other local schools into singing activities and which in turn promotes excellent outreach skills in their leaders.

One further aspect of leadership skills developing under the auspices of the Awards scheme is how the pupils in all the schools visited are being encouraged as leaders. So many sessions were observed where volunteers were asked to come to the front of a group to lead singing activities. This sometimes involved leading the actions or holding a group together in the singing of a round. Children were often working with younger pupils both with and without adult supervision, for example as singing buddies leading playground song squads. This was already evident in Silver Schools but in the Gold and Platinum Schools there was an even greater expectation that pupils could and should be encouraged and supported in gaining the confidence to lead.

**Key Finding 3:  
The level of Award is a reflection of the quality of further benefits gained**

While this study set out to analyse how the structure of the Sing Up Awards scheme brings tangible benefits and incremental improvements in the quality of singing and leadership within the schools in the scheme, it should also be noted how the benefits of working within the scheme extend beyond this. Comments were also made about how singing improved concentration, application and memory across the curriculum. Using the cross-curricular singing activities from the Sing Up website enhanced learning in all subject areas. Through talking with staff and with pupils in the surveyed schools there was a reiteration of how being part of the scheme brought a sense of focus, structure and motivation to all the singing work. The non-competitive nature of the Awards encouraged initial participation and then, when an Award was achieved, it brought a tremendous sense of satisfaction in that achievement. Those schools in the early stages of the scheme could already see the benefits across all the pupils in the school. In the Platinum schools there were many comments about the huge improvements in both behaviour and results in even 'hard to reach' children. Striving together to achieve an Award was seen as having a real effect on the sense of teamwork and community within the schools.



North Lakes School in Cumbria achieve their Platinum Award in 2008

## Conclusion

Although a relatively small number of schools were visited for this study, the broad range of size, type and geographical location of schools selected means that this was a useful representative sample. It is notable that, while the schools were extremely diverse, they were linked by the way the quality of singing and of leadership increased in relation to their stage on the Sing Up Awards scheme.

In the study: 'Sing Up Awards – An Evaluation' undertaken by Jackie Adams and Kate Organ in 2010<sup>2</sup> it was found that, in the process of applying for an Award, '87% of schools believed that the quality of singing had improved.' The observations and analyses undertaken here by this current study into the ten selected schools would endorse these findings. Recognised criteria of assessing good vocal production are being achieved in all the surveyed schools with the standards in the Gold and Platinum schools even higher.

Adams and Organ also refer to the quality of singing leadership in their report mentioning how the majority of schools agreed about an increased 'enthusiasm, confidence and competence of staff and students to participate in or to lead singing'. Certainly the current study found that leadership skills developed in tandem with a progression through the Awards scheme with non-specialists developing both competence and confidence in leading singing. There have been some misgivings from specialist singing teachers that using non-specialists to lead singing activities could potentially do damage to young voices. However, this current survey would suggest that, under the auspices of the Sing Up Awards scheme, non-specialists are gaining knowledge and understanding of how the voice works and are using this knowledge to encourage and develop high levels of musical and safe singing within their schools. In this they are being supported and helped by extremely good music co-ordinators and very well resourced and led workshops and other sessions.

The final note of this study takes up another point from Adams and Organ. They state that the Awards scheme has not and never has been designed to be a framework which seeks to enhance and validate or reward top achievers in vocal technique, choral performance or achievements based on selection and exclusivity'. The overriding observation from all of the ten schools surveyed was how inclusive the singing was and how much of a tool it was in engaging and developing even pupils with learning or social difficulties. Nevertheless, in this very engagement, it was notable how standards of singing increased as the schools moved forward in their Sing Up journey and how this journey has inspired and developed committed and effective leaders.

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<sup>2</sup> Unpublished. A summary of the findings can be found here <http://www.singup.org/news-local-events/news-article/view/192-awards-evaluation-key-findings/>

## **Appendices**

### **St Ambrose's RC Primary School – Worcestershire**

- A medium sized mixed voluntary aided primary school with pupils from age 4 –11. In this smaller than average school, a high proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those of Polish, Philippino, Italian and Asian heritage.
- Sing Up Award achieved: None – on pledge for Silver
- Date observed: 1March 2011

### **Activities Observed**

The music co-ordinator is currently on maternity leave so the Headteacher, Marie Yates, spent time with me discussing singing in the school and also showing me round. For the rest of the time, I was able to wander freely throughout the school.

- Jean Lloyd was in the school on the day I visited and she is a specialist music teacher who works with Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children. I watched her work with Years 1 and 2 where much singing was encouraged. A good warm up session was conducted with both groups. The topic for Year 1 was pitch and the work revolved around low pitch and high pitch. Using the voice to make low and high sounds was explored and a song about Goldilocks and the three bears was learnt. Whole group singing was used alongside smaller group singing. With Year 2 the importance of posture and warm up was also explored though here more work exploring sounds of instruments was introduced.
- Year 4 children were working on a project on the Tudors and they were learning a song in a folk style about this subject. A backing track was used but the teacher led very confidently by demonstrating and encouraging the children to think about the music as well as the content of the song.
- In Year 5 the topic was the two world wars and the children sang *Pack up your Troubles* and *It's a long way to Tipperary*. There was much discussion about which song they preferred and why and about how the music and the backing tracks were different.
- Year 6 children had just taken part in a cluster school concert organised by the local High School. They had presented a song in Polish and had also joined with all the other schools in singing a number of different songs and hymns. The children were asked to choose songs from this event to sing for me and, after a fun and focussed warm up, they sang enthusiastically and confidently. In particular the boys were all joining in. The group were able to sustain songs in a round format.
- I was also able to attend the after school choir run by Marie Yates. This was a group of about 30 children from Year 3 – 5. They were very keen and sang

a range of different styles of music. They were asked about how they could develop their performances and came up with creative ideas.

### **Round-up**

- The school had very recently had an Ofsted Inspection and the staff had put a great deal of work into this. They were clearly disappointed that they had only received a satisfactory report. There are difficulties with key staff members being on maternity leave but, despite all of this, I was able to observe much quality work in the singing. I was able to talk with the arts team at the end of school and they are very keen to progress with the Sing Up Silver Award and to see how they can stretch the more able children and improve the level of participation with the Year 6 children. They are already involved with the community, taking children out to sing in special events and they are now thinking about how to get the parents more involved, how to encourage more leadership skills in the children and how to improve standards.

### **Leadership**

- Marie Yates leads the singing very well in the absence of the Music Co-ordinator and her team are also completely involved. She is very keen to see singing thoroughly embedded in the school and, with just a little more gathering of evidence, I am sure that the school can achieve the Silver Award and indeed move forward to Gold. The standard of singing in the choir shows that there is much good work being done.

### **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The Sing Up Awards scheme was seen to be a great help in encouraging all the staff to get involved with singing, joining in and leading. Year 5 children had taken part in a project to design posters for Sing Up extolling the virtues of singing! The structure of the awards and the challenges of progressing further through to Gold were seen as positives and ideas of encouraging children to self assess and to lead both in formal and more informal settings were embraced. The web site was used though teachers were also resourceful in sourcing their own materials. Teachers also thought that Sing Up provided resources to build their self-confidence in singing.



## **Joseph Hood Primary School – London**

- A medium sized mixed community primary school with pupils from age 3 –11. The school serves a mixed residential community. Almost half the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and a quarter are learning English as an additional language. Both these figures are double the national average.
- Sing Up Award achieved: Silver
- Date observed: 22 March 2010

### **Activities Observed**

- I was able to wander freely throughout the school and to spend time with the music co-ordinator, Aimee Hawke.
- Year 1 children had been on a visit to the zoo the previous day and sang a zoo song along with suitable animal actions. Teaching assistants joined in enthusiastically.
- Year 3 were listening to a selection of Sing Up songs from the web site to support their project on the environment and the children were encouraged to vote to choose which song to learn.
- Nursery children sang the register and then had a singing session, singing familiar songs and starting to learn a new song.
- Reception children were encouraged to sing changing for PE.
- Year 4 were choosing and learning songs to embed work they were doing on language skills.
- Years 2 and 6 were observed in rehearsals. Year 2 children were leading an assembly later in the week and were practising songs to link with their topic of the seaside. Year 6 children were working towards an end of year musical production of 'Alice' and the whole group was involved with children singing solos, duets and ensembles. The quality of this work was very good with acting skills also being very well developed.
- In Assembly the whole school sang with focus and energy. All the pupils and teachers were singing effectively together and clearly enjoying the experience.

### **Round-up**

- Through observation and talking to Aimee it is apparent how much singing is happening in the school. Even at break time, singing continues. Several children had been on a course to become pupil leaders, learning to direct songs and games. The boys got involved and older children worked effectively and creatively with the younger ones. The Merton Teachers' Choir

provides opportunities for Aimee and colleagues from the school to sing themselves and one of the teachers who moved to a different school has taken singing ideas there and is keen to introduce the Sing Up awards scheme.

### **Leadership**

- Aimee Hawke is a very good leader helping to motivate and inspire the staff at the school. She has attended courses run by Merton Council and has encouraged colleagues to get involved. All the children showed a willingness and desire to participate and lead and the level of singing happening across the curriculum was very encouraging. The level of singing achieved in Year 6 was particularly impressive.

### **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The Sing Up Awards scheme was thoroughly endorsed. The website was very popular and much used across all the year groups. Aimee is very keen to pursue the Gold Award as she has found the structure of the awards very helpful in developing singing throughout the school. She is keen to see how the school can develop stronger links into the community. I am sure that Joseph Hood can build confidently on the excellent work that has been achieved so far.

## **Gibside School – Newcastle Upon Tyne**

- A small mixed primary school for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or autistic spectrum conditions with pupils from age 4 – 11. Pupils are drawn from the whole of Gateshead. A well above average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils are White British. Almost twice as many boys attend than girls and the school caters for a very small minority of looked after children. The school has received the International School's Award, Artsmark Gold, Teaching Learning Academy Centre, Inclusion Award, Basic Skills, Healthy Schools, the Activemark and an award for encouraging the professional development of teaching assistants.
- Sing Up Award achieved: Silver
- Date observed: 17 September 2010

### **Activities Observed**

- I was able to wander freely around the school and to attend the whole school assembly.
- Class 8 used a 'good morning' song to greet each other.
- Class 9 were singing action songs both as a group and in pairs. They varied the words and actions as the singing progressed.
- Reception children had 'circle time' when they sang welcome songs and then used singing games for learning colours, shapes and the weather. All the children joined in and the focus remained very good throughout. Nursery and Reception classes also used singing to help get to lunch and at other times of transition through the school.
- Class 11 were working on *Frère Jacques* and also singing other songs in French. Backing tracks were used and as much action as possible was put into the song.
- Class 10 were choosing their own number songs to sing and taking ownership by making up their own rhymes.
- Music was also used in the stimulation and therapy room to help both soothe and invigorate.
- The music assembly for the whole school used live guitar and piano accompaniment as well as backing tracks. There was a warm up session and then singing activities including two-part work and the learning of a new song. The enthusiasm was fantastic and all the adult helpers and teachers joined in, encouraging the children and helping to produce a really good sound. Moving into a well-known song, volunteers were requested to come to the front to lead in the singing and the actions. There were also singing games involving faster/slower and lower/higher concepts.

## **Round-up**

- Singing is clearly at the very heart of this school and helps to develop confidence and social skills. A community assembly is held weekly which allows the parents to join in with the singing. A Christmas production happens annually and this year the theme is 'Movies and Musicals'. There is a choir, which is open to everyone, and this group goes out into the community to sing carols. Even in the playground the children will sing and the Headteacher is also involved in leading singing at the 'Good News' assembly.

## **Leadership**

- Under the music co-ordinator's inspired leadership singing has achieved so much in this school. She has encouraged everyone to take part, involving parents, helpers and teachers. The children are also encouraged to choose and lead singing activities. With the music co-ordinator's guidance the school has developed its own singing resources.

## **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The path to the Silver Award had been thoroughly enjoyed and the awards scheme was deemed to bring excellent focus to the singing work being undertaken. It also gave the school a real sense of achievement. The website was highly praised as a valuable resource though even more 'signing' songs with someone signing during the song would be appreciated. Overall though it was seen as excellent that anyone could use the songs in the classroom even if they felt themselves not to be musical. The links to the curriculum too were particularly appreciated. The school is keen to pursue the Gold Award but realises that this may take time.

## **Upton Upon Severn Church of England Primary School – Worcestershire**

- A medium sized mixed voluntary controlled primary school with pupils from age 4 –11. It serves a mainly rural community with almost all the pupils having a White British background and only a very few having to learn English as an additional language.
- Sing Up Award achieved: Silver
- Date observed: 2 February 2011

### **Activities Observed**

- I was able to join the music co-ordinator, Kate Maroni, for much of the day on her 'learning walk' when she not only leads activities herself but observes others in their singing work.
- Two assemblies took place while I was in school. Reception to Year 2 children were encouraged to think about posture and breathing and worked on call and response and also accompanied unison singing. Children were asked to volunteer to come to the front to lead in the action songs. The assembly for Years 3 – 6 children showed everyone fully involved in rhythmic work, in pairs and in the whole group.
- Reception children were using singing in their number work and their student teacher was fully involved and leading with enthusiasm.
- Year 4 children sang through the register with a call and answer format and then had a music session where instruments were used alongside singing. Two part work developed and the children all worked extremely well both with partners and in the whole class. They were encouraged to be creative and to choose a leader to help with the singing.
- Year 1's project was an animation project, designing puppets and then bringing in music to support the artwork. The classroom teacher proved to be a very good singing leader, demonstrating the song but also allowing the children to try for themselves. The boys were especially enthusiastic and liked working with the backing track.
- Year 2 showed a very high level of discipline while choosing their own songs and their own leaders. They practised singing loudly and softly, with actions and in their 'thinking' voices. The end result was some really excellent singing.
- At lunchtime, a small group came together to sing. This group showed a real enthusiasm and energy and clearly had fun while also developing a high level of skill. Self-assessment was encouraged, as was self-leadership. This lunchtime group was a new initiative in the school and it was hoped would lead to the formation of a bigger choir.

## **Round-up**

- There is a very high commitment to music in the school with many children learning instruments and regular school productions happening. Carol Green has been into the school to work with the teachers on developing the singing and the school has been part of the Worcester Chorister Outreach Programme. There are links with the local High School where a singing day has been organised for older children from the local cluster schools. The long-term plan is to bring singing into a more central and integrated place in the school and to build on the links already established through the local church and the Jazz Festival into the wider community. The parents are already encouraged to come into the school to join in class assemblies and the children take songs home.

## **Leadership**

- Kate Maroni is a very dedicated and enthusiastic leader and has many plans for developing singing. She is well on the way to collating all the evidence needed for the Sing Up Gold Award and is keen to forge links with other schools in the area. The level of leadership she has encouraged throughout the school is excellent with teaching assistants as well as class teachers all singing with classes confidently. This not only sets the children a good example but has also helped them to develop their own leadership skills.

## **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The Sing Up Awards scheme was fully supported. The staff enjoyed the workshops that were available through Sing Up and the web site was thoroughly appreciated as a useful resource particularly for those who felt less confident in their singing. The Headteacher was completely behind the scheme and it was felt that the structure of the scheme encouraged everyone to take part and to feel that they were working together to achieve something very positive. The fact that the school is well on the way to the Gold Award is evidence of this.

## **Solent Infant School – Portsmouth**

- A large mixed community infant school with a three-form entry and pupils from age 4 – 7. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low.
- Sing Up Award achieved: Gold
- Date observed: 22 September 2010

### **Activities Observed**

- I was able to spend some time moving in and out of classes but also to spend time with Caroline Hurst the music co-ordinator.
- Year 1 groups sang a welcome song at the beginning of maths class and also sang to reinforce their number bonds work, using both low voices and high voices. When the class got too noisy at one point, the teacher got the children singing to help re focus.
- Year 2 were working on the Victorian era in history and, as they were working on their own, a CD was playing and they were encouraged to sing along. They could also choose their own CD's to bring in.
- In Music lessons with Caroline, Year 1 groups were exploring sound and noises produced by everyday objects and this led to singing activities with guitar or piano accompaniment. The children also sang unaccompanied and were encouraged to develop their own gestures and actions to the songs.
- I also observed Year 2 hymn practice and whole school singing assembly. Both were extremely well led by Caroline. Voice and body warm up exercises started the sessions and then a number of singing activities followed with children being given the chance to volunteer to lead. Music was played as they assembled and left. Everyone in both sessions joined in enthusiastically and the standard of singing produced was very high.

### **Round-up**

- Through observation and talking to Caroline, it is clear how much singing is going on in the school. Singing buddies and playground leaders regularly lead singing informally. Half termly music themes are introduced and there are regular 'shows' in which the children perform. There is a staff choir and numbers of staff are also involved in other local choirs. Workshops and leadership courses have been regularly attended.

### **Leadership**

- The quality of leadership is excellent with Caroline being both lively and committed. Although only part time, she has achieved a tremendous amount

and has enthused and encouraged staff and teaching assistants to join in and develop their own leadership skills. The children also take on responsibility for leadership and are positive and keen throughout all the year groups. Parents, too, are highly supportive.

### **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The Awards scheme was found to be a particularly good way of focussing the singing activity in the school and helping the staff to take on leadership roles. The resources, especially the website, were widely praised, helping to prevent activities getting stale by constantly injecting new ideas. Singing events and workshops were identified as being both useful and fun. Time constraints were cited as the reason for not yet pursuing the Platinum Award but, under Caroline's inspired leadership, I am sure that the school can progress in that direction.



## **Oldham Hulme Kindergarten – Oldham**

- A small mixed pre prep independent school with pupils from age 3 – 7. The Kindergarten is part of the wider Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools.
- Sing Up Awards achieved: Gold, Silver
- Date observed: 8 October 2010

### **Activities Observed**

- Although I was only able to spend the morning observing the children, I was able to wander freely between classes and attend Assembly.
- Year 2 children sang greetings and thanks to each other in Maths lessons and then sang *Shout out the sillies* to aid concentration. Lining up at the end of Maths they sang the numbers backwards. Questions and answers were sung and goodbyes were varied to decide whether high or low voice was being used. Later, they were singing before going home and were making up their own words to songs. The level achieved in unaccompanied singing was very good.
- Nursery children were learning about their bodies and songs were chosen for the topic. Movement and action were included and all the teaching assistants were joining in. The class teacher led to start then volunteers from the class acted as leaders.
- Reception children had timetabled music lessons and were using instruments to learn to watch the 'conductor' giving instructions about louds and softs. Children from the group took turns as 'conductor' then two of the boys chose a song and led the group in singing.
- Year 1 children sang as they lined up and moved through the corridors and they demonstrated very good ability as they chose their own songs.
- In Assembly every child sang with enthusiasm. Action songs were used and backing tracks were played. The children sang in two parts and also sang Happy Birthday to each other in Italian. They sang sitting and standing and good posture was encouraged. All the teachers present joined in the singing.

### **Round-up**

- I was able to chat to the teachers in the school and also to the teachers in the Prep School where most of the children will be going next. There is a good level of continuity in the singing programme as they move schools with the boys particularly well catered for. In the pre prep, there are regular 'productions' during the school year with songs chosen around a theme (e.g. Harvest) and towards the end of the academic year, a school squad is set up with children from Year 2 leading singing in the playground. Parents are also encouraged to join in with the singing when visiting the school.

## **Leadership**

- Liz Brockhurst is a terrific and inspiring leader, supported by a very enthusiastic Headteacher. She leads staff training sessions and has an excellent background in leading sessions in other schools. She sees the potential to start a staff choir and has been involved with a village community choir project. The children are always encouraged to take on leadership roles and are taking songs home to teach to parents and wider family. The success story has been getting even reluctant members of staff enthused about singing and confident to lead groups themselves.

## **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The Sing Up Awards scheme was thoroughly endorsed. The website received much praise for providing extensive support, particularly in helping those who thought of themselves as 'non-singers'. The backing tracks and exercises were well used. The resources had even made their way into the wider community with adults learning Sing Up songs. Liz is very keen to see if the school can achieve Platinum and with her strong leadership, I think this can be achieved. Even with children this young, she has already achieved fantastic results with a huge level of enthusiasm and commitment across the school.

## **Aldersbrook Primary School – London**

- A large mixed community primary school with pupils from age 3 – 11. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is above average. A small minority of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than average. More pupils than average join and leave the school part-way through their education.
- Sing Up Award achieved: Gold
- Date observed: 13 October 2010

### **Activities Observed**

- The day was spent with the music co-ordinator, Melanie Henry. I was able to observe her work with different year groups in music lessons and also during break and lunch time. I also had a chance to talk to other members of staff and to see them helping in singing activities during Melanie's lessons.
- In Year 6 groups, children sang greetings to each other and were involved in composition projects with pentatonic scales. Excellent teamwork and creativity were observed.
- Year 1 groups sang together and learnt about dynamics with listening games and instruments as well. Teacher and teaching assistants joined in enthusiastically.
- Reception children worked on call and response songs with creative use of material in parts. Both teachers and teaching assistants led groups confidently.
- Years 4 – 6 had a singing assembly and a variety of songs were used with call and response being led by chosen volunteers. They also sang effectively in three parts with different dynamics demonstrated.
- There was also a boys' choir rehearsal. This choir is for boys in years 4 – 6 and is a voluntary group of about 60 boys currently learning a Michael Jackson number with dance and movement. Leaders from the group were brought forward to demonstrate and direct.

### **Round-up**

- The school has just had a change of Headteacher and is settling down into a new regime. Certain activities such as lower school singing assembly and singing stops in the playground have yet to start this academic year. However, Melanie is an inspiration and a superb leader. She has already organised an outside concert opportunity for the boys' choir, is working on a pantomime for Christmas and is looking at more ways to take singing beyond the school into the community.

## **Leadership**

- Under Melanie's enthusiastic and energetic direction, teachers and teaching assistants are joining in and gaining confidence to lead singing activities across the school. Melanie is organising two lower school staff members to lead the lower school singing assembly and she wants to start a parents' choir. The children are very keen to volunteer for leading singing either in small, informal groups or in larger more structured sessions.

## **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The Sing Up Awards scheme was highly regarded. It was thought to be an easy process to engage with, helping with motivation and structure. The magazine was particularly well thought of, but the real plus was the website which gave lots of ideas and was used by all the staff. The link between songs and cross-curricular activity was particularly useful.
- Melanie is very keen to go for the Platinum Award with Aldersbrook and the strength of leadership skills she has already developed will definitely help the school move through to this level. All the children I observed were fully engaged with singing and the work with the boys was particularly impressive. All of the staff are fully behind the scheme.

## **Burwell Village College – Cambridgeshire**

- A large mixed community primary school in a rural area with pupils from age 4 – 11. Almost all pupils are of White British background, although a small number of children are from Traveller families. The school has achieved several awards in recent years, including The Basic Skills Quality Mark, the ACTIVEMARK Gold Award and FA Charter Mark for physical education, the NAACEMark, the Healthy Schools Award and ICT Award for information and communication technology.
- Sing Up Awards achieved: Platinum, Gold, Silver
- Date observed: 8 July 2010

### **Activities Observed**

- I was able to wander through the school informally, to drop in on classes at work and also to spend some time in a Year 4 singing workshop day led by Sue Hart. This was a day based around Sue's work with the Bacca tribe in Cameroon and it used singing to integrate activities across the curriculum. Culture, geography, art, craft and movement were all covered and the children produced amazing singing in parts, exploring complex rhythms and language.
- In Year 6 groups, children had been involved in a production of Joseph and were very keen to show me their work. Soloists produced an excellent standard of singing but all the groups were keen, focussed and committed and sang well throughout.
- Reception children were singing and dancing using backing tracks and even progressed to singing *Frère Jacques* in parts. A very high level of focus was apparent. Later they were rehearsing for the morning Assembly, practising three songs from memory and being led by very enthusiastic teachers and teaching assistants.
- Year 1 classes were singing unaccompanied and adapting material to include their own teachers' names. Everyone joined in fully.
- Year 2 wanted to sing especially for me and so sang the songs they had presented in Assembly the previous week. This year group has a higher level of children with learning difficulties than other years and the singing was proving a very good way to engage the whole group. Volunteers from the group were happy to step forward to lead.

### **Round-up**

- I was able to have a chat with the Headteacher who outlined just how much singing activity goes on in the school. He mentioned particularly the boys' choir, which has a membership of about 30 boys including some hard to reach children. The Head was very enthusiastic and clearly provided excellent

leadership and support for the singing, encouraging the school in outreach activities in cluster schools and in a community choir.

### **Leadership**

- Nicola Plumb, the music co-ordinator is a truly inspirational leader, full of energy and drive. Under her leadership and with the Head's wholehearted support, all the staff and teaching assistants are joining in singing, encouraging the children to participate and also to lead themselves. The children take songs home and teach their parents and even find songs themselves to bring in to teach the teachers.

### **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The Sing Up Awards scheme was highly praised as being something that was non-competitive yet gave the whole school a goal and a sense of achievement. It was felt that the framework of the Platinum Award had been a really good way for Burwell to draw other schools into singing activities and had created a strong sense of community. The website received particular praise for its range of resources and ideas. The school were very sad to be losing Nicola who is moving to Devon but she is fully committed to taking Sing Up with her to her new school, so helping to draw more children into singing.

## **Wylam First School – Northumberland**

- A small mixed community first school in a rural area with pupils from age 3 – 9. Pupils are from mixed social and economic backgrounds and are mainly of White British heritage. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The school has the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark, Investors in People and was the first school in the North East to have been awarded the Sing Up Platinum Award.
- Sing Up Award achieved: Honorary Platinum
- Date observed: 16 September 2010

### **Activities Observed**

- I spent the day observing classes and activities freely, including an Assembly.
- In the Nursery class, there was plenty of music with tapes to dance to and each day starting with an activity song.
- The Reception children greeted each other with a 'hello' song and moved into lively action songs. Even the reluctant children were swept up in the enthusiasm and energy coming from the teachers and teaching assistants.
- These two groups also worked together and the children were fully engaged suggesting actions, words and even 'counting in' the group.
- Year 1 children were working on reading skills using singing to help with the sounds and having fun with a 'backwards' register. They also sang on the way to lunch.
- Year 3 children were working on poetry to do with the weather and were exploring sound and how words made sounds. Although not a singing activity as such, this showed how much music has been taken up as a learning tool in literacy work.
- I also observed the whole school Singing Assembly. This was led by members of staff. All the children and other staff present joined in fully. Helen, who had had a child at the school and is a parent helper, enthusiastically took the lead too. Singing was both unaccompanied and with a backing track. Year 4 led a call and response activity with great energy and then children from Year 3 led a song. The standard of singing produced was excellent with good pitch control evening part-singing. The level of focus and concentration was particularly impressive.
- The choir, which is a voluntary lunchtime activity, had about 30 members taken from Year 2, 3 and 4, with a good number of boys. This group was highly committed, singing unaccompanied songs in parts, choosing their own songs and working on actions and movement.

- Of particular interest to watch was the parents' choir run by Helen. This meets just before the end of school and, though small in number as yet, is a group that clearly loves to sing. It is great to see the singing ethos of the school extending outwards.

### **Round-up**

- I was able to have a chat with the Headteacher who outlined even more of what goes on in this singing school. She said how supportive the parents were and how the staff, teaching assistants, administration team and even the caretaker joined in the singing with music evenings every term, a staff choir and singing communities in the outlying villages. Local schools have been drawn into the singing with partnerships set up. A boys' choir had been started and even the lunchtime French club used lots of singing to help learn grammar and vocabulary.

### **Leadership**

- Becky Kroese, the music co-ordinator, is a highly talented and committed singing leader. She has inspired everyone in the school to sing and the ethos is inclusive and informal. Even with this as the policy, the standard being achieved is excellent. The children are confident and engaging, joining in readily but also willing and able to lead singing activities themselves. The participation in the community is very exciting and with parents of current pupils and ex pupils readily joining in and leading, singing in Wylam shows a real sense of growth.

### **Feedback on Sing Up**

- It is clear that the Sing Up Awards scheme has really helped to move singing forward in Wylam. Projects with The Sage Gateshead and The Big Sing were particularly praised. The Sing Up magazine was highly rated but the really useful resource was felt to be the website with the song bank and the different levels and categories it contained. The training programme too was felt to be very useful in encouraging motivation and growing leadership skills.



## **St John Fisher and St Thomas More Primary School – Manchester**

- A large mixed voluntary aided primary school with pupils from age 3 – 11. Nearly half of the pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, this is more than twice the average. Just over a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language and many are at an early stage of learning English.
- Sing Up Awards achieved: Platinum, Gold
- Date observed: 15 February 2011

### **Activities Observed**

- The day was organised by the music co-ordinator, Deborah Horley. She ensured that I spent time with her and also with all the year groups and I was able to observe work in music lessons and also during break and lunch time.
- The day started with a staff choir rehearsal. This is a fairly new initiative and involves all the staff coming in early to sing together for about 25 minutes before the start of school. They were preparing for their first performance for the children in assembly later on that week.
- Key Stage 2 year groups came together for Hymn Singing where effective warm ups were used and a wide variety of different styles were covered. Leaders from the children were selected to help with part-singing and self-assessment was used as a teaching tool.
- Nursery and Reception children used the 'song box' to help choose songs and even in Nursery children sang solos to each other. They were encouraged to use their 'singing voices' and, in Reception, worked both unaccompanied and with backing tracks. Counting songs were used for number work and children were enthusiastic and focussed. Both teachers and teaching assistants joined in and led groups confidently.
- Years 1 – 2 were observed in language and numeracy lessons. Groups did work on phonics and engaged in trying out their own words to different tunes. In maths, the children were counting backwards in songs and also learning to double numbers. Leaders were brought out from the classes and all the children participated with real enthusiasm and concentration.
- A lunchtime choir practise for Years 3 – 6 showed a very high standard of singing with accompanied and unaccompanied work in unison and in parts. Good posture was encouraged and soft singing and high singing were worked on with excellent leadership skills demonstrated.
- Hymn singing with Key Stage 1 children also showed great care taken to explore vocal production thoughtfully. Dynamics and tempi were varied and actions and movement were fully integrated.

- Year 6 children were working on a project about the willow pattern plate with Maurice Walsh who had come in to take a rehearsal. Instruments were used and there was solo singing and ensemble work all at a high standard. I was able to talk to him at some length about the benefits of 'singing squares', how all the staff at the school were engaged and enthused about singing and how the choice of repertoire is vital in engaging the children's interest.
- I also observed how signing was being encouraged with one of the teachers using it as a tool in classes, developing this alongside the singing.

### **Round-up**

- The school is a real singing school. Members of staff have joined the Manchester schools staff choir to help develop their own singing and the whole school sings together on a Friday at 'Golden' assembly. Older children are monitors and leaders and have been involved in transition projects at the local High School where they have sung with children from other local schools, exploring different genres and putting on a concert for parents. A scheme has been started to bring other local school children into the school for a joint choir practise and starting a boys' choir was also mentioned as a way to ensure that the older boys stay singing. There is already wide involvement with the local community as groups go out to sing at different events but plans for a local community choir to involve more parents are in place.

### **Leadership**

- Under Deborah's enthusiastic and committed leadership, and with the support of a very positive Headteacher, all the staff at this school have become excellent singing leaders. The children are given every opportunity not just to sing but also to participate fully in leading activities, choosing songs and developing their own musical ideas.

### **Feedback on Sing Up**

- The Sing Up Awards scheme was very highly regarded. The school had thought of itself as a singing school before the introduction of the Sing Up Awards process but had only really focused on the choir. Through engagement with Sing Up, everyone was singing right across the school. The Sing Up website was seen as a really useful resource, with the song bank especially providing great ideas for cross-curricular activities.
- Deborah is an inspirational leader and the school shows what can be achieved. Great leadership skills are apparent and the engagement with singing throughout the school is very impressive.