Opinion

Singing contributes to school culture

Marc Jaffrey

Singing is such a fundamental human activity that people would probably be shocked to find out that there is little in the way of evidence of this in schools today. The massive success of the National Scheme for Arts and Music Education in the UK in the mid-1970s was followed by a huge decline and, while in the past five years we have witnessed some improvements in music education, I have been lucky enough to have a role in just one aspect of it; the National Project El Sistema, now being so ably led by Julian Lloyd Webber. It has been a real pleasure to see the impact of such a project on schools, especially the less successful ones. For me, it’s the only way forward, to revive music in schools, because it is not just about the benefits of singing, a national singing programme, but to develop the whole child. It’s not just about addressing academic standards; it’s about providing the right kind of environment for learning. The success of Sing Up, the national singing programme, has played a significant role in ensuring that all children have the opportunity to participate in music, and particularly singing. The project, which was launched in 2007, has had a huge impact on schools and children’s lives. It has brought about a culture change in many schools, resulting in improved standards and behaviour.

The project has attracted a lot of interest, both from schools and parents, and has received a lot of support from other organisations, including the Department for Education and the Arts Council. Sing Up has also been successful in raising the profile of music education in schools, which is vital if we are to continue to make progress in this area.

Project hits the right notes

Singing builds confidence, promotes teamwork and provides a way of addressing special needs outside mainstream schools

Sarah Jewell

Singing helps children overcome the challenges they face in life, according to a recent study by the University of York and the Centre for Research in Music Education. Their report, Beyond the Music Room, is a comprehensive review of the benefits of singing education for children, with a focus on the impact of singing programmes that were designed to address specific needs, such as those of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), children who are not yet ready for mainstream education, and those who are experiencing difficulties in learning.

The research found that singing education can be an effective way of promoting positive outcomes for children, by providing them with a means of self-expression, a sense of achievement, and the opportunity to develop social and emotional skills. It also highlighted the potential of singing education to improve academic performance, as well as to promote social cohesion and community building.

The report concludes that singing education should be an integral part of the school curriculum, and that it should be available to all children, regardless of their background or abilities. The findings of this research confirm the positive impact of music education on children's lives, and demonstrate the potential of singing education to make a real difference in children's lives.