

# Transition

Sing Up 2007-2011  
Programme Evaluation  
Theme 9

## Sing Up 2007-2011 Programme Evaluation

Sing Up 2007-2011 was the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by Government. It aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children throughout the country to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become 'singing schools'.

Sing Up commissioned the Centre for Use of Research & Evidence in Education (CUREE) to undertake an external evaluation of the whole programme. The evaluations are presented as follows:

- Synthesis Report including Executive Summary
- Probe & Case Study Report
  - Themed Reports:
    1. Communications
    2. Health & Wellbeing
    3. Impact on Schools
    4. Learning Across the Curriculum
    5. Management of Change
    6. Musical Development
    7. Partnership
    8. Speech, Language and Communication
    9. Transition
    10. Workforce Development
    11. Youth Leadership

The full set of reports can be found on the Sing Up website: [www.singup.org](http://www.singup.org)

Further information about CUREE can be found at: [www.curee-paccts.com](http://www.curee-paccts.com)

## Introduction

Sing Up 2007-11 was the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme, led by Youth Music, with AMV-BBDO, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead, supported by Government. It aimed to raise the status of singing and increase opportunities for school children throughout the country to enjoy singing as part of their everyday lives, and to support all primary schools to become 'singing schools'.



Sing Up operated through four main strands of activity: a national PR and advertising **campaign** highlighting the benefits of singing; singing **resources**, through the twin vehicles of a website [www.singup.org](http://www.singup.org) (including a 'Song Bank') and a free termly magazine with CD; a **workforce development** programme to build the confidence and expertise of primary school teachers, musicians and others in leading and supporting children's singing activities, with a supporting network of 30 Sing Up Area Leaders; **funded programmes**, supporting the development of singing activity around the country.

By March 2011 Sing Up had engaged with over 95% of state primary schools and over 90% of all schools with primary school-aged children in them.

## Background

Attention to the importance of transition in young people's lives and learning, and the role that singing and music could play in it, has been strong from the outset of the Sing Up programme: it was recognised as one of the key objectives in the Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> (2008). Building on the work of Youth Music, one of the four partner organisations in the Sing Up consortium, colleagues involved in the programme wished to 'support singing through transition periods for young people'<sup>2</sup>. Sing Up planned to achieve this by developing resources and providing support in staff professional development to enable 'singing across transition periods'<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, the Sing Up programme partner organisations and practitioners aimed to:

- offer children in nursery settings opportunities to participate in singing and music-making on a daily basis (Early Years Foundation Stage/KS1 transition); and
- ensure 'children who are progressing to middle or secondary school are already used to singing and music-making every day and can gain access to as much or more singing provision' (KS2/3) transition.

1. Sing Up Strategic Plan, 2008

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

4. For the purposes of this report, a project was defined as an aspect of activity carried out as part of the Sing Up programme. Projects therefore range in nature and include specific interventions; their types (e.g. Sing Up Awards); organisations and areas, leading a variety of strands of work; various communications activities and their analysis, etc.

5. Sing Up Probe Report, 2011

Thus the Sing Up programme, which generally focused on the primary phase, in its transition projects<sup>4</sup> included developing resources, working with and providing support for practitioners (and their students) from other phases. Projects involving pre-school and foundation age children are described in more detail in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) section of the probe report.<sup>5</sup>

As Sing Up work aimed at engaging children not in mainstream education developed, it resulted in an additional interpretation of transition within the programme:

- transition into mainstream education and inclusion of children not in mainstream education.

## Aims and Objectives

The projects that were identified as relating to transition were diverse and their aims related to transition varied accordingly.

Several projects including the Young Leaders Pilot Project in York and several Sing Up Clusters, such as Northumberland, explicitly aimed to ease transition for their students by setting up joint choirs and singing groups of year 6 and 7 students.

The West Midlands Sing Up Consortium aimed to develop transition dialogue between two high schools and their feeder primaries through joint project work towards singing development. Vocal Force Kirklees had a similar aim, looking to refine the transition strategy already in place, particularly for EYFS/KS1 transition.

One Beyond the Mainstream (BTM) project run by the Greater Manchester Music Action Zone (GMAAZ) took place in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which worked with non-English speaking pupils about to enter mainstream English education. The aim of the entire PRU was to prepare children for mainstream education, and the Sing Up project looked to help fulfil this, through joint singing lessons with the feeder primaries and helping the speech, language and communication of the non-English speakers.

Typically, transition was one of the objectives set within the projects reported here. Other objectives related to areas such as young people's musical development and progression, health and wellbeing, EYFS and youth leadership.

## Processes and Strategies

### Transition Choirs

A number of projects whose aim was to smooth the transition process for pupils did so by setting up a choir which included pupils from across the transition divide. For example in the West Midlands Consortium one high school and its feeder primaries joined forces to share resources, expertise and ideas to create a singing community and from this a community choir. Year 7 students are now being tracked by the high school to see how they have coped with the transition and to put this learning into practice.

Practitioners from one of the Sing Up flagships projects (North West Music Partnership) made sure that colleagues from the local high schools were aware that many year 6 pupils wished to continue singing. A vocal specialist from the local authority then worked alongside music teachers in the high schools to set up a year 7 choir. Some students subsequently chose to join the school choir whilst others opted to continue with the year 7 choir.

Another flagship project used a similar approach in a slightly different way. A high school choir started an after-school signing club for KS2 children in their local primary school, in the hope that when they transferred to the secondary school they would join the choir (Sing Up Flagship: Music and the Deaf).

### **Community Concerts**

Along with the creation of transition and/or community choirs, a number of projects also looked to put on a concert which the whole community could enjoy. Bedlingtonshire Community High School, part of the Northumberland Cluster, was particularly clear in their vision of how singing could be used as a strategy to facilitate transition:

'The project will allow the first and middle school pupils the opportunity to gain an experience of the next tier in their education through the performance celebration itself, meeting the teachers at the high school, pupils from other schools that will form part of their cohort at middle/high school and older pupils. They will also get the chance to communicate with the young singing leaders and high school pupils during the performance and rehearsal phases.'

The school worked with its feeder primaries to put on a community concert whose theme was 'The World'. This included a joint performance of a choir made up of primary and secondary children, solos, duets and some interaction with the audience. Vocal Force Kirklees also put on a 'Celebration Showcase' of talent from across the high and primary schools, including pupils and teachers. This was the culmination of their project 'Sing Up for Kirklees' and is now a permanent fixture for the area.

### **Young Singing Leaders**

Young Singing Leaders (YSL) was a main aim for the Sing Up programme as a whole, and it was used to demonstrable effect for many transition projects. Along with their community concert, Bedlingtonshire Community High School also created a number of young singing leaders who worked with the school's feeder primaries helping the teachers to lead singing with their pupils. They also helped with rehearsals for the concert, coaching the singers and helping them perfect their performance. In the Young Leaders Pilot Project year 7 students, Sing Up Area Leaders and experts were trained for working with and leading younger children in singing. The YSLs were then attached to two to three primary schools where they worked with the teachers to teach songs and lyrics to year 6 students. These year 6 students would then look to become the YSLs the following year.

### Signing Buddies

Signing Buddies was a specific project developed by Music and the Deaf as part of their work with Sing Up and their work to engage hearing and hearing-impaired children across the country. The Signing Buddies project was developed specifically to support transition and to encourage the growth of Young Singing and Signing leaders. It followed a similar process to the main YSL programme developed by Sing Up, and lower secondary school pupils worked with both hearing and hearing-impaired pupils to teach and lead them in singing and signing songs. They also received training which was targeted at communicating with hearing impaired students and encouraging them to access singing.

### Beyond the Mainstream (BTM)

This aspect of Sing Up worked across all strands and has a strong transition presence running through it. As the name suggests most BTM projects took place outside of mainstream education, but key to their success was working with mainstream schools in order to facilitate transition back into mainstream education. For example GMMAZ worked with a PRU and local primary schools on joint singing projects. This allowed pupils from the PRU to interact with peers their own age in mainstream education, and gave them a taste of what they would experience when they joined. Another BTM project for children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties linked with a local primary school so the children could develop positive relationships with their peers in mainstream education. Children from the primary school acted as singing mentors in order to build on the relationships between the two sites and facilitate transition from one to the other.



### Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Resources Provided by Sing Up

Staff participation in professional development was reported by most of the Sing Up projects related to transition. Descriptions of the training provided in the reports suggest that the development efforts were mainly focused on embedding singing in practitioners' own settings, occasionally there were opportunities for sharing good practice and 'cross-fertilisation' of repertoire (Vocal Force Kirklees) and training for young singing leaders. The range of professional development activities included support from the Area Leader, teachers' choirs and courses, etc.

The Song Bank and Sing Up magazine also contributed to transition through numerous songs and articles which aimed to have children 'singing their way through the day'.

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## Findings and Outcomes

### Children and Young People as Participants and Audience

Outcomes related to children and young people centred around increased enjoyment of singing, and increased engagement with it. In conjunction with an increased enjoyment of singing, children and young people also increased in confidence, both in singing and in general. 'I have found that I really like singing and it has made me more confident as a person by singing with others and sometimes leading the song, or singing by myself. And with my friends.' (Student, Sing Up Flagship: North West Music Partnership).

In some instances (e.g. Sing Up East Berkshire) year 6 children were able to 'explore their feelings about the upcoming change in their lives', i.e. transition, through song-writing. In others year 6 children had an opportunity to experience their high school and meet some of the students prior to transition. This was achieved not just through a visit to the school but by working together on the Sing Up project to perform a concert together held at the high school (Northumberland Cluster). The evaluation of Sing Up Clusters report<sup>6</sup> highlighted the increase in confidence among year 6 children with regards to their transition from primary to secondary as they became more familiar with the faces and places they would encounter in their new setting.



Another outcome for children and young people was their increased communication with each other thanks to an involvement in Sing Up. The evaluation of the Sing Up Clusters programme, in particular, highlighted improvements in children's social skill development gained by working with both their peers and older mentors from other schools.

Improved communications skills were even more visible in programmes involving children with special needs or not in mainstream education. For example, the PRU that worked with GMMAZ, specialised in preparing non-English speakers to enter the English education system, found that through singing, especially with English speaking children from the mainstream primaries, pupils communication skills increased and they were able to make themselves understood. 'They sing with each other. They can't always speak together because they don't have a shared language, but they can and do sing together.' (GMMAZ)

This was also the case with the Music and the Deaf project as children from feeder primaries were led and mentored by their peers from the secondaries. Communication both through singing and signing increased among both groups.

### Children and Young People as Singing Leaders

There was a similar increase in confidence in those students who were part of the YSL scheme. Through training and mentoring from teachers and singing specialists their skills and confidence to lead and mentor their younger peers increased. YSLs from Great Baddow High School (Music and the Deaf), for example, were proactive in leading pupils from the feeder primaries through

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6. Sing Up Cluster Evaluation Report, January – July 2010

'I have found that I really like singing and it has made me more confident as a person by singing with others and sometimes leading the song, or singing by myself. And with my friends'

singing and signing songs. 'Pupils from the secondary school worked in pairs to learn, teach and communicate the signing of songs... In one case two boys had thoughtfully printed out copies of the words for the younger children to take home and share with their families.' (Music and the Deaf).

### Adults as Participants

Adults as participants refers to teachers, school staff and parents who participated in the Sing Up projects. For the projects related to transition, the pattern was similar to that of the children and young people, in that their confidence and enjoyment of singing and school life increased through participation in the projects.

There is also evidence indicating a greater take up of singing and music generally in a number of school staff from participating schools. For instance the Eden Valley project run by the Vocal Force strand has had a number of school staff become involved in singing and music outside and inside of school. One teacher has set up a 'Rock School', a teaching assistant from another school set up an after school singing club and another in the same school has taken up the oboe and now helps the music specialist with singing sessions.

### Organisational Impact

One of the areas where school leaders noticed impact on their organisations from participating in Sing Up was improved communication between secondaries and their feeder primaries throughout the project and into the transition period. Being collaboratively involved in Sing Up helped strengthen existing ties and establish new relationships between colleagues from different schools and other settings, which was reflected in running projects successfully, sharing resources and singing repertoire.

Many colleagues thought that offering primary pupils the opportunity to meet students from what will be their new school, and to form good relationships with them through singing, had a setting-wide impact for a number of the transition projects.

Another organisational impact for schools has been the setting up of transition choirs. This has helped raise awareness of singing across schools as a whole and a number of staff and whole school choirs have also been created.

### Drivers and Inhibitors

The main driver behind the success of the projects concentrating on transition was perceived to be the support of the senior management team (SMT) at both the primary and secondary schools involved. Practitioners from one of the schools involved in the Music and the Deaf project, for instance, had the support of their SMT to allow pupils and their teachers to take whole days away from school to work on the Sing Up project. Colleagues from another school involved in the same project did not have the same level of support from senior management and felt their work was not as successful.

Another challenge that colleagues working on transition related projects faced was much more logistical. The process of getting students, especially those in leadership roles, out of the secondary schools and into the primary classroom

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proved to be problematic for several projects. Selby Young Leaders, part of the Vocal Force strand, had problems as it had to visit several primary schools in the area and this meant taking their YSLs out of classes more often than they wanted. During the second term this problem was overcome by getting the primary children to come to them instead. This further enhanced the transition process by allowing year 6 pupils the opportunity to meet with their peers from other primaries who would be moving up with them in September.

The final area that was perceived as an inhibitor to the projects was a lack of communication between schools involved in transition, which led to a lack of knowledge about the transition procedures for a number of schools. This was picked up on as part of the evaluation for the Sing Up Clusters programme (which was specifically aimed at transition) as being a major stumbling block at the beginning of a number of projects. The report recommended that schools working together needed to outline their transition procedures at the start of a project to try to overcome the differences and work out a mutual plan to support transition across feeder primaries and their secondary school.

## Methods

'Development of student peer support mechanisms (YSL, singing buddies) comes across as a strong feature of many projects'

Ninety nine project reports and related evidence, ranging between internal evaluations and external assessment, were selected by Sing Up as a basis for a number of synthesis evaluation reports. The documents were coded by a team of CUREE researchers as likely to yield evidence for each of the themed reports. The data were then extracted by the same team, using Nvivo software, for each of the themes identified by Sing Up. The data extraction framework, based on questions focused on both impact and processes for each of the themes, was agreed in advance with Sing Up. The resulting data was then analysed and synthesised so that the key messages for each theme could be reported.

The current report is based on the documents which were identified as containing data relevant to the theme of Transition. A total of 11 projects had information relating to the theme. Types of evidence collected by the projects that provided the basis for this report included:

- music specialists perceptions/quotes;
- school staff perceptions/quotes; and
- reports.

## Transition: Connections to the Wider Evidence Base

Evidence submitted by the projects reported here suggests that their work was successful in engaging large numbers of children from different phases and contexts in singing, which led to increased confidence and enjoyment of life in school. Development of student peer support mechanisms (YSL, singing buddies) comes across as a strong feature of many projects. In addition, opportunities to meet staff and visit new schools before transition were provided by some

7. Evangelou, M., Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. & Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2008) What makes a successful transition from Primary to Secondary School? DCSF: London. Accessible at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-RR019>

8. Peters, S. (2003) 'I didn't expect that I would get tons of friends ... More each day': children's experiences of friendship during the transition to school. In *Early Years*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2003, pp.45-53.

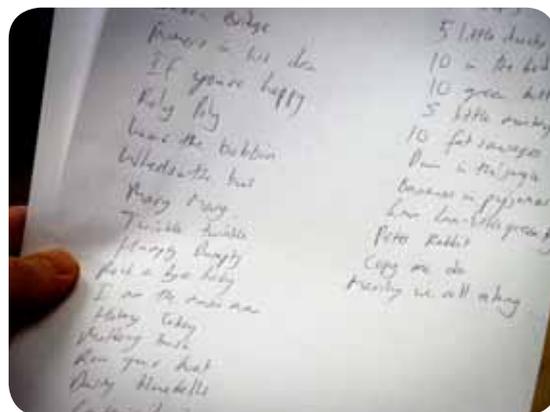
9. CUREE & University of Wolverhampton (2010) How do effective curriculum experiences contribute to narrowing achievement gaps for the most vulnerable children and young people? Coventry: CUREE

projects. The latter two approaches are consistent with what has been identified as facilitating transition in other studies<sup>7 8 9</sup>. Specifically, in her work with over 500 children and their families about what constitutes effective transition and how the process can be supported, Evangelou found the following strategies to be particularly effective:

- the use of 'bridging materials';
- the sharing of information between schools;
- visits to schools by prospective teachers, children and their parents;
- distribution of booklets;
- talks at the schools, and
- taster days and other joint social events between schools.

Many of these approaches were employed in Sing Up transition projects.

Available evidence suggests that work aimed at securing coherence of learning experiences between two key stages, (through for example ensuring that singing provision is sustained), was less common amongst Sing Up projects. It is perhaps then not surprising that attention to ensuring pupils' progression in musical learning and development at the next key stage, allowing them to build on what they know and can do already, was rare.



These findings indicate that sustaining momentum of learning and engagement, through developing progression mechanisms for transition stages (particularly children moving into secondary school), supported by relevant and targeted staff development opportunities, could be suggested as an area for development for policy and practice related to singing and musical provision.

## Glossary

### **Sing Up Awards**

The Awards have helped schools to embed singing throughout their school life, encouraging them to celebrate their singing. There are three different levels of Award: Silver, Gold and Platinum. The Awards are specially designed to work across different types of school, including SEN settings.

### **Beyond the Mainstream (BTM)**

Sing Up made a commitment to ensure that its work impacts upon all primary aged children, including children in SEN schools, Pupil Referral Units, looked after children, children with mental health issues and many others early in 2009, and the stream of work that underpins this commitment throughout the programme is called Beyond the Mainstream. BTM broadly focuses on children who can't access primary mainstream school (in SEN or PRU settings) as well as those who have difficulties accessing primary mainstream (including looked after children, children with EBD, children with mental health difficulties etc).

### **Sing Up Clusters**

Sing Up Clusters have helped secondary schools to lead innovative singing projects with their feeder primary schools. The programme aims to train and inspire singing leaders and enables schools to work positively with pupils' transition issues. Clusters work with 240 schools across the nation, introducing exciting singing opportunities to over 7,500 pupils.

### **Sing Up Flagships**

Sing Up Flagships are leading singing advocate organisations that work to share and develop best practice through projects, performances and resources. Nine organisations have worked as Flagships, with most programmes typically lasting 2 years. Thousands of children, practitioners and singing leaders have benefited nationwide from their work.

### **Sing Up Communities**

Sing Up Communities have been run by arts organisations and music services that work with primary-aged children. They aim to place singing at the heart of the community. Each project has run for two years and aims to reach over 2,000 primary-aged children. Work includes the development of young singing leaders and encouraging singing out of school hours.

### **Vocal Force**

Vocal Force was originally a project based on the innovative Vocal Union programme devised by The Sage Gateshead, before becoming part of Sing Up in 2008. Vocal Force aimed to foster a peer support network for sharing learning and exploring ways of sustaining networks. It has created over 60 bespoke projects to increase the skills, confidence and repertoire of more than 3,000 singing leaders.