



## RIPLEY NURSERY SCHOOL

### MUSIC, MUSIC, MUSIC!

#### INTRODUCTION

At Ripley Nursery School we place great emphasis on supporting all children to be confident, able and happy communicators – and what better way to enhance speaking and listening than through the provision of a high quality music curriculum?

We understand the powerful role of the adult in both teaching and modelling language and social communication<sup>1</sup>. Teaching of short, repetitive songs with actions and simple tunes is a powerful vehicle for introducing and embedding new vocabulary for young children. The development of call and response songs would support both verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours.

Singing in child's mother tongue also supports a child's understanding of how their language works.

In 'The Genius of Natural Childhood, Secrets of Thriving Children', Sally Goddard Blythe explains,

*"Lullabies, songs and rhymes of every culture carry the 'signature' melodies and inflections of a mother tongue, preparing a child's ear, voice and brain for language."<sup>2</sup>*

We are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment which enables the potential of all our learners. Graham Welch describes the many benefits of singing including the inclusive nature and sense of well-being evoked by singing as part of a group.

Finally we wanted to concentrate on developing musicality for all children and **The Kodály approach** develops musicianship through singing and regards the voice as the first instrument.

**Using our voices as a instrument was a perfect starting point in developing staff training and introducing children to music.**

#### INTENT

We began our musical journey with two intents – firstly to develop staff and pupil's confidence in using our voices to sing with enjoyment. We wanted this to be an offer for all of our children. Secondly we wanted all staff to develop the essential skills and knowledge to 'teach' music firstly through singing and then through using instruments.

## IMPLEMENTATION



We worked with Ju Birchall from Derbyshire Music Hub to support the development of a music curriculum; Ju led a series of staff meetings which enabled staff to rediscover musical concepts and learn simple songs and structures to deliver short singing sessions. Staff quickly began to incorporate singing into their regular interactions and daily routines – these strategies were particularly effective in engaging children with communication and social interaction needs. We were also successful in our bid for the Musical Exchanges Project; this involved working with musicians who would lead further teaching sessions and staff training.

The Musical Exchanges project ran from October 2023 – February 2024; staff have participated in 12 musician led sessions and 3 training days for lead teachers. The lead teachers practice and develop their musical offer with their class teams and then share training with staff through staff meetings. We also build in opportunities for staff to buddy up and observe practice of their colleagues.

Working collaboratively with staff and the musicians on the musical exchange project we have developed three themes;

**hearing and listening,  
vocalizing and singing,  
moving and dancing,**

around which to organize our music and movement curriculum. Our starting points include introducing a limited number of carefully chosen songs and rhymes including welcome, hello, call and response and nursery songs and rhymes. Using a repertoire of carefully chosen songs, staff build in opportunities for exploring tempo, pitch and vocalisations, keeping a steady beat and beginning to follow a rhythm. Once core songs and rhymes are well established we add in exploring and playing instruments with direction and, finally, exploring movement to music.



*Expressing emotions through movement as the children listen to classical music whilst watching and chasing bubbles in the wind.*



*Beat keeping with movement, whilst swaying the parachute side to side*



*Staff are becoming much more confident and are now leading regular music sessions. Here is a session in which the children are using claves to keep a steady beat.*

*Here children are using lycra in the same way as the outside parachute to sway from side to side, whilst singing, 'A Little Frog in a Pond Am I.' Archie in the photograph is anticipating the next stage of the song... where the children make the frog bounce up and down!!*



We have observed several children with additional needs respond incredibly well to the music sessions, with increased participation, attention and listening skills. These regular sessions have a huge positive impact upon our children, with significant progress made each week.



We use props, including scarves, with the children to develop interactive songs including, 'Where are the children?' and 'A little flower.' Our children love these songs and often ask for them to be repeated several times.



All four teaching teams, have evolved their music offer to pupils in slightly different ways. Staff plan bi-weekly singing sessions in all classes, all practitioners are confident to lead singing sessions, many children know and independently use a core of familiar songs and virtually all children respond positively to singing invitations.

We have many different ability groups in school and development of music curriculum has been key in further developing listening and strong engagement skills. Throughout the learning environment children are very receptive to songs to support listening and attention, children are confident participating in call and response songs and children often observed singing independently as they work in the environment. Children are developing their ability to keep a steady beat, which is the foundation of all musical experience and supports co-ordination in walking, running and even in writing. There is growing evidence that the ability to keep a steady beat is also a strong predictor of reading skill.

We use termly whole school reviews to consider the impact of our teaching and curriculum offer and termly individual supervisions to support staff in their well-being and CPD; from this collaborative approach staff have devised an incremental skills based music curriculum which runs over the academic year.

### **Reflections and key improvements for Ripley Nursery School**

1. Singing is useful in developing co- and self-regulation
2. Singing is extremely effective in promoting listening and attention
3. Singing songs and games support children in working co-operatively as part of a group
4. Singing is useful for introducing new vocabulary, especially when combined with Makaton and/gestures.
5. Singing is inclusive—it is an offer for all children and staff.
6. Singing together is a joyous activity and supports high well-being.
7. We have the knowledge to structure a music session for 3 and 4 year olds and how to plan a progression music curriculum over an academic year.
8. We have greater understanding of key concepts including rhythm, pitch, tempo and keeping a steady beat.
9. We know how to use a range of instruments effectively, including shakers, claves and bells with young children.
10. We are composing and directing music with young children.

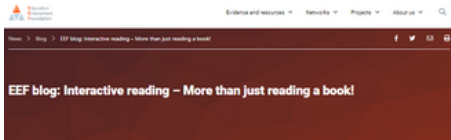
### **REFERENCES**

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4. [Blossom and Berry - Music teaching and early years](#)
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6. <https://www.derbyshiremusicshub.org.uk/home>

# REFERENCES



[Development matters](#)



[EEF Evidence Store -  
interactive reading blog](#)

