



Singing Assemblies: Tools and Resources for KS1, KS2 and KS3



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Introduction

Singing assemblies are an increasingly popular way for young people to access vocal opportunities in school on a regular basis. For some schools they are an integral part of their approach to Collective Worship, and for all schools they can be a key way to provide students with cultural capital. The research-backed benefits of group singing are numerous, from calming the heart rate and boosting the immune system, to increasing positive mood and self-esteem, to bonding people and creating a feeling of closeness. Singing assemblies provide a way to increase the sense of community in your school, while helping to improve students' physical and mental well-being and their musicality.

Singing assemblies can be a daunting prospect for many teachers. Using our voices in front of large groups is a nerve-wracking thing to do, and that self-conscious feeling can easily transfer to the students. There is also such a wealth of resources available that it can feel overwhelming trying to find songs that will benefit the children and feel accessible to lead.

This resource is designed for both music and non-music specialists, giving tools and resources that can help you to lead successful singing assemblies, and develop a culture of confident and enjoyable singing within your school.

Before you Arrive

To create a successful singing assembly, the first thing to think about and prepare is yourself. Whether you are a confident singer who finds the idea of a singing assembly fun, or a more nervous singer who finds the idea intimidating, there are steps you can take to prepare yourself which will enable you to enjoy the session, and which will ensure the children enjoy themselves too.

Please use the below 1–3-minute videos to help you prepare for your journey of leading singing assemblies.

Introduction	A brief introduction with helpful hints and tips in building confidence and preparing a successful singing assembly	Video
Posture	Prepare your body to ensure you can lead with confidence and sing well yourself	Video
Breath	Take a breath to calm nerves, and expand your breath to help you demonstrate singing effectively.	Video

Planning the Session

Plan your session and the timings of each activity thoroughly to ensure engagement from all students throughout, thinking of the following aspects:

- Warm ups should develop the skills you need in the session. For example, tongue twisters are beneficial for songs with lots of words.
- New material should be started straight after the warm ups, as it will need the most concentration and you don't want students to be tired.
- End the session with a song the students know so that they leave feeling confident in their singing.

Setting the Scene

Singing assemblies can take place in a variety of spaces based on what your school has available, however there are certain set up requirements it can help to think about ahead of time.

Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try to make sure you are using a room where everyone can sit or stand comfortably, without being pressed against each other. - For KS1 and lower KS2, consider singing spaces. These can be marked with coloured rubber circles on the floor, and enable children to know where they need to sit or stand in each assembly. This can speed up the arrival and minimise behavioural disruption. - For upper KS2 and KS3, consider a rotating seating plan. So often the oldest children are at the back, which can create a mindset of not needing to take part. By varying where each year group sits, you can ensure engagement each week and discover some star voices you may otherwise not have heard.
Audio/ Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To enable your young people to create the best sound, they need to look up rather than down. I would recommend, if your space allows, having lyrics displayed on a whiteboard rather than using lyric sheets. This also prevents the children from having something to fiddle with and be distracted by during rehearsals. - If you aren't a confident pianist or guitarist and are unable to accompany the children, there are many great backing track options available. Certain providers even offer echo tracks, so that you can teach songs line by line without relying on your voice. I'll be introducing some of these providers later in the resource. Also ask other staff members if they play any instruments, as someone you didn't expect may be able to come and accompany. - If you are relying on music being played digitally, ensure you have a loud enough sound system so that all children can hear the music. This can greatly increase their confidence when singing.
Entry/ Exit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider playing music while the children enter and exit the singing assembly. The music could be changed each week or each half term, or be reflective of the theme of the song they are learning. It can set the mood of the assembly, such as calming children who have just arrived from break time, or energising children who are coming into an assembly as their first session of the day.
Staff Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speak to other staff members who will be in the singing assembly and ask them to enthusiastically take part. Leading by example is the best way for a positive singing culture to be embedded in a school. Plus the benefits of singing are not limited to children. - Have a policy for toilet trips and any other issues that may require children to leave. Assign a member of staff to oversee this. - Encourage all staff to use positive behaviour management, highlighting children singing well, perhaps with rewards. - Share songs and lyrics with teachers, and ask if they can sing them during the week with their class to improve their confidence by the next assembly.

Warm Ups

If you have a 20-minute session, plan to spend 5-10 minutes on a warm up. The warm up is a really important part of the assembly. Not only does it ensure vocal health, but it also engages the children from the start. Below is a table of various warm ups in multiple styles that you can incorporate into your sessions.

Physical	Include warm ups that are for the whole body as well as the voice. This will help to relax muscles before singing, and can be good to focus attention on the session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rubber Chicken (KS1/2/3) - Pumpkin Face / Raisin Face (KS1/2) - Bananas of the World Unite (KS1/2) - Banana Apple Strawberry (KS1/2/3)
Body Percussion	Body percussion warm ups develop overall musicianship as well as the voice, and encourage children who are more nervous about their voice to join in.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alive Alert Awake Enthusiastic (KS2) - Shoulder Click Clap (KS2/KS3) - First You Make Your Fingers Click (KS2/KS3)
Breathing	Ensuring breath support is fully engaged makes sure that children are singing healthily, and not straining their voices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rubber Ring (KS1/2) - In for 4, hold for 4, out for 4 (KS3)
Posture	Explain to the children what happens to their lungs and diaphragm when they slouch. Understanding will encourage them to maintain good posture during the session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stand like a soldier (KS1/2) - Body collapse and roll up (KS3)
Tongue Twisters	If you find that children are struggling to get their mouths around the words of a song, definitely introduce tongue twister warm ups to get the tongue, teeth and lips moving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My mother makes me mash my mini M&Ms (KS1/2) - How much wood can a woodchuck chuck? (KS2/3) - Merry men (KS2/3) - Papa's got a head like a ping pong ball (KS3)
Vocal Range	Gently warming up the entire vocal range of your students will prevent students tiring or hurting their voices and ensure healthy singing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Humming/Sirening (KS1/2/3) - 1 2 3 4 5 (KS1/2) - 1, 121, 12321 (KS2/3) - 1 3 5 8 (KS3)

Please watch the below videos for warm up demonstrations for each Key Stage, including some of the warm ups that I have listed in the above table.

KS1/2 Warm Up Video	KS3 Warm Up Video
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Choosing Repertoire

Below are some points to consider when choosing repertoire for assemblies.

Pitch Range	Before introducing a piece, consider carefully if the children can comfortably sing all notes in the piece once they are warmed up. It may take them time working with you to feel confident singing notes around the top of the stave (higher than a C above middle C) and to sing them healthily without straining or shouting. Avoid songs with notes much below middle C for KS1 children. For KS3, consider if changed voices can enjoy singing in the range, or if the original key needs shifting.
Range of Songs	Use a variety of song styles, for example songs in unison, simple rounds, and call and response. Include songs from various cultures and that are sung in different languages. Learn songs a capella as well as with accompaniment. Ask for student suggestions, so you can discover the music your students enjoy. Don't feel pressured to sing only pop songs – students will sing any type of music if you present it in a fun and confident way.
Context	Talk to the children about the song, for example telling them where it was written, the culture it is from, or talking about the composer. Discussions around the context of music can help with improving school inclusion, for example in Black History Month or LGBTQ+ History Month.

There are many organisations who now provide accessible singing assembly resources, pitched at a variety of levels to cater for both music specialists and non-music specialists. Two of the main providers I have highlighted below.

Sing Up www.singup.org

Membership with Sing Up offers access to almost 1000 songs, specially arranged to promote good vocal health in young voices. Their wide range of resources and songs are designed to help you create a complete foundation for singing across the school, for musical learning, choirs and more, for early years to age 18 and beyond.

- KS1/2 - Sing Up includes songs, a music curriculum, assembly plans, activity and lesson plans created specifically to suit 4 – 11 year olds.
- KS3 – Sing Up includes high quality arrangements for choirs and vocal ensembles of varying levels from beginners to experienced groups; as well as songs and units of work for music topics and musicianship development in the classroom.
- Songs can be filtered by age suitability, style, topic, and even assembly theme, making choices for singing assemblies as easy as possible.
- Each song offers a variety of backing tracks, with vocals and without, and most have the option to play an echo track so the children can learn by call and response without relying solely on your voice.
- You have the option to display the notated music, a keyboard, or just the lyrics depending on what is most useful for you and your students.

Charanga www.charanga.com

Charanga is a world-leading music teaching and learning platform used in 62 countries. They provide a vast library of digital resources, including a large range of songs, as well as useful videos for teachers and students. Examples of some of their most useful singing assembly resources are below.

- **Signed Songs** - These are songs from the scheme that include Makaton signing. Children who are not confident to sing yet can learn to sign the song while they slowly introduce singing.
- **Warm Up Activities** - Guided by Kim Chandler (internationally-acclaimed session singer and vocal coach), these lead the children through body warm ups and exercises aimed towards breathing and articulation and then on to pitch.
- **Exploring Vocal Health** – These are videos led by Kim Chandler but aimed at teachers, ensuring vocal health for teachers when using the voice in a variety of ways throughout the day.

Charanga also offers instrumental courses, music curriculums and schemes of work, meaning it can be used as a tool for music teaching across the school.

Assembly Themes

Below is a selection of assembly theme suggestions for each term, with a small amount of song examples that could accompany them. There are arrangements of a lot of these songs on either Sing Up or Charanga. Alternatively you may have an arrangement yourself that you can play on the piano/guitar, or you may find a backing/karaoke track on YouTube.

Autumn

Theme	KS1	KS2	KS3
Harvest/ Autumn	- Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring - Cauliflowers Fluffy	- Let's Harvest - Harvest for the World	- In Autumn
Halloween	- Jack o' lantern	- Creepy Castle - Monster Mash	- Superstition - Little Girl of Rain
Black History Month (October)	- Simama ka - A Keelie (Makaton video – SingUp)	- I wish I knew (how it would feel to be free) - Three Little Birds (Makaton video – Charanga)	- Something Inside (So Strong) - I Know Where I've Been
World Religions	- Hiney Ma Tov - I've got peace like a river	- The night of a thousand lights - Madina tun Nabi - Heiveinu shalom aleichem	- Kis nay banaayaa - Ame sau vala tara bal - Ve al Kulam
Mental Health	- Sunshine in my Heart	- I Can See Clearly Now - Happy (Makaton video: Charanga)	- You Will Be Found - Sing (Makaton video: Singing Hands)
Winter	- This Winter's Night - Frosty the Snowman	- Winter Wonderland - The snow is falling	- California Dreamin' - Winter-Time (BSL video: Friday Afternoons)

Spring

Theme	KS1	KS2	KS3
Think Positive	- The Bare Necessities - Come Dance With Me (Makaton video: SingUp)	- Don't Worry Be Happy - Roar (Makaton video: Singing Hands)	- Wonder - Bring Me Sunshine (Makaton video: Singing Hands)
Love Equality / LGBTQ+ History Month (February)	- Sing A Rainbow	- True Colours	- Seasons of Love
Celebrating Difference and Diversity	- The Ugly Duckling	- Let It Go	- This is Me (Makaton video – Singing Hands)
Nature/The Planet	- Digging the Garden - Little Bird	- Rockpool Rock - One World Together	- What a Wonderful World (Makaton video: Singing Hands)
Perseverance	- Try Your Best	- Try Everything - Power in Me	- Eye of the Tiger - Don't Stop
Spring	- I like the flowers - Hot Cross Bunny	- New Beginning	- Here Comes The Sun

Summer

Theme	KS1	KS2	KS3
Friendship	- You've Got A Friend In Me (Makaton video – Singing Hands) - Can I Help You (Makaton Video: Out of the Ark)	- Keep Me Warm - Bringing Us Together	- Count On Me - Lean on Me (Makaton video: Singing Hands) - With A Little Help From My Friends
Around The World	- La Foret Lointaine - Kye kye kule	- Plynie statek - Si njay njay njay	- Janie Mama - Baião de ninar
Stop Bullying	- The Orange Song - Give A Little Smile (Makaton video: Out of the Ark)	- Shake It Off - Good To Be Me	- Respect - Everyday People - Right To Be Loved
Summer	- BBQ Blues - I do like to be beside the seaside	- Summer Holiday (Makaton video: Singing Hands)	- Mr Blue Sky (Makaton video: Singing Hands)
Moving On/Moving Up	- Goodbye (Makaton video: Out of the Ark)	- We Are The Champions	- Ain't No Mountain High Enough

KS3 Assemblies

In KS3 your large group singing may not take place in the context of an assembly. So instead of having a topic theme, you may decide to have a musical theme instead. For example, spending a half term on big band jazz before a half term on musical theatre, followed by a half term on 1970s rock. Students may discover a genre of music they didn't know but will really enjoy.

You can also incorporate elements of musical learning that will feed into their music lessons. If there are key terms you want them to learn, such as ostinato, choose a song where they sing a fun ostinato to reinforce that learning, and which you can then refer to in lessons to remind them of the definition.

Signed songs using Makaton and BSL

Signing using either Makaton or British Sign Language in singing assemblies can be a great way to improve their accessibility. It can also encourage young people to think about how they communicate with each other, especially with those who struggle with speech, don't speak English, or are non-verbal.

- **KS1** – Out of the Ark have partnered with Singing Hands for a selection of signed song videos, which are featured on their YouTube channel. They also have clips demonstrating the signing for some songs featured in their singing assembly collections:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/outoftheark>
- **KS1/2** – Both Sing Up and Charanga have a selection of songs that include accompanying signing videos as part of their membership fees:
www.singup.org / www.charanga.com
- **KS1/2/3** The Singing Hands YouTube channel has a variety of signed songs, from nursery rhymes to pop hits. There are also signed stories on the channel for assemblies with younger children:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/SingingHandsUK>
- **KS2/3** – Friday Afternoons (further information below) provides a large selection of signed videos using British Sign Language. These are signed by Dr Paul Whittaker OBE, founder of Music and the Deaf. All resources are free to access, including scores, lyrics sheets, and backing tracks, you simply need to register to access them:
<https://www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk/>

Further Useful Resources

Below is a list of other organisations who have created digital resources that you may find useful when leading singing assemblies, or who offer staff training that can help to develop your skills as a vocal leader in schools.

Voices Foundation	<p>Voices Foundation works alongside teachers and school communities to transform music education, supporting children's wider skill development and wellbeing through accessible and inclusive singing programmes. They provide Continuing Professional Development and Learning for educators, inspiring content for parents and in-depth research and evaluation. Together, we can ensure that every child can find their voice through the power of singing.</p>	<p>Virtual Singing Assemblies: 10-15 minute singing assemblies for children, parents and teachers! https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhjzi-p3BAmSlwL1CePY0wqV1GIlzZ84h</p> <p>Beyond The Sings Teaching Resources: Downloadable teaching resources that expand on our #VFVirtualSing series. Each resource includes teaching tips, warm ups, extension activities & more! https://www.voices.org.uk/vsa-learning-resources</p>
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Opera Holland Park	<p>Opera Holland Park is an independent charity serving the community in care homes, hospices, shelters, and schools. They aim to build the audiences of the future and take music to those for whom a traditional theatre setting is inaccessible. Their singers have recently created a selection of free online music lessons, where young people can learn songs and take part in activities and games to go alongside.</p>	https://operahollandpark.com/projects/music-lessons-with-opera-holland-park/
VOCES8 Foundation	<p>The VOCES8 Foundation is a vocal music education charity that brings the power of singing to communities around the world. Their singers have created a variety of videos teaching warm ups and fun short songs, with resources that can be viewed and downloaded to accompany them.</p>	https://voces8.foundation/resources
Friday Afternoons	<p>Friday Afternoons is a free resource which connects teachers and young people with contemporary composers, through high-quality songs. The Song Bank contains scores, lyrics sheets and backing tracks for over 70 contemporary classical songs.</p>	https://www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk/
Sing for Pleasure	<p>Sing for Pleasure is a registered charity and aims to encourage people of all ages to enjoy singing. They run training courses for teachers and vocal leaders aligned to the DfE Standard for Teachers' Professional Development, and offer a range of stimulating song books for use in class and choir.</p>	https://singforpleasure.org.uk/
Out of the Ark Music	<p>Out of the Ark Music offer award-winning songs for primary schools that can be purchased. They have collections dedicated to assemblies.</p>	https://www.outoftheark.co.uk/
English Folk Dance & Song Society	<p>The English Folk Dance and Song Society champion the folk arts at the heart of England's rich and diverse cultural landscape. They deliver programmes of learning and participation as well as artist development. Use the following link to explore free, downloadable materials for using English traditional folk song, music, dance, drama and other arts in your teaching and learning.</p>	https://www.efdss.org/efdss-education/resource-bank