

## Helping children sing in tune

Unless children learn musical elements thoroughly they are trying to build their singing ability on sand.

Songs that use two notes (so and mi) or three notes (la so mi) are the best for helping children get to grips with the basics of pitch. These are the basic chanting notes (na na na na na) which children sing more easily than any others.

Singing songs with just these notes makes the activity simpler. Children then stand a much better chance of succeeding and doing so in tune. Success leads to confidence leads to enjoyment leads to success leads to confidence leads to enjoyment...

Notes on songs:

**Cobbler cobbler:** only uses two notes (so and mi). This is just a starting point but really helps children to succeed. 'If every nursery and primary school in the country had all their children sing 'Cobbler cobbler' twice a day we would virtually eradicate 'tone deafness' in our children in two years'. (Len Tyler). The attached sheet lists a wide variety of activities and exercises which can be used with this song, including singing it in canon.

**Hickety tickety:** uses the three chanting notes (la, so and mi). Children have the opportunity for their moment of attention and praise singing their name in response to the vocal leader's question. From experience it helps to start with a fairly confident child, then others are more likely to feel comfortable singing solo. However, if a child doesn't want to sing by themselves be prepared to sing with them. Encourage other adults to join in with this.

**Old MacDonald:** although this has a much wider range than these other songs (a major sixth), there is a whole section in the middle which is sung all on one note:

'... with a **baa baa here** and a **baa baa there, here a baa, there a baa, everywhere a baa baa...**'

Use toy animals as props for the song, but only those where the animal makes an open vowel sound i.e horse (neigh), cow (moo), sheep (baa). Lots of unison singing on one note helps children learn to pitch the note. Use the animals as props to set the tempo – get the animals to do a 'molto rallentando' on the one note section so the children have plenty of time to get to grips with the pitch.

Thanks to Len Tyler for permission to distribute the attached songs and

activities. His website ( HYPERLINK "http://www.lentylermusicschool.co.uk"  
[www.lentylermusicschool.co.uk](http://www.lentylermusicschool.co.uk)) contains lots of useful information, links and  
downloadable resources.

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