

Within the early years singing should make up part of your daily routine and be embedded in the way you teach and support children of all abilities to learn and express themselves. We know that singing supports the building of listening, memory and recall skills, introduces new vocabulary and is often calming or soothing to children and adults alike. It can be used in many different scenarios from group singing sessions to one-on-one regulation support and even to aid during transitions throughout the day. By considering how singing can be impactful outside of a group time you can use it to enhance children's learning and development in a variety of ways.

How can singing be used to support SEND?

Singing may provide comfort and calming when children are feeling overwhelmed. Simply knowing a child's favourite song and being able to sing for or with the child is the most important step. You might then include a visual representation of their favourite song in their calm box so that they can ask you to sing to them or a recording of a parent or key person singing particular songs that they can access freely.

Consistent transition songs can engage children with this next step of the day and make them feel confident in following, or leading, their key person to where they need to be. Having a nappy song or handwashing song can bring more joy to these sometimes challenging but necessary changes that children need to experience.

Singing can embed new vocabulary through repetition and presenting language in different ways. You can make songs up on the spot which relate to what children are playing with or how they are playing, such as "scooping sand into the bucket, bucket, bucket, scooping sand into the bucket, until it's full". Some children have a natural disposition to learn language through melody and rhythm rather than plus one language acquisition.

Including Makaton sign or actions to songs may also engage a child to participate and develop a love for music. Different movements can support children with their physical development, particularly focusing on core strength and cross body coordination. Introducing these skills during songs can build a child's awareness of their body and themselves and so supporting their growing physical independence and prewriting abilities.



How to ensure singing is inclusive?

- Start with a few consistent songs, introducing too many new songs at once can be overwhelming.
- Use props or visuals which can be engaged with, a child may enjoy cuddling the star or waving a coloured scarf during a song even if they do not verbally join in.
- Include Makaton signs or consistent actions which match the song. When all adults use the same signs or actions with the same songs it is much clearer how to join in and begin to copy these.
- Sing slowly and clearly, think about how easy it is to hear and process what you are singing for the child, if the song moves too quickly it will be more challenging to listen to and process the words.
- Using a song bag/basket or even giant dice to give children some ownership of the songs they choose to sing next and some physical input for those who need movement to support their attention.
- Don't forget to share song ideas with parents so that they build the confidence to engage with their child this way at home!

