

Let's keep singing!

Is singing the new most dangerous activity in the world? There has been a lot of conflicting guidance over singing in the time of Corona and many people are a little nervous of it at the moment, especially in schools.

All this is very new, of course, and it has only been over the Summer of 2020 that there has been research into the role of singing in spreading the Corona virus. The study led by Declan Costello (see link below) found that singing was very similar to speaking in terms of the volume of aerosols produced. The factors which make singing dangerous are lack of ventilation, loudness, duration of the activity and lack of distancing. So, if we make sure there is good ventilation, we stick to quieter songs, keep our sessions short and sit or stand two metres apart then singing can be as safe as speaking. It is worth noting that although this research was conducted using professional adult singers (and there are no plans to replicate it with children) the researchers feel confident that the findings can apply to children. In schools, the additional advice is to keep to singing within your bubble for now.

KEEP in your bubble

KEEP the sessions short

KEEP the windows open

KEEP it fairly quiet

KEEP your distance

KEEP in your bubble

Singing, like everything else in schools at the moment, will be happening just in class bubbles. However, because schools cannot come together to sing does not mean that we cannot share our singing. Here are a few ideas.

- Why not choose a song known to everyone from whole school assemblies and challenge each class to write a new verse? These can then be shared. Each class could video themselves singing their verse. It might work best with classes in each Key Stage working together on an age appropriate song.

- It would be a great idea to video a bubble singing, but recording an audio track is easier and can then be used as a soundtrack for a photo album, of activities or artwork, to share with other bubbles or parents.
- Consider using the recordings of songs which come with assembly and other singing resources to listen to in the classroom as children are changing for PE, tidying the classroom, etc. They can decide which ones they would like to learn when whole school assemblies resume.

KEEP the sessions short

Maybe work on just one or two songs and don't sing for more than ten minutes at a time. Little and often works well for singing throughout the day, even in normal times, so a quick song between other classroom activities can lift the spirits and refresh the mind!

KEEP the windows open

Good ventilation is key to stopping the spread of the aerosols, so keep the windows open. If you can time your sessions at the end of the day or before a break, so that the air in the room can change, then so much the better.

Of course, you can always sing outside (see also the notes on playground games below).

KEEP it fairly quiet

Quiet singing can be soothing, relaxing, spooky, funny, exciting, conspiratorial... It doesn't have to be just lullabies!

First of all, it is a good plan, even in normal times, to avoid using words such as 'loud' or 'quiet', which can lead to forced or lacklustre singing respectively. It is far better to talk about the effect and mood we are trying to create with our voices and to strive for committed and energetic singing whatever the volume.

Humming is a great way to warm up the voice. You could try humming any short song or round the children know. Just make sure that the children are not pressing their lips together. Ask them to hum with a loose jaw and the lips very gently together. This will help them to produce a free sound which resonates in the head and is not forced in the throat.

It works well to start with the words. Ask the children to speak them in an energetic stage whisper. This uses the same amount of air as singing. Ask them to exaggerate the clarity of the words and the mood. Don't do too much of this, though, as whispering can place a strain on the voice and certain consonants, such as p, b, t, d, k and g, can project coronavirus aerosols.

Once the tune has been learned to the words, the children can practise it humming.

Here are a few songs which work particularly well sung quietly.

Yellowbelly Songbook 1 and Yellowbelly Songbook 2 (via LMS Primary Toolkit):

Any of the songs from the Singing Through The Day section, Shalom, Scarborough Fair, Oj dana, No other moon, On the river flows, Island in the sun, Water Round, Suo Gan, Tallis's Canon, Greensleeves, Down in the Jungle, Si, si, si, Oo a lay lay, Over in the meadow, Have you brought?

Junior Voices 1 and 2:

A cat called Alexander, Bilbo's Riddle, Now the sun is shining, Skye Boat Song, Puffin, Wondering

Singing Sherlock 1 and 2:

Lickety Split, Creatures of the Deep, Jack Frost, Dr. Knickerbocker, Autumn Leaves

Junior Songscape:

The Teddy Bears' Picnic, Morningtown Ride

<https://www.singup.org/singupathome>

Across the fields, Baloo Baleerie, Nobody Knows, Soualle

KEEP your distance

Speaking, singing, coughing and breathing all send moisture from our lungs into the air and therefore can spread the virus if we have it, even if we have no symptoms. Droplets move out a short distance from our body and then, as the name suggests, drop (hence the two metre rule). Aerosols are smaller particles which can hang in the air for quite some time (this is why ventilation is so important and why distance is less important in the open air).

Make sure singers are all facing in the same direction, at least a metre from one another. It is quite possible to sing with a mask on, if you wear masks in your school. Special masks for singers have been designed, but an ordinary face covering is fine for a short period. The adult leading the session should be a good two metres away from the children, further if possible, and might want to wear a visor.

If your school is still a little unsure of singing in the classroom, then there are other ways to encourage children to sing.

Playground Games

Singing in the open air is much less of a problem than indoors. Lunchtime Organisers and confident singers amongst the children can lead and encourage singing games in the playground. Why not get

children to research playground games by asking staff and older relatives to remember them from their childhood? Or have a competition for children to make up a playground singing game, perhaps.

<https://www.singup.org/song-bank/top-ten-playlists/top-ten-playlists-for-everyday-singing/top-ten-playground-songs>

Singing at home:

Encourage children to teach the songs they enjoy at school with their families. They can ask older relatives to recall songs they learnt at school and research them on the internet. Sing Up has more ideas and resources. This link is free and you do not need to subscribe to Sing Up to use it.

<https://www.singup.org/singupathome>

Useful links

Research:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/chemistry/news/2020/performsingingstudy.html>

<https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/wellbeing/singing-choirs-relatively-safe-right-conditions-covid-584019>

Guidance

Sing Up: <https://www.singup.org/blog/article/1434-back-to-school-back-to-singing/>

Music Mark: <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Children-and-School-Singing-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

Government: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-suggested-principles-of-safer-singing/covid-19-suggested-principles-of-safer-singing?fbclid=IwAR2EQPm--CbZ4cIT0xtWFLEPrH1KuGP-c8CXyIF-M6w5xPJB-E4m6bYD5Qg>

KEEP CALM

and

CARRY ON SINGING

LET'S KEEP SINGING!

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