



A different key

Sarah Giles looks at how Music and the Deaf is unlocking new opportunities for children

Music and the Deaf, the UK charity which provides music-making opportunities for deaf people by deaf musicians, has announced the imminent completion of the final stage of *Keys to Music: Unlocking the National Curriculum for Deaf Pupils*, which will affect the teaching of music to deaf children under five.

Since the start of the project in 2003, Music and the Deaf has assessed current resources and the curriculum guidelines and requirements. Researchers have undertaken workshops in schools with deaf pupils, making adaptations to enable all hearing-impaired pupils to take part in the music national curriculum throughout primary and secondary school. User-friendly teachers' guides have been published for Key Stages 1-3 (with advice on Key Stage 4) and these are now in use across the UK and in schools worldwide.

The final stage of the *Keys to Music* project has been with deaf and hearing-impaired pupils in early years settings. Danny Lane, education projects manager at Music and the Deaf, explains: 'Our work with deaf young people and their families since 1988 has highlighted how vital it is that deaf children participate in music activities from the earliest opportunity – allowing them to grow up appreciating that music is a totally normal activity for deaf people to participate in.'

Lane, who is himself profoundly deaf, has led a programme of workshops in early years settings across the UK. He has researched the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework and the Foundation Stage curriculum and has made adaptations to enable the youngest deaf children to be included.

'The project is a wonderful opportunity for the youngest deaf children to benefit from music, just like their hearing peers,' he enthuses. 'It also encourages parents and teachers to realise the potential that they have in music.'

Lane's workshop programme covered all aspects of the framework and curriculum for pupils in their early years. It included a wide range of musical concepts such as pulse, rhythm, pitch and dynamics, with percussion instruments used to offer visual and tactile sensation. Movement and lots of visual props were also used to make the activities understandable. These activities don't only improve children's musical abilities, as Lane points out: 'Many music activities in the guide are physical and can help develop mobility skills. In one activity the participants are given the opportunity to show their understanding of pitch by standing up for high notes and sitting down for low notes. They really love games like this! The activities are also fantastic for developing social skills because they are suitable not only just for deaf children but hearing children too, which means that families and mixed groups in early years settings can get involved.'

Many aspects of music for very young children, such as nursery rhymes, are inaccessible to deaf children. These have been adapted and further opportunities have been made available to increase



participation and enjoyment and to eliminate the exclusion of deaf young people. 'Deaf children don't generally have a good start in music and miss out so much. This project is a great chance for them to take part and enjoy it too,' says Lane.

The workshops were attended by parents, early years leaders and teachers and the ideas from the workshops evaluated by group leaders and parents alike, in terms of learning opportunities and access for deaf children. Feedback from parents and teachers has been extremely positive. One mother explained, 'The activities are easy to remember and join in,' while a teacher added, 'I can use these ideas immediately and they grow other ideas in my mind'. In one recent session, recalls Lane, parents and grandparents were involved: 'Many young people were proud of their achievements and showed their families what they had done so far. It was

wonderful to watch and see them take a confident lead in some of the activities.'

The project concludes with the publication in July of two user-friendly guides with accompanying signed song DVDs: one for specialists in early years education, the other for parents' use at home. They provide ideas, advice and step-by-step instructions to help parents and teachers.

The DVD explains how to use songs for singing and signing and how to involve the children as much as possible, with tips and extensions for every activity. There are also creative ideas for using everyday objects in the home and in early years settings to make musical instruments and to use them as props. ■

The guides will be available from July. For more information or to order copies, please visit www.matd.org.uk