

THE TIMES

22 November 2007

Pupils will have karaoke lessons to nurture their musical talents

Nicola Woolcock

Karaoke lessons will be taught in primary schools as part of a £322 million government drive to encourage every child to develop musical talent.

Teachers can download backing tracks to popular songs from a new website devoted to musical education, which pupils will sing along to in class.

Money will be spent on new instru-

ments such as flutes, violins, clarinets, African drumming sets and bassoons.

Free music tuition is being promised for every primary school child for a year, to ensure that they have a grounding in at least one instrument.

The Government said it was up to schools to decide how much tuition was offered in that year. Experts questioned whether the scheme would work without specialist music teachers

who could ensure that the subject was being taught properly.

Ed Balls, the Schools Secretary, said: "Children from all backgrounds should have the chance to perform, play an instrument or sing.

"Everyone should get behind our efforts to make music a key part of the school day — for the educational and personal benefits for children and the cultural enrichment and enjoyment it brings people of all ages.

"Every parent knows how much it means to their child to be involved in a school performance and the pride and inspiration it offers the family."

Mr Balls said £40 million would be spent on instruments and a similar amount on the Sing Up programme.

This will create a national song bank and provide singing training. An internet-based songbook will provide backing tracks and lesson plans.

Lord Lloyd-Webber, who backs the music manifesto, said: "The day of lip-sync manufactured pop is dying. Now everything is about live performance. I am thrilled by the initiative."

Howard Goodall, who is leading the Sing Up project, said: "We already know that young people who learn music and sing from an early age develop better social skills, memory, ability to listen and have more confidence.

"There are proven links between productive music lessons and a better all-round development of young children. We want to show that teachers, parents and children can have fun and learn together."

The Sing Up website tells teachers that singing is a valuable learning tool: "When children are singing they are taking in information and training the brain but they don't think they are. They think they are just having fun.

"There are many song collections, which offer curriculum support: counting songs, geographical songs, songs about historical characters or periods, songs about 'green' issues, songs that support physical development and songs that raise awareness."

● The guitar is on course to eclipse the violin as the most popular instrument for tuition in schools, research by the Institute for Education has found. Children are shunning traditional classical music, in favour of emulating their favourite bands by playing guitars and drums.

Right notes

● Young children have been shown to increase the amount, quality and understanding of speech developed through singing activities such as counting games, nursery rhymes and finger play

● Music can be used to start or finish activities, such as taking the register or ending the school day

● It can reinforce mathematical development through the use of finger and counting games, and exploration of musical instruments and sound-makers through sequencing and patterning

● School music lessons benefit reading and language skills. Young children can increase the amount, quality and understanding of speech through singing activities

● The physical advantages to singing include increased blood flow and lung capacity. With movement or dance it can combat obesity and increase fitness

● School music lessons can foster individuality, improve social skills and create more positive attitudes. These effects have been particularly marked in low-ability, disaffected pupils

Source: National Singing Programme

