

## CHILDREN'S CHOIR – CHOSING REPERTOIRE

**Repertoire:** Choosing the right song can be key to getting the best out of your young people. There are many factors to consider - what do you start with? How challenging do you want the piece to be? What vocal range should you use? Do you introduce harmony?

If your first task is just to get them singing, start with repertoire that the pupils enjoy, or that will hook their enthusiasm – simple, quick to pick up and familiar. Once you have won them over you should begin to stretch them by introducing music that they are less familiar with. If you have a mixed ability – some seasoned singers and some brand new, then start the warm-up with something straight-forward and then move onto more complicated songs later.

### **Some considerations to make note of...**

**Suitability** – There are some songs that include inappropriate words and content – anything that deals with contentious subjects should perhaps be left for older children.

The range of notes - E to D' is a good starting point – the songs need to suit their voices. As the children grow older their range will increase, especially if they are regularly singing. If all the songs lie in the chest voice they will never learn to use their head voices.

Some contemporary pop songs are too low – they rarely sound the same when sung by a choir and this can be quite disappointing to the children. It's also very difficult to 're-teach' a familiar song. If you think your children need help with tuning, try songs with a narrower pitch range & call and response songs which lay the foundation of part songs.

Once you have your song, prepare how you're going to teach it! The better prepared you are, the more positive experience you and the children will have:

It's helpful to decide on the character of the song, especially if you can introduce the character of the song in a warm-up. Make decisions about speed, dynamics and any harmony before the session starts. Are there any 'tricky' parts of the song, like a particularly complicated rhythmical section? Chanting, or sing-speaking, the section is always helpful, especially if you slow right down. Any passages that will need vocal gymnastics or particular vocal qualities? Having a breath plan before you start will always help, you'll avoid big gaps and start teaching them good breathing techniques without them knowing! Finally, it's a good idea to have in mind how you will want your children to stand when performing – three longer lines for example, or four shorter? This is especially important if there are actions or movement as having a base will be important for the children.