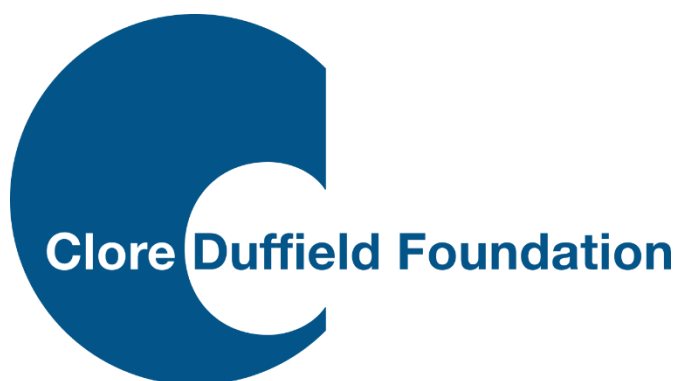




Clare School Choirs and Singing Programme

Information for schools

What this is

The Clare Duffield Foundation is funding a small number of organisations to work with groups of state-funded schools to build choirs and group singing that last. The organisation that gave you this sheet is applying, and is asking whether your school would be one of the schools they work with as part of a cluster.

Between five and ten projects will be funded across England, each for three years. Together they will form a national cohort that meets, shares what it learns, and produces a published resource.

Where this programme comes from

School choirs and singing in English state schools have declined in recent years. At the same time, our knowledge is growing about the benefits of singing, for confidence, belonging, wellbeing, social connection and engagement with learning, as well as musicality. The DfE's Enrichment Framework, published in June 2026, places arts and culture among its five categories, and one of its eight benchmarks is about working in partnership with organisations beyond the school. Ofsted has considered enrichment as part of personal development since September 2026. This programme aims to develop singing across groups of schools in areas of need, and to help schools build sustainable, inclusive and high-quality singing that brings benefits to pupils, staff and the school.

What this could be in your school

Singing in schools today is pop and gospel, folk and beatboxing, original songs and classical repertoire. It reflects the young people and the communities they come from, rather than a prescribed tradition.

What it looks like depends on the school. In a primary it might run right through the day – in classrooms, in assemblies, at moments of celebration and transition. In a secondary it might anchor in the music department, in groups that bring students across year groups together, and in performances that become fixtures in the school year. It might also bridge the transition between school phases.

Choirs and singing groups sit at the centre of school singing. Not a separate entity, but where ambition and belonging concentrate, and open to anyone who wants to sing and progress.

How the programme would work

The organisation would work alongside your staff, not instead of them, to develop singing in your school, including a substantial workforce development programme.

A specialist running a session in partnership with your teacher, over three years, improves the whole provision and builds something the school owns. A specialist running a session while your teacher watches leaves nothing behind. How that works in practice is for you and the organisation to shape together.

The programme is not only for the music specialist, and it works best where more than one member of staff is involved from the start. In a primary that might be the music lead alongside a class teacher who has never felt confident to lead singing. In a secondary it might be the music department, and also the pastoral team, or an enthusiastic teacher from another department.

You might consider naming a link governor for the project. It is not a requirement, although it helps the work survive changes of staff.

This is not a project that arrives and then leaves. What the Foundation is funding is the start of a partnership that carries on and changes shape as the school's singing grows, and that links out into other schools and your community.

What your school would put in

Staff time and commitment, regular rather than occasional, and ideally more than one member of staff so that the singing does not rest on one person. Money isn't expected, but if you would like to contribute financially to the project, to deepen its impact, that would be welcome.

What is being asked of you now

A conversation, and a commitment in principle. There is nothing to sign, no budget to find and no timetable to change.

Please note that more organisations are likely to apply than can be funded, so this project may not go ahead. If it does not, we hope the conversation is still useful to you.

Applications close at midday on 30 October 2026, decisions about which projects will be funded are made in spring 2027, and nothing would begin in your school until autumn 2027, with a term of planning first, involving you.

The Foundation requires organisations to have met a headteacher or another senior leader, not only the music lead, before applying. This is because this work only takes root where the school's leadership is genuinely behind it, and will protect the time it needs.

If your school is being invited to be a lead partner school

One or two schools in each project help shape and lead the project across the group of schools, not only within their own. The organisation will want a longer conversation with you about this. If you haven't been approached by the organisation to be a lead partner school and this interests you, please let them know.

Who this is from

The Clore Duffield Foundation is an independent grant-making foundation supporting the arts, education, social welfare and health across the UK. Its schools programmes include Clore Learning Spaces, the Clore School Trips Programme and Clore Learning Spaces Schools Connect. This programme was developed during 2026 through conversations with music services and hubs, choral and vocal organisations, opera companies, teachers and headteachers. This sheet has been produced by the Foundation. It does not mean we endorse the organisation that gave it to you, or that their application will be successful.

Any queries?

Your first port of call is the organisation that gave you this sheet. If you want to check anything with the Foundation directly, please email info@cloreduffield.org.uk, and the full guidance is available at cloreduffield.org.uk