



Raising Awareness: A Headteacher's Perspective

Hello. I'm Alison Carter and I am the Headteacher at Longwill School for Deaf Children.

Longwill is a specialist provision for primary aged Deaf pupils who need a sign bilingual education. We educate 64 profoundly deaf children between the ages of 2 and 12 from Birmingham and the eight other Local Authorities from around the clockface of the city.

In order to flourish, our children need a school which is both bilingual and bicultural. English and British Sign Language are equally valued, and we want our pupils to develop both languages to the very best of their ability.

We want our children to be confident communicators, proud of their Deaf heritage and able to flourish in both the hearing and Deaf world. Furthermore, we want them to be confident contributors to society and be able to feel that they can 'give something back'.

We are a Rights Respecting School and so the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a movement which is close to our hearts. Article 30 states that every child has a right to their own language and our children are always looking for ways to support that.

And so, when I learned of Andrew's vision for this song, that "Your Love Lifts Me Up" would be performed in both BSL and English, I was very excited. Music and singing are very much part of school life at Longwill, but this project has bought us so much more! It brings Deaf and hearing people closer together, making the world a little more inclusive!

The children have sung their hearts out! And they have loved doing so! We have enjoyed sharing our signing skills with the fantastic "Your Love Lifts Me Up" team and raising the profile of BSL further afield. Teaching BSL to other children in Birmingham and beyond is something that all the children feel very proud about. Also, a tutorial video has been created to accompany the song, led by three 'teachers', which include a Longwill pupil and staff member. The video helps non signers understand how they can sign along to the lyrics.

The school tries to promote leadership in young people as much as we can. So, our Arts Ambassadors took a big role in the filming for the song. We wanted them to have an opportunity to let their light shine – and so it has!

Our children are proud to be Deaf! They have loved taking part in this project and what better way to share their knowledge and skills than this! Teaching others to sign through song as well as 'showcasing BSL'!

On 18th March 2022 the Deaf community rallied parliament for the BSL Act. The Deaf community has campaigned for many years for BSL to be legally recognised as a language and we hope that very soon this will be formally agreed in law. It is a momentous time for our Deaf children, and I think they have played their part to raise awareness of BSL through this song in celebration of the Commonwealth Games.

Being part of Andrew's song, Your Love Lifts Me Up, has been a wonderful experience, which we have all thoroughly enjoyed. I hope you too enjoy the song and perhaps learn the words and signs to accompany the tune!

And remember, Your Love Lifts Me Up!

Alison Carter
Headteacher
Spring 2022



**BSL Community Chorus – Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
Legacy & Sustainability – February - September 2022**

The recording produced out of the RBC state of the art studios was one of the biggest and most ambitious of any recording since our building opened in 2018. With the help of professional producer Ross Simpson (Woodbury Studios), RBC will be using the session files - before and after production and before and after editing and comping as a teaching tool on our BSc Music Technology and BMus (Hons) Music Technology degree courses. In addition, the connections we have made through this project and programme have been really useful in continuing our desire to provide as many professional music industry relations for RBC students. It is hoped that this will include possible workshops and masterclasses with both Ross Simpson and Nigel Palmer (Lowland Masters) in the future.

Your Love Lifts Me Up - British Sign Language Chorus project has enabled Royal Birmingham Conservatoire to build a future strategic partnership with Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust. The performance at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in June 2022 was so well received by Headteachers, CEO of Multi Academy Trusts and other senior leaders in secondary education across the city. All the young people that were asked to learn the chorus in BSL wanted to learn the rest of the song and it has raised the awareness of BSL with young people across the city. As a result of the performance in June, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire have been commissioned to deliver a secondary school music development programme bringing £70,000 of investment to young people from diverse backgrounds.

Our joint performances at Singstanding and New Street station brought the song to new audiences that RBC would not otherwise have engaged and we value this aspect of the collaboration greatly. A fantastic collaboration and production that highlighted everything the arts can do to bring people together from different backgrounds across the city, a huge success for the commonwealth cultural festival. RBC are proud to have been a part of this!

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BSL Community Chorus – Shireland Collegiate Academy

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The opportunity for our Academy Choir to get involved with this project was a wonderful one. It provided a real boost to the choir, and we had youngsters knocking down our door to join in. Attendance to rehearsals remained consistently high, and the commitment and focus during the rehearsals was higher than it's ever been before. Moreover, the opportunity to experience things like performing in a music video, performing at New Street Station and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and working with professional musicians and signers, will be things that our youngsters won't forget in a very long time. In keeping with the song, the whole experience really lifted our students up!

Thank you to everyone involved.

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