Music is an invaluable tool for developing children's learning!

Using carefully chosen songs, rhymes and musical activities, will help to cover all the main areas of the EYFS - in particular those three main areas highlighted by the recent Early Years review.

Good quality musical experiences help develop children's listening and concentration skills, language and communication, co-ordination, fine motor control, social skills, creativity and confidence. And what's more, it's great fun

Debby moves on to focus on specific skills and techniques, such as using rhythm and rhyme to build a sense of the spoken word and widen vocabulary (see activity on opposite page).

“Introduce lots of rhyming games into your daily activities with the children,” suggests Debby. “The rhythmic pattern of the words is a great way of building language skills. As the children become familiar with the words, you can leave gaps for them to anticipate the rhyme and fill in the missing word.”

She adds that repetition of words and phrases gives children the chance to get a ‘feel’ for the sound of the words.

“Anything you set to music is easier to remember. You can also make it more fun by repeating the same rhyme in different voices, for instance as a little mouse, a booming giant or a robot – perhaps with the aid of hand puppets – and encourage the children to give suggestions for other characters.”

Debby also introduces participants to the Sing Up programme and a range of resources, including stretchy Lycra sheets; hand drums, shakers and tap sticks (claves); and homemade puppets.

“I encourage staff to pull together a range of props wherever possible, and to ensure that resources are accessible to children so they can follow their own interests, in keeping with EYFS [Early Years Foundation Stage] principles of the enabling environment and child-initiated play,” Debby says.

It’s also useful to display photos of the instruments or resources around your setting, or create laminated pictures relating to particular songs, for children to use as activity prompts.

Debby adds, “There are simple things you can do that don’t require musical training or knowledge. For instance, try alternating between sitting down and standing up from one song to the next, changing from quiet to loud within a song, or varying the pace of the session with slow and fast-paced songs.

“After a while, these things come naturally to practitioners when planning and running sessions, but it helps for them to see someone more experienced show that these things really are effective in holding the attention of a group of children.”