# Keyboard 3/48/O Sight reading Exercises, Year 4

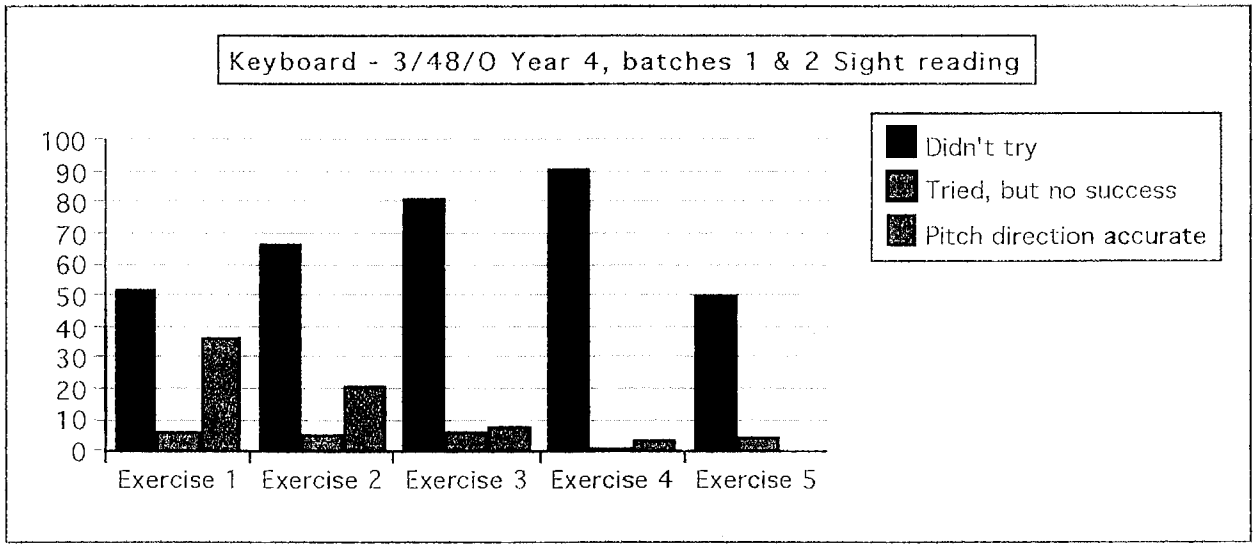
## Pitch Direction in Keyboard 3/48/O

**Description:**

The five sightreading exercises were optional, but were attempted by enough children to produce some useful information. There were initially 54 tapes (batch 1). An additional batch of 44 was viewed, primarily for focus 6, but the findings are incorporated here.

**Table 22 - Keyboard 3/48/O Year 4, batches 1 & 2 Sight reading n = 98**

| | Didn't try | Tried, but no success | Pitch direction accurate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Exercise 1 | 52 | 6 | 37 |
| Exercise 2 | 67 | 5 | 21 |
| Exercise 3 | 82 | 6 | 8 |
| Exercise 4 | 91 | 1 | 3 |
| Exercise 5 | 50 | 4 | n/a |




**Comments:**

Table 22 shows quite clearly that nearly all the children who tried these exercises at least had a sense of direction. However, it would be wrong to suggest that it was an aural sense of direction that guided them. Rather it was a visual/tactile link that may with some have had a small aural component as well. Most children struggled with the unfamiliarity of the instrument, so that one must question as to whether there was any value in the task. The musical component was minimal.

Very few of the children had had any prior experience of keyboard playing, so that the performances were mostly very basic and hesitant. There is a certain visual connection that can be made between the upness and downness of pitch notation and the lateral directions of the keyboard. In the case of children with no experience of music notation, it must be very confusing to be faced with an instrument with which they are unfamiliar, together with a notation that means nothing to them, and be instructed to sight read. The distinction between pitch and duration elements in the music notation system is clear to those who understand it, and there are some logical elements that seem self-evident, even to those unfamiliar with them. These are mostly in the pitch domain in which upnes and downness, and bigness or smallness of intervals can be related to the direction and distance between notes.

In the element of duration, music notation offers few clues to the unititiated as to its meaning in musical terms, or even in relation to the keyboard. An example of this is that a few read the minim 'G' in bar 2 of the first keyboard tune as being a different pitch rather than a different duration.

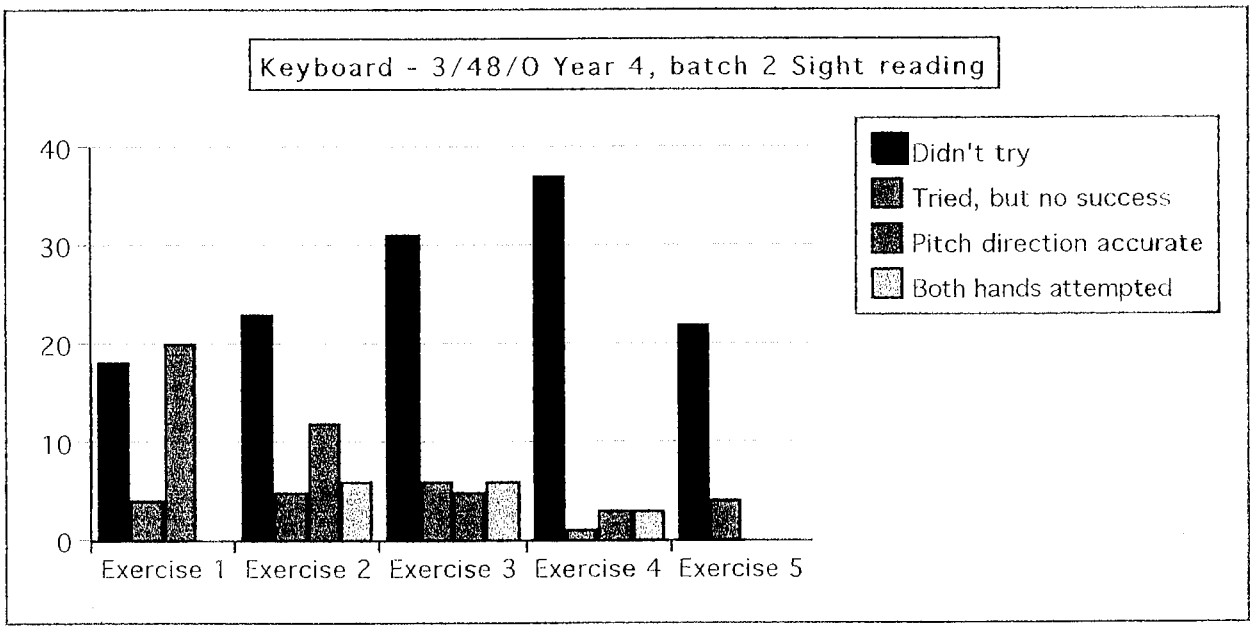
The point of this is that the sightreading tasks in Sing Song and Keyboard were effectively tests of notational skills. If this was the intention, well and good. If the

intention was otherwise, such as to test the aural perceptiveness of the children, the tasks presented too many irrelevant barriers to effectively fulfill their intention.

With the second batch, of 44 tapes, a note was made of the number who attempted to use both hands in exercises 2, 3 nd 4. Table 23 below gives the results, which do not necessarily mean that the children exhibited a sense of direction. Some merely demonstrated an extraordinary degree of application and tenacity.

**Table 23 - Keyboard 3/48/O Year 4, batch 2 Sight reading n = 44**

| | Didn't try | Tried, but no success | Pitch direction accurate | Both hands attempted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Exercise 1 | 18 | 4 | 20 | n/a |
| Exercise 2 | 23 | 5 | 12 | 6 |
| Exercise 3 | 31 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Exercise 4 | 37 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Exercise 5 | 22 | 4 | n/a | n/a |



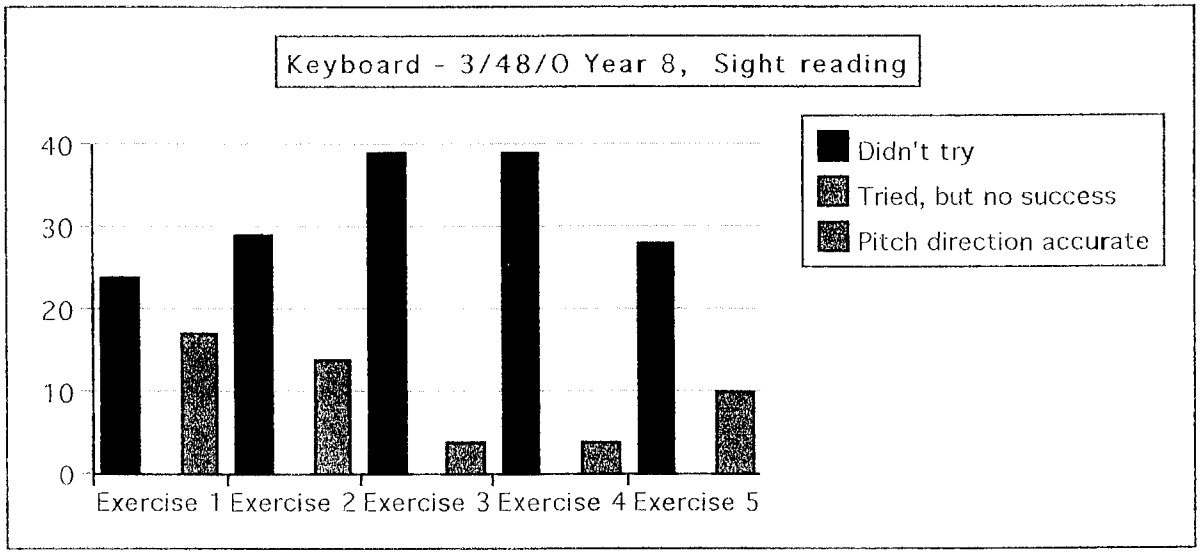
## Pitch Direction, Keyboard 3/48/O Sight reading Exercises, Year 8

### Description:

The same instructions applied at Year 8, namely that these exercises were optional.

**Table 24 - Keyboard 3/48/O Year 8, Sight reading n = 85**

| | Didn't try | Tried, but no success | Pitch direction accurate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Exercise 1 | 24 | 0 | 17 |
| Exercise 2 | 29 | 0 | 14 |
| Exercise 3 | 39 | 0 | 4 |
| Exercise 4 | 39 | 0 | 4 |
| Exercise 5 | 28 | 0 | 10 |




### Comments:

More Year 8 children attempted these exercises, but fewer were able to exhibit an accurate sense of pitch direction. As with Year 4, a number attempted the own choice piece, exercise 5, who had passed the previous two or three exercises. These are registered in table 24 on the basis of a positive score if the own choice piece has recognisable musical pitch shape. Most such attempts were the outcome of casual experiences such as playing at a friend's place where there is a keyboard. The results can hardly be said to carry much significance in terms of musical achievement.

## Supplementary Study of Pitch Direction and Accuracy in Keyboard 3/48/O

The four pitch exercises in Keyboard 3/48/O produced some useful data in children's sense of pitch direction and interval, and although they were not originally part of this focus, it is decided to include a brief summary, together with some comments that may help future NEMP projects.

### Keyboard - 3/48/O Group A

#### Pitch direction and accuracy in Keyboard 3/48/O Year 4

**Description:**

The tapes were studied for the ability of the children to hear and reproduce pitch direction and pitch accuracy. The results for year 4 are set out in tables 25 and 26.

**Table 25 - Keyboard 3/48/O Year 4 Pitch direction n = 98**

| | Right Direction | Right Pitch |
|---|---|---|
| Task 1 | 92 | 79 |
| Task 2 | 36 | 21 |
| Task 3 | 92 | 58 |
| Task 4 | 92 | 11 |

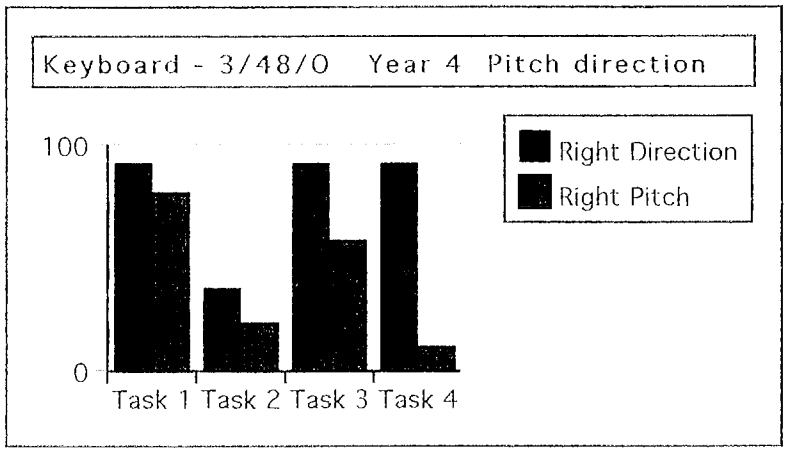
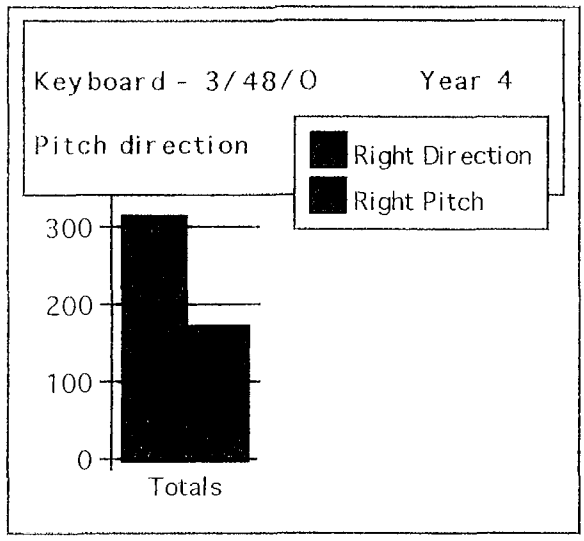


**Table 26 - Keyboard 3/48/O Year 4 Task 4 Pitch direction Totals n = 98**

| | Right Direction | Right Pitch |
|---|---|---|
| Totals | 312 | 169 |




**Comments:**

1. For many children this was clearly their first experience of a keyboard, as could be seen by the number who experimented first with the concept of **up** and down in pitch. Despite this, table 25 shows that most did not link the downward pitch of exercise 2 with the opposite direction from exercise 1. Their facial expressions frequently indicated that they knew the sound they played was wrong, but didn't know why.
2. Going up from the base note, middle C, seemed to most to be a more **natural** direction to go, as seen by the large proportion who not only played exercise 1 in the right direction, but also recognised that it was close to middle C, **and** played the right note.
3. Most of the many who played a note up from middle C in Exercise 2, knew that it was different from the correct 'D' of exercise 1, so played another **"up"** note, usually 'E'. Many reacted, indicating that they knew it was wrong.
4. The high scoring in exercise 3 was almost certainly a matter of luck rather than aural judgement with most, except insofar as they recognised it was a very high note - and what could be higher than the top? Reactions, however, suggested that most who got it right could hear it to be right.
5. Exercise 4 sounded different from 3, and the note had to be lower. Consequently a number played the 'B' immediately below the top note, and from there tried others in the hope of getting the right one. Some did.

For task 4, it was recorded whether those who played the wrong note played one too high or too low. The result of this is given in table 27.

**Table 27 - Keyboard 3/48/O Year 4 Task 4 Pitch direction inaccuray n = 98**

| | Wrong pitch | Too high | Too low |
|---|---|---|---|
| Task 4 | 40 | 22 | 18 |

## Pitch direction and accuracy in Keyboard 3/48/O Year 8

### Description:

Just one group of 43 tapes was viewed for year 8, the results being in tables 28 and 29.

**Table 28 - Keyboard 3/48/O Year 8 Pitch direction n = 43**

| | Right direction | Right pitch |
|---|---|---|
| Task 1 | 42 | 39 |
| Task 2 | 27 | 22 |
| Task 3 | 37 | 37 |
| Task 4 | 43 | 9 |

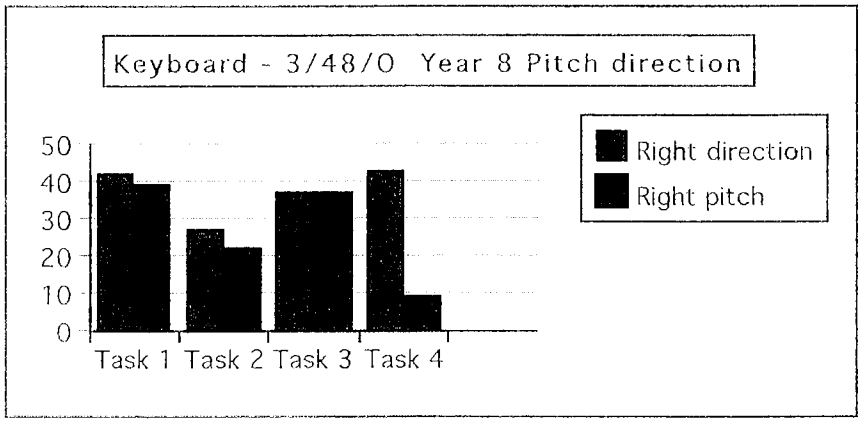
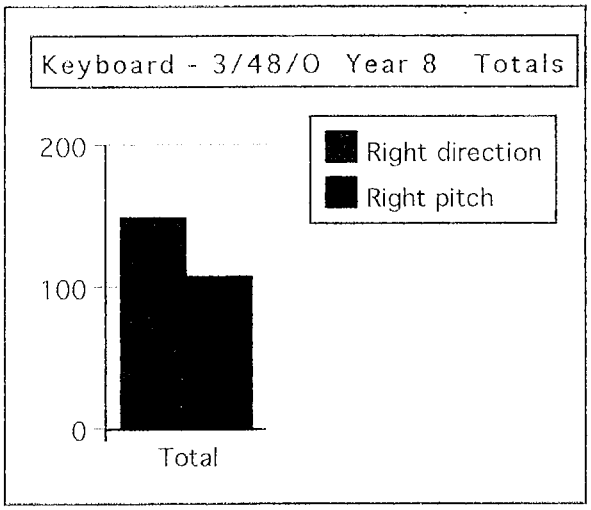


**Table 29 - Keyboard 3/48/O Year 8 Pitch direction Totals n = 43**

| | Right direction | Right pitch |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 149 | 107 |




**Comments:**

The general pattern of results is similar to that of year 4, and for the same reasons. The proportions of correct responses are higher for all exercises, particularly exercises 2 and 4.

**General observations**

1. Many children seemed bewildered by the keyboard, and didn't become at ease by the time the task finished.
2. There was much distraction in the administration of the tasks. It must be realised that, unlike other subject areas, with music the sound itself is the test. Anything that interferes with this, such as other sound, will distract the children from their main task. Such distractions as children & teachers coming into the room, and more especially, another NEMP test going on at the same time, must affect the validity of the results.
3. In a few cases, teachers allowed an unusual keyboard registration for keyboard tasks. Depending upon what the registration is, this can acoustically confuse the quality of sound.
4. In a a few cases the children used headphones. As a result, the marker could not hear the sound of the video.
5. The concept of upness and downness should not be assumed
6. Aural concentration was a problem with many children. They could not focus on the sound as such.

7. The problem of the boy's changing voice is an issue at year 8. It is often difficult to tell whether a boy with a changing voice is singing at a lower or a higher tessitura. In such cases they were always given the benefit of doubt in this study.
8. There is a striking lack of confidence in singing amongst most children. Many are initially very reluctant to sing at all, then, with strong coaxing, start to enjoy it - and improve. This suggests a complete lack of positive experience.
9. Some year 4 children were so tired by the end of their sessions that they were almost asleep. Especially for children who seem to have had virtually no experience of singing alone, and who are overwhelmed by it, the strain is clearly intense. Some of the tasks are too long, especially when they come at the end of a session.

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[i] Goetze, M *Factors affecting accuracy in children's singing*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado, Boulder.