

Inner-city voices aim to be cathedral choir

Pioneering primary school could achieve a state education first

BY DEBBIE LEIGH
EDUCATION REPORTER

A PRIMARY school in one of Leeds's most deprived areas has unveiled ambitious plans to become the country's first state-run cathedral choir school.

Pupils at Holy Rosary and Saint Anne's RC primary in Chapeltown, hit all the right notes for Children's Secretary Ed Balls who was invited to hear the proposals.

Head teacher Kathryn Carter said the project was the brainchild of Benjamin Saunders, director of music for the



ANGEL VOICES: The pupils let rip and, *above*, chat with schools secretary Ed Balls
PICTURES: TONY JOHNSON

Diocese of Leeds and would link the school with St Anne's Cathedral in Leeds city centre.

The project is expected to cost around £1m, which would include a purpose-built extension with an auditorium, practice rooms and a recording studio which could be used by the community outside school hours.

Mrs Carter said the move would see music become integral to the school.

"Every child in the school, no matter what their background is, would learn to sing to a very high standard, would learn to read music and would



learn to play an instrument.

"The opportunities it would present for are immense and would develop in them an aspiration that there's life outside Chapeltown, that they can develop these talents and they can make something of themselves.

"It's going to develop some of the poorest children in the country and give them opportunities that they would never have."

Pupils are already working with one of the cathedral's choral directors and sang there at Christmas.

If the school does become a cathedral choir school, separate boys and girls choirs would regularly sing at services at the cathedral.

Most cathedral choir schools are private or independently-run and although some state-run schools do have a cathedral choir sec-

tion, none encompasses every child in the school as the Chapeltown venture would.

If the plans get the go-ahead the school will be looking for a benefactor, foundation or trust to back the project.

Along with Normanton MP Mr Balls, the Bishop of Leeds, the Right Reverend Arthur Roche, also visited the school and watched a choral workshop with the trainee cathedral choir.

The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families also toured the Hunslet Club, which for 70 years has kept young people busy in the evenings and at weekends.

Its activities include football, drama and cheerleading and day-time vocational courses for 14 to 16-year-olds in subjects including bricklaying, bike mechanics, and catering.

debbie.leigh@ypn.co.uk