



Music teacher is best-selling author

A music teacher who turned to writing almost by accident, is celebrating having sold over 30,000 books on the subject.

Now Karen Marshall, specialist music teacher at Osbaldwick Primary Academy, has been signed as a Faber Music Educational Composer, alongside educators such as Dame Fanny Waterman and the superstar Chinese pianist, Lang Lang.

It was a casual remark over a decade ago that has led Karen to an international readership, with three publishers, 24 books – and more to follow. What's more, Karen has dyslexia, a learning disorder that includes issues with reading, but the ways that she has overcome this hurdle has helped her writing.

"It came from a jokey comment, really: I was chatting to someone who turned out to be a book publisher at a music conference over ten years ago," said Karen. "I said I'd like to write a piano book for children – and they suggested I send across some pages. So I did!

"I see my dyslexia as my gift: it forced me to structure everything so carefully."

A collection of piano books followed, plus an excellence in music publishing award in 2018.

Faber Music, a top British publisher of classical, contemporary and printed music, say they see great potential for her publications internationally and particularly in China.

Karen writes books for adults as well as children and has broadened her reach into other areas of music. A recent volume is "How to teach Instrumental & Singing Lessons: 100 Inspiring Ideas". Her next project is a commission to put together a book on

the revised music curriculum for Key Stages 1-3, to be used as part of the national curriculum in schools across the country.

But the attraction of being an international author has failed to lure her away from Osbaldwick Primary Academy, where she has been a member of the eight-strong music team for eight years.

"I'm first and foremost a teacher," says Karen. "I love it here and my practice encourages me and inspires me to write. I develop ideas in the classroom and test some of them out, which is a win/win for the school and for my writing. But I never sought to write the books, they just happened!"

Matthew Brown, headteacher at Osbaldwick Primary Academy, said: "Karen deserves her success and she is a valued member of our team.

"Music is a rich entitlement for our children and we have an amazing choir and orchestra – we believe we are trail-blazing in the city when it comes to music and we have great plans to be a beacon of expertise. There are few schools who can say, as we can, that every child gets to learn ukulele, recorder and violin. We have played at rugby matches, at the Barbican – music can inspire children and spark a lifelong passion for them."

Karen adds: "Our children here are innately musical – they have no prejudices – and that's because we have trained musicians who are also teachers and they start with our youngest children."

• Picture shows Karen Marshall with, from left, Osbaldwick Primary Academy pupils Arthur, Jack, Maisie, Amelia, Abdullah and Wafaa.