

Individual Instrumental Music lesson Policy & Information

At St. Christopher's The Hall, we firmly believe in the value of our pupils having the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, this enhances not only their musical education but has a wider positive impact in terms of children's concentration, confidence, wellbeing and academic growth. Individual music lessons are therefore an important and integral part of the education we provide and take place throughout the whole of the school day in our dedicated music rooms, delivered on a one-to-one basis by our specialist Music Teachers. Where the music lesson occurs during teaching time, children are required to leave their classroom in time to attend the music department and return at the end of their music lesson. Teachers will collect and return Lower School children to their classrooms, whilst Prep School children are expected to attend their music lesson independently.

Timetabling

Individual music lessons take place during the school day and timetables are organised by the Visiting Music Teachers, with the support of the Director of Music and the class teachers. We work hard to arrange timetables in order to have the minimum impact on pupils' academic lessons; where it is impossible to timetable around these the Visiting Music Teacher will organise a rotating timetable so that pupils do not consistently miss the same academic lesson each week.

Where a timetable rotates, the pupil will have their lesson on a fixed day but the time will vary from week to week; in this case the timetable will be emailed to class teachers and posted on the notice board in the Music Department corridor, we encourage the pupils to get into the habit of checking the time of their lesson. Any change of lesson day will be notified to parents. If the lesson is to be before the beginning of the school day (ie. earlier than 8.30am) the music teacher will check with parents. In this case, children will need to enter the school via the office and sign in.

Priority for time slots avoiding the core subjects and exam preparation is, where possible, given to Year 6 in the Autumn Term when they are preparing for external exams, and Year 5 in the Spring and Summer terms as their academic pressure increases. In the case of a pupil needing extra support in an academic subject, **class teachers** may ask that they do not miss a particular lesson if possible and we will do our best to accommodate this.

Pupils in the Prep School (Year 3 and above) are expected to make their way to their music lesson independently at the appropriate time (although if they do not arrive the teacher will go and look for them). Pre-Prep children will normally be collected and returned by the music teacher - or an older pupil or Teaching Assistant if appropriate.

It is the child's responsibility to catch up with any missed academic work, with suitable support and understanding from the class teacher concerned.

Costs (2023-2024)

Cost of lessons is £175 for a ten week term of 20 minute lessons and £262.50 for 30 minute lessons. Most instruments can be started on 20 minute lessons with the expectation to increase to half an hour as the child progresses. Depending on the instrument, teachers may offer to see a child for an initial assessment and 'taster' lesson before requiring a commitment to lessons. No notice is required to stop if a child decides to stop during their first term of lessons, after which a full term's notice is required. This must be made in writing to the Bursar or Director of Music by the first day of term in order to stop at the end of that term.

Lessons are invoiced with school fees by the Bursar on the basis of 10 lessons per term. When fewer lessons have been given a credit will be issued. In general the Visiting Music Teachers aim to teach 30 lessons per academic year. This may work out to 12 lessons being given during the longer Autumn term and 9 in the Spring and Summer. Teachers keep their own register of lessons in case of query.

Missed lessons

Missed lessons have to be made up by the music teacher ONLY in cases of:

- The music teacher's absence
- Formal in-school examinations
- Planned school trips which are on the school calendar and involve a whole class/Year group

Whilst our Visiting Music Teachers are always happy to be flexible, there can be no guarantee of replacement lessons for any reason other than the above, e.g. if a pupil is absent for sickness, appointments, visits to other schools etc. If your child has a planned absence on the day of their lesson, please let the Visiting Music Teacher know with as much notice as possible and they may be able to adjust timetables accordingly. This is at the discretion of the teacher and MUST be notified in advance; it cannot be done on the day of the lesson.

Lesson clashes with sports matches: It is accepted that children may be out at sports matches on their games afternoons and for this reason we avoid timetabling music lessons during these times. However, there are many other sporting events which take place outside of games periods; lessons cannot be guaranteed to be made up if a child is out of school for these. If you have given permission for your child to attend a sports event on their music lesson day, please let the music teacher know with as much notice as possible and, if at all possible they will re-schedule or make up some time, but again this is at their discretion and the lesson may be lost if it is not possible.

Practising at home

Children will need to practise regularly – ideally every day, but at least three times a week as a minimum to make progress; they will need their own instrument to practise on. The school has a selection of violins, woodwind and brass instruments available for short-term hire through the SCA, the intention being that families buy their own instrument once the child has been learning for 2 terms and has committed to continuing.

Parents can help their child to practise by:

- Making sure they have access to the instrument and an allocated time in the day when they can practise. Initially a few minutes every day or every other day will suffice, although this will extend as your child makes progress.
- Sitting alongside as they practise; even where the parent knows nothing about music this can be very beneficial. Ask your child to ‘teach’ you what they have learnt at their lesson.
- Using rewards, which can be very good incentives for learning. A star chart at home is often a useful way to encourage your child.
- Making sure that they bring their music books on the correct day. This, together with evidence of having practised over the week, means that they could earn a Character Counter – for enthusiasm or ambition!

Each pupil is issued with a notebook where the work they should aim to do each week is set by their teacher. This can be a valuable tool for communication between parent and teacher. Regular notes and emails between teacher and parent are encouraged, to ensure communication is effective. A written report is sent home at the end of the Summer Term.

There are many performance opportunities in class music lessons and assemblies. We also have a range of concerts at school in which your child will be encouraged to take part. The more they perform, the more they will grow in confidence. The Orchestra welcomes children who have passed Grade 1 in an Orchestral instrument.

Instruments in school

If your child brings a musical instrument to school, we advise you to make sure that the instrument is fully insured. The school will not be responsible for any loss or damage to instruments, including those hired from a shop or from the school. The school is not responsible for instruments lost or stolen from school or any other venue where the children may be performing or rehearsing. This includes any vehicle hired by the school to take pupils to and from venues. Parents must ensure that their child’s name, address and telephone number are written clearly inside the instrument case and also that the name is clearly visible on the outside of the case so that instruments can be located easily and returned to pupils in the event of them being mislaid.

Books and accessories

It is the responsibility of parents to obtain any music/accessories requested by the pupil’s music teacher. The teachers will happily offer advice on where to buy them from. Music teachers can order music for their pupils through the school and in this case the books will be charged on the termly invoice.

Instruments available and minimum starting ages

The starting age varies according to the child's maturity and the instrument, but as a general guide these are the earliest. Please do not think that if your child does not start at this age then it is too late – a child will enjoy an instrument more and progress faster once they are keen and ready to commit to the discipline and practice required.

Piano - Mrs. Ashcroft, Mrs. Lovett, Mrs Paulides

Guitar - Mr. Birch

Violin - Mrs. Rayner

Usually, the earliest starting point for these instruments is Year 2, with assessment of suitability by the music teachers and with the agreement of the class teacher that the child is ready to come out of class to an individual music lesson. Lessons are 20 minutes initially increasing to 30 on the teacher's advice and in agreement with parents, as the child progresses.

Drums - Mr. Blundell. Usually starting in Year 3 and above but happy to assess at Year 2. 20 minute lessons initially.

Flute - Mrs. Webb. Year 3 and above, although children can start on the recorder at an earlier age. 20 minute lessons initially.

Oboe - Mrs. Lovett. Year 4 and above. 30 minute lessons.

Clarinet and Saxophone - Mr. Christou. Year 3 and above. 30 minute lessons.

Trumpet/Cornet/Trombone – Mr. Rainsford. Year 3 and above as assessed by the teacher. 30 minute lessons.

Singing – Mrs. Paulides. Usually Year 4 and above. 20 minute lessons initially rising to 30 minutes once the pupil is preparing for exams.

Graded Music exams

We believe that music exams are a useful goal and means of assessment, giving a sense of achievement. However, they are a means to an end and it is absolutely possible to learn to play a musical instrument without taking exams. Music Teachers will encourage children to work towards exams at appropriate stages with the agreement of the pupil and parents, however if this is not desired, there are plenty of performance opportunities in school during class, assembly and concerts which children will be encouraged to take up. We host a termly music exam day with an ABRSM Examiner for our pupils (regardless of whether or not they are learning with a teacher in school or externally).

Arranging lessons:

Please email Mrs. Gay, Director of Music, as the first point of contact for arranging lessons and she will put you in touch with the relevant teacher via email.

musicadmin@stchristophersthehall.org.uk

