

# Lancing College

## Preparatory School at Hove



## Music Department

September 2017

Music is an important, everyday part of school life at Lancing Prep at Hove. In addition to class music lessons and singing assemblies, all children perform in a number of musical events throughout the year and most children (currently over 75%) learn one or more instrument and most of these take part in the appropriate ensemble and/or choir.

If your child does not play an instrument he/she is missing out on a wealth of opportunities. Learning to play a musical instrument offers many benefits. For example:

### **1. Playing A Musical Instrument Makes You Smarter**

Many studies have been conducted on the effects of music on the brain. Scientists say that children who are exposed to music, or those who play an instrument, do better in school than those who don't. Recent research suggests exposure to music may benefit a child's reading age, IQ and the development of certain parts of the brain.

### **2. It Teaches Discipline**

Learning to play an instrument is like learning to speak another language and it can be challenging at times. One of the qualities musicians possess is discipline. You have to be disciplined in order to master playing your instrument. You have to set time each day to practice, practice and practice some more.

### **3. Playing A Musical Instrument Relieves Stress**

We all have days when we are so stressed out and we just want to take a break from it all. Have you ever noticed that when you hear soft, soothing music you feel more relaxed? Playing an instrument can provide this and more, especially if you're the one playing. Music is one of life's simple joys; it helps calm the mind. This applies even to very young children.

#### **4. Sense of Achievement**

If you're a beginner learning to play your first piece, it can be frustrating. But once you've mastered it, the satisfaction you'll feel is priceless. Never mind if it's just a simple piece, you'll never forget the first piece you mastered. You are one step closer to achieving your goal and that is certainly something to be proud of.

#### **5. Playing A Musical Instrument is Fun**

Of course, it can be a lot of hard work but there is no denying playing an instrument is fun. Once you get better at it, many opportunities will arise for you to share your newly learned skill with your family and friends. You can play the music you like, alone or co-operate with others in a like-minded band.

#### **Q and A**

Below are some common questions about instrumental lessons at Lancing College Prep School at Hove. Hopefully these will answer your queries, but please do not hesitate to contact the Director of Music, Mr. Alex Farley, should you have any further queries. His email is [afarley@lancing.org.uk](mailto:afarley@lancing.org.uk).

#### **Do children have to learn an instrument?**

No, while most pupils (over 75%) do have instrumental lessons, some choose not to (often because they have many other hobbies and extra-curricular interests so do not have the time). All pupils, regardless of whether they have lessons, get the opportunity to perform in whole or part school events such as the carol concert, summer show, etc. Learning an instrument is a great advantage in class music lessons (and pupils are encouraged to bring their instruments to these), but keyboards are available for those who do not learn.

#### **Does my child have to have instrumental lessons in school?**

No! If you have a teacher out of school that is absolutely fine. The Director of Music keeps a list of instruments pupils can play, and approximate grade, and all pupils are invited to perform at the relevant 'evenings' and 'days' regardless of where they learn. They may also join school ensembles.

## Which instruments can children learn to play?

Instrumental lessons are available for most instruments from a hardworking and talented team of musicians. The age at which children can start learning an instrument varies from instrument to instrument, and because of the physical nature of playing, also from child to child. A rough guide is that children can start learning piano and guitar in Year 1, woodwind and brass instruments in Year 2, string instruments in year 3 and drums in Year 4. All pupils in Year 3 currently have two terms of string lessons, free of charge, so that they experience instrumental playing. The list of instruments available varies from term to term, according to demand, but a very rough guide, with approximate years from which a pupil can learn that instrument, is shown below.

Year 1 ...	<b>Piano</b>	<b>Guitar</b>	<b>Recorder</b>	<b>Cello</b>	<b>Flute</b>		
Year 2 ...	<b>Trumpet</b>	<b>Cornet</b>	<b>Trombone</b>	<b>French Horn</b>	<b>Violin</b>	<b>Viola</b>	<b>Double Bass</b>
Year 3 ...	<b>Saxophone</b>	<b>Clarinet</b>	<b>Voice</b>				
Year 4 ...	<b>Drums</b>						

## How much are instrumental lessons?

Most peripatetic teachers aim to give around ten 30-minute lessons during the course of a term, at the current competitive rate of £19.50 per lesson. Some teachers give twelve lessons in the first term; ten in the second and eight in the final term but this will be obvious from their bill. Some teachers offer more than 30 lessons in a year, but again they will discuss this with you.

## How do I pay for instrumental lessons?

Instrumental teachers bill parents directly and any queries regarding bills should be directed to instrumental teachers. *Please note, unlike the school billing system, instrumental teachers bill in advance. You should receive the bill in the first or second lesson of the term and are kindly asked to pay in the first half of term.*

## How do I know which instrument to choose?

Choosing the correct instrument to learn is not an exact science and will depend on the age of your child, as detailed above. Many children are 'drawn' to a particular instrument (often guitar or drums) or want to learn an instrument because their friends also learn that instrument. While these are both good reasons likely to motivate children very often children are suited to a particular instrument because of their mouth shape, motor skills, aspects of their personality, etc. Please contact the Director of Music ([afarley@lancing.org.uk](mailto:afarley@lancing.org.uk)) if you would like his input on which instrument would be best for your child.

## **How do I sign up for instrumental lessons?**

Parents should inform the Director of Music as soon as possible if they wish their child to have a 'trial lesson' (see below) and then start learning an instrument.

## **How do I know my child is suited to the instrument / teacher?**

When you have requested a trial lesson the relevant instrumental teacher will then collect your child (these lessons are not timetabled and the teacher may not know what your child looks like in the same way your child may not know what the teacher looks like so it is easiest if they are collected). Your child will then have a short (approximately 15 minute) lesson, to see if the physical requirements of that instrument are met, and in which the teacher and pupil see if they seem likely to work well together. Following this lesson the instrumental teacher will get in touch with you to answer any queries you have and to check you are happy for lessons to commence. For some instruments, particularly brass instruments, several such lessons are necessary.

## **Can I choose which teacher my child has?**

Some instruments (particularly piano) have more than one teacher. While often a child would like to have the same teacher as their friend or classmate the Director of Music decides which teacher they will have, based on pupil numbers for each teacher and their availability.

## **When are the instrumental lessons?**

Lessons take place during the school day, and times are rotated to ensure children do not miss too many lessons in the same subject. Lesson times are posted on the music notice board for pupils and their parents to check. They are also posted on the VLE (which all pupils can access by going to [vle.lancing.org.uk](http://vle.lancing.org.uk) and signing in with their usual school username and password). Please check your child's lesson time in advance, in case there is a problem (see below).

## **What happens if an instrumental lesson is scheduled at a time that my child cannot make it?**

The office should be aware of any outings or other events published in the school calendar that would prevent a pupil from having a lesson and will adjust the instrumental lesson timetables accordingly. However, pupils and their parents should check lesson times carefully and let the office know as soon as possible if there is a problem with the lesson time (or a clash with multiple lessons!). In the unlikely event a lesson has been scheduled at a time the pupil is unavailable, please let the school office know *at least 24 hours before the lesson slot* so the lesson can be moved to an alternate time. Only the office can authorise changes to the timetable, pupils should not agree 'swaps' among themselves!

## **Are pupils collected for instrumental lessons?**

If a child forgets their lesson, at first they will be fetched. This will continue in the case of younger children. Children are collected in pre-prep and form teachers help pupils to remember their lesson times in the lower prep school years, but as pupils rise through the school we expect them to become a little more organised and self-reliant. While they will at first be fetched, persistent lateness/forgetfulness further up the school will not be accepted and the instrumental teachers will not make up any lost time through lateness if pupils have to be collected.

## **What happens if a lesson is missed?**

A lesson missed through illness of the pupil cannot usually be 'made up' (in the same way a missed English or geography lesson would not be 'made up'), but lessons missed through the teacher's absence are rescheduled as you have paid for them.

## **What are the instrumental 'evenings' and 'days'?**

All children who learn an instrument, in or out of school, perform a piece on that instrument at the appropriate 'instrumental evening'. (*Please note, all children learning the appropriate instrument are **expected** to perform at that instrumental evening.*) When your child reaches the higher grades he/she will have the opportunity to attend musical 'days' at other schools. When invitations to such events, which are shown on the school and music calendars, arrive, the Director of Music consults his lists to identify children playing the instruments involved at the required standard (which varies from venue to venue and year to year) and invites all those who are able to attend. Please ensure the Director of Music has up to date information ([afarley@lancing.org.uk](mailto:afarley@lancing.org.uk)) so that your child does not miss an opportunity.

## **What ensembles are available, and how can children get involved?**

There are two choirs (a junior and senior choir), which are open to all (although smaller groups are sometimes taken from within the choir if numbers are limited at particular event). Children having singing lessons are expected to attend the relevant choir.

When children learning an instrument have reached the required standard, they will be invited to join an appropriate group or ensemble by their instrumental teacher or the Director of Music. The Director of Music tries to ensure all pupils are involved in one or more ensemble. If pupils are 'invited' they are expected to attend. These ensembles, and a rough guide to the grade requirement required to join them, are listed in the music calendar, and are free of charge.

## **What musical events take place?**

Many musical events are featured in the busy music calendar, which is published alongside the termly calendar. There is a wide range of musical evenings and other events, allowing every child who learns an instrument, in or out of school, to perform on that instrument over the course of a year and all children take part in at least one performance, such as the Carol Service or the Prep or Pre-prep school shows, during the course of the year.

## **What about instrumental exams?**

One way to track instrumental progress is through instrumental examinations. Whilst it is not essential that children take these, many children like to do so and are proud of their certificates. Many of the instrumental staff encourage pupils to take instrumental examinations, which are held at the Prep School when possible. If a pupil needs accompaniment and is taking the examination at the Prep School the Director of Music can take the pupil to the exam, and accompany him or her (for free, when many schools charge for this). It is particularly important when your child is entered for an exam that you monitor their practice, especially the notorious scales!

Please talk to your child's instrumental teacher if you wish to discuss where they are in terms of examinations – they decide if pupils should be entered, not the Director of Music. They should let you know if your child has been entered for an examination. Instrumental exams take place in the second half of term and the Director of Music emails parents with the date of the examination, and the date of the rehearsal session, as soon as these are known (usually in the week after half term). The cost of instrumental examinations, as published on the ABRSM website, is added to the end of term bill. The results are usually available in the first week or two of the term after the one in which the examination is taken.

## **What about music scholarships as part of the entry process to the next school?**

Some pupils in Form Eight use music as part of their entry to their next school, either by taking a music scholarship or more commonly by using music as part of an 'all-rounder' scholarship package. Pupils are given information about this at the start of their final year but parents are free to contact the Director of Music for further information, once their son/daughter is in Year Eight. As a very rough guide, pupils going for a music scholarship should be of at least Grade 5 standard in two or more instruments, while pupils using music as part of an 'all-rounder' should be at least Grade 3 or higher.

## **How and when are music 'prizes' awarded?**

Instrumental 'prizes' (in the form of a badge and a certificate) are awarded throughout the year, in the end of term assembly following the relevant instrumental evening. These are listed with the prizes given at prize-giving at the end of the year, when an additional junior prize (up to Year 6), a senior prize (Years 7 and 8) and an instrumental prize are also awarded.

## **What are music 'colours'?**

Pupils are able to gain coveted 'colours' for music in the same way they are for sporting teams and other aspects of school life. Colours are awarded in end-of-term assemblies and children are given a certificate and a badge. The criteria for these colours are as follows.

To gain colours a pupil should . . .

Demonstrate an exceptional level of individual performance skill *i.e. gain grade 5 or above in an instrumental exam.*

AND

Participate in the wider musical life of the school *i.e. be an active member of more than one ensemble/choir/orchestra & take part in musical 'days' at Lancing College or other Prep. or Senior schools.*

AND

Show a commitment to performing at a high standard *i.e. play or sing a solo in a choir/orchestral/ensemble, perform in performance assembly.*

## **Where are the music rooms?**

The music department is situated at the top of the building, and includes several music practice rooms where instrumental lessons take place and in which children can practise. The music department is well equipped, and there is a strong emphasis on the use of ICT in music further up the school.



## **What can I do to help my child learn an instrument?**

We live in a culture in which many people seek instant, or at least fairly quick, gratification. Learning a musical instrument is a long-term undertaking based on the principle of 'delayed gratification'. That is to say, a lot of work usually needs to go in before very much will come out. To use a financial analogy, dividends may not appear on your investment for quite some time.

But if you, as a parent, are prepared to spend time with your child, being involved in their practice and progress, then they will reap the many wonderful benefits which being able to make music offers. If it's important and of value to you, then it will become important to your child.

The most important contribution that you can make as a parent is to sit with your child while they're practising for at least ten minutes every other day. Only by doing this will they make real progress. Children are generally not able to structure a practice session on their own and your input is vital. Find a time in the day that suits both you and your child, when you are both relaxed and you can give your child your full attention. Make this a regular routine, like brushing teeth, and expect this to carry on for years. Ask other members of the family, particularly any siblings, to respect this practice time and not to disturb you.

## **How do I stop music lessons?**

If your child wants to stop lessons the first thing you should do is talk to the instrumental teacher or to the Director of Music. Often there is a simple reason for wanting to give up. If your child has pressure at school, perhaps through exams, then make sure they know that their music can take a back seat for a while. Let them simply enjoy playing when time allows, without the expectation of progress being made. Make sure that the instrumental teacher is aware of any pressures from homework, exams, or other activities. Another option is to change instrument, this very often rekindles enthusiasm. If this does not help and the child still wishes to terminate lessons, *notice that a child plans to cease lessons on an instrument should be given to the instrumental teacher in writing before half term in the last term of lessons.*

**Any queries about billing should be directed to the appropriate instrumental teacher.**

**Queries about timetabling of lessons should be directed to the School office (hove@lancing.org.uk).**

**More general queries about musical lessons, ensembles and events should be directed to the Director of Music (afarley@lancing.org.uk).**