

Instrumental Tuition—Frequently Asked Questions

At Whiteley Primary, we are very fortunate to be able to offer a wide range of musical opportunities, both within and outside of the curriculum. At KS2, class music is usually taken by one of our music specialists, and all children are given the opportunity to learn to play an instrument through these sessions (Y2 — ocarina, Y3 - recorder, Y4—handbells, Y5 - samba). In addition we offer small group instrumental tuition at KS2 in a range of instruments. Below we have put together answers to the most frequently asked questions.



Who teaches the small group instrumental lessons?

We use peripatetic music teachers provided by Hampshire Music Service. They are employed and vetted by Hampshire, and usually teach in a number of different schools in the area.

How often and when do lessons take place?

A minimum of 30 lessons are provided over the year, usually on the same day each week. Lessons usually take place during the school day, although they may start as early as 8.30am or finish as late as 4pm. This means that children who take music lessons will often miss part of their usual class lessons. Where possible, we try to limit the disruption to their studies by changing lesson times during the year so that they don't always miss the same lesson.

Will my child receive individual tuition?

Lessons are generally held in a small group (4 pupils is the usual size). Group sizes may differ as children are grouped according to ability, but to enable the maximum number of children to benefit from tuition, it is rare for pupils to be given 1 to 1 tuition.

How much do lessons cost?

The school subsidises the cost of music tuition. The cost to parents for 2024/25 is £195, payable in 3 instalments (September, December, March).

If my child decides to give up during the year, will I get a refund?

Unfortunately, we are not able to offer refunds if a child drops out of lessons during the year as it is not appropriate for a new beginner to join a group once lessons have already commenced, and the school will have already paid for the teacher's time. All instalments must be paid, even if a child gives up before March.

How does the school choose who is offered instrumental lessons?

We aim to offer as many pupils as possible the opportunity to learn an instrument, but we don't have the resources to provide for all children. We therefore prioritise children at the end of Y3 who have shown commitment to a music club in school during the previous year, and any children who show particular aptitude and interest within their class music lessons. We have found that children are more likely to take to playing an instrument and practising regularly if they have already experienced singing or playing together in a club, and therefore understand what it means to make a commitment. If any spaces are still available once children have been targeted, these are offered to KS2 children on the waiting list. The waiting list is held in the office by Mrs Reid and children may be placed on the waiting list by the parent from Y3 onwards. Parents may indicate any number of instruments that their child is interested in. Parents should note that there is frequently a high demand for spaces in guitar and piano lessons, and pupils are more likely to be allocated a space if they are flexible in their choice of instrument.

My child is in KS1. Can they start lessons if there are spaces?

We do not offer small group instrumental lessons to KS1 children. Due to the high demand for lessons, the spaces are taken up by children from Y4—6. If additional space is available, Y3 children may be offered the opportunity to learn.

How many spaces are there for beginners each year?

The number of spaces varies year on year, depending on how many instrumentalists from the previous year have left the school and how much time is allocated to us by Hampshire Music Service. We aim to start one new beginner group (around 4 children) in each instrument per year if possible.

Which instruments are available?

We currently offer lessons in violin, 'cello, piano, flute, clarinet, guitar and brass. Before taking up brass lessons, potential pupils are given a taster session to see if they are suitable for brass. Once they begin lessons, the teacher then finds out which brass instrument is most appropriate for them—this could be trumpet, cornet, trombone or euphonium. Sometimes children start on a smaller instrument before moving to another. We have no plans to extend the instruments offered any further, as the music room is now fully timetabled for the week.

Will I have to buy my child their own instrument if they start lessons in school?

We are often able to loan instruments to children for their first year of tuition. The exception to this is piano/keyboards, or occasionally when there are lots of beginners starting at the same time. Instruments are loaned for a year, and then parents are asked to provide their own instrument if they wish their child to continue. The school can offer advice on instrument purchase, and we also offer an assisted purchase scheme which allows parents to purchase instruments via the school, without having to pay VAT. Hampshire Music Service also offer a reasonable hire scheme for instruments.

How often will my child be expected to practice?

Children are encouraged to practise daily for a short period. They will be provided with a practice record book in which the teachers record what is expected before the next lesson. Parents are usually asked to purchase the appropriate music book for their child to work from — details are provided by the peripatetic teachers once pupils have commenced lessons.

My child is already learning an instrument. Can they go on the waiting list for a second instrument?

As the school subsidises the cost of lessons and there is such a high demand, we will only offer tuition in school in one instrument to each child, so that the maximum number of children can benefit from the subsidy. If at the end of a year, a pupil decides to give up an instrument, they may go on the waiting list for a different instrument, but we cannot guarantee a place. However, if your child learns an instrument privately outside of school, they may learn a second instrument in school.

My child learns an instrument outside of school. Can they still perform in school?

Because of the high numbers of pupils involved, it is not always possible for pupils who learn instruments privately to perform solos in the school concerts. However, once children have been learning an instrument for around 2 years, we would encourage them to join the school orchestra in the summer term. Pupils are also encouraged to use their talents within class music lessons, and we can also provide opportunities for them to perform in our weekly sharing assemblies so that they can experience playing in front of a large audience. Please contact the music team via the school office if you think this would be appropriate for your child.

My child is learning an instrument outside of school, but I would like them to take lessons in school instead. Is this possible?

It is sometimes possible to accommodate pupils who are already learning an instrument outside of school within our existing groups. If there are any spaces in the groups, the peripatetic teacher would normally meet with the child to hear them play and assess if they are at a similar standard to the other pupils.

If you have any further questions regarding instrumental lessons, please see Mrs Reid in the school office. She will put you in touch with the music team if she is unable to help with your query.