

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ◆ *What happens if my child is ill?*

If your child is absent from school due to illness, the lesson is forfeited.

### ◆ *My child is on a trip on a lesson day, will they still receive the lesson?*

Usually, lessons missed due to school trips will be re-scheduled. We agree to provide 30 lessons across the school year, which is normally 10 lessons per term. If your child does not receive them, you will be reimbursed at the end of the school year.

### ◆ *When will that lesson be made up?*

Sometimes lessons will be carried over into the next term—particularly if lessons are missed in the Spring Term where there are not usually enough teaching weeks to make up missed lessons.

### ◆ *What happens if my child loses their instrument?*

It is essential that you name your child's instrument. If you don't have a name tag, your child can ask me for one. Please make sure your child's name is clearly visible so that it is easy for them to pick up the right instrument at the end of the school day. It is a good idea to check with the office and any clubs that your child has attended in case it has been left there at the end of the day. If it is clearly named, the chances of getting it back are higher. The instrument is your responsibility and if it is lost permanently, you are responsible for the replacement cost.

### ◆ *Who is responsible if the instrument is broken or damaged?*

In the event of an accident or damage to the instrument, please send a message to [nwayman1.210@lgflmail.org](mailto:nwayman1.210@lgflmail.org) and I will be in touch to discuss the next steps. Do not take it somewhere yourself to have it mended.

### ◆ *Can my child play in an assembly?*

The teachers are always on the look out for children who have practised hard and made great progress to show off their new skills in assembly. You will be invited to come in to listen if your child has been chosen to play.

### ◆ *Will my child take music exams?*

Your child's teacher is the one who is best placed to judge when your child is ready to take an exam. It is important to remember that at The Belham we are interested in developing enthusiastic and competent musicians, not merely exam takers. Of course, sometimes the two things go hand in hand. It takes a long time to be ready for exams and it is better for children to be well beyond the level necessary to pass in order for it to be a positive learning experience. Other opportunities for excellent performance, with slightly less pressure, are concerts and assemblies.

## Contact

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### The Music Teachers

Rachael Down: Recorder

Ben Duff: Guitar and Ukulele

Gennie Joy: Curriculum Music

Nancy Wayman: Violin

THE BELHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Learning a Musical  
Instrument: How to  
Support Your Child  
on Their Journey.



# Learning a Musical Instrument at The Belham

## Top Tips For Effective Practice

*“Practise only as many times as you have breakfast.” (Shinichi Suzuki)*

We hope that learning a musical instrument at The Belham will help your child to begin a life-long love of music. It is a long and exciting journey that will not only teach them skills on a specific instrument but also reap many other rewards from increased self-confidence and improved memory to good self-discipline and improved abstract learning capabilities.

Listening to and watching performances of a wide variety of music with your child – either live, on the radio or on the computer - played on their chosen instrument is hugely beneficial. Listening is great for all-round musicianship and watching can help clarify how to hold the instrument, display what is possible on the instrument and show what practice can achieve.

Sing and dance! Sing everything: the pieces they are learning, nursery rhymes they used to love, current songs that you love and routine songs (getting dressed, going to bed, tidying up). Your child is not as critical as you are and will love to sing with you, even if you think you have a 'bad' voice.

There's no need to take grade 63 before their 11th birthday. Let's share our love of music and our knowledge that it will enrich all of us if we give our children the tools to enjoy making music for the rest of their lives.

- ◆ Frequent, regular practice is by far the best approach - not just regularly on a Monday night after swimming but regularly almost every day. 10 minutes is plenty at this stage and 10 minutes on 6 out of 7 days is far more beneficial than 30 minutes on a Sunday night. Think about your child—what is a good time of day for them?
- ◆ Find a good place to practise where your child can concentrate. Having the television or radio on at the same time makes it impossible to really listen which is one of the most important skills we are trying to develop when learning an instrument.
- ◆ If you can leave the instrument out in a safe place—away from toddlers' hands and out of reach of the dog—it makes picking it up to practise easier than if you have to take it all out and set it up every day. It's also a good idea to invest in a music stand.
- ◆ Ask them to set a focus for each practice session. This could be one bar of the music or one activity, it needn't be a big thing. If children can learn the link between having a goal and working hard towards it, it will benefit them in every area of life.
- ◆ It's non-negotiable! Don't bargain with practice time: “OK, watch T.V. today and make sure you do double time tomorrow.” You'll only set yourself up for trouble next time. They've chosen to play it, they need to learn to commit to it if they are to reap the rewards.
- ◆ Record them one day and record the same thing a week later—they will be amazed at how much progress they make in a short time if they practise.
- ◆ Some children like a reward system—although I understand the argument that the reward of pro-

gress and satisfaction at the improvement you've made should be enough—and this can sometimes be a good idea if your child needs a bit of a boost. Have a sticker chart or jar of beans and put one in for every proper practice session (one with no arguing or procrastinating). Agree on a reward (a magazine from the shop, an extra trip to the playground, popcorn and a film night with everyone together on the sofa) before you start and when the jar/sticker chart is full they can 'cash in' their prize.

- ◆ Encourage them! (Even if you think it didn't sound good). Ask them what they are working on and listen out for that (not everything but just one thing at a time). It is easy for adults to forget that there are many elements to learning instruments and it can be overwhelming which makes practising extremely challenging and, occasionally, disheartening.
- ◆ The teacher will probably have written something in their practice book so ask your child to check in there if they can't remember what they should be doing. If you take an interest, it will help your child.
- ◆ You don't need to be musically experienced to be useful to your child in a practice session; a listening ear and a sympathetic audience can be incredibly helpful. Often, just having company and a sounding board is all that is required to make it fun rather than a chore.