



## **Frequently Asked Questions - Learning a musical instrument**

### **1) What benefits are there in learning a music instrument?**

Learning an instrument builds the following character strengths:

- ❖ Confidence
- ❖ Patience
- ❖ Self-discipline
- ❖ Responsibility
- ❖ Resilience
- ❖ Perseverance
- ❖ Self-expression
- ❖ Creativity



Playing a musical instrument also:

- ❖ Increases memory capacity
- ❖ Reduces stress and aids in wellbeing
- ❖ Develops fine motor skills and coordination
- ❖ Improves performance in cognitive and multi sensory skills
- ❖ Strengthens teamwork skills when playing with others
- ❖ Develops time management and organizational skills

### **2) What is the best age to start learning an instrument? Any indications?**

The best age to start learning an instrument would vary with each individual. However, the following may help you determine whether your child is ready to learn an instrument:

- ❖ They can maintain focus for up to half hour (lesson duration)
- ❖ They have expressed high interest in learning the instrument
- ❖ The student is committed to putting the time into practise
- ❖ The parent is committed to encouraging practise at home and being involved in the learning process

It is important for children to learn the basic skills of music including reading and playing notes as well as establishing a good sense of beat and rhythm. The piano is an excellent instrument to begin with as it builds coordination of both arms, use of all ten fingers, and helps to develop reading skills in both treble and bass clef as well as build an understanding of music theory. The violin or cello are also good choices for younger students as there are a variety of different sized instruments available.



Other factors to consider in choosing an appropriate instrument include:

- ❖ The physical size of the child, including height, length of arms, muscle development
- ❖ The child's lung capacity and ability to blow or buzz, and hold their mouth in an appropriate position to suit different wind instrument

### **3) I have an idea of what instrument my child would like to learn. What's next?**

Parents should seek the relevant instrumental music teacher so that the child can take private instrumental lessons. Students can also sign up and join our after school music clubs program (group instrumental learning).

### **4) My child would like to join KJS music ensembles (such as orchestra) and secondary music ensembles further down the track, what is the suggested instrumental learning pathway for different instruments?**

The four main string instruments are violin, viola, cello and double bass. Students who play any of these instruments can join the Orchestra. Students can start learning as young as the age of 5.

Guitarists can play in guitar ensembles, small music groups and rock bands, however, it is generally not heard in orchestras, wind or string ensembles.

The woodwind instruments include the flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, saxophone. Woodwind students can play in the Orchestra. It is suggested that students can start learning on woodwinds from year 3.

The brass instruments include the trumpet, trombone, French horn and tuba. Brass students can play in the Orchestra. Although it is not suggested that students learn brass instruments until their upper primary years, they are able to transition to brass instruments with more ease by learning on woodwind instruments prior.

Pianists have important roles in all music ensembles and provide accompaniment to many small and large instrumental and singing groups such as choir. Students often begin their music training on the piano and take up a second instrument later.

Percussionists are required in the orchestra and other instrumental groups. Drummers and pianists are well suited to become percussionists.



**5) What strategies do you think can be used to help parents support their child's learning and successfully motivate students to practise at home?**

- ❖ Encouragement and praise
- ❖ Set expectations with the children (e.g. practise happens before free time)
- ❖ Set aside times allocated for music practice – setting short practice sessions every day is more effective than having 1-2 longer practice sessions a week
- ❖ Set short term and long term goals with your child - record a practice journal
- ❖ Maintain good communication with your child and their instrumental music teacher
- ❖ Encourage students to take ownership and responsibility for their learning and progress

**6) What other aspects are important to encourage a love of learning on musical instruments?**

- ❖ Expose students to music through attending concerts and music workshops
- ❖ Encourage students to show initiative in finding more about music, composers, musicians that interest them
- ❖ Encourage music conversations through listening to various types of music and genres