

IDENTIFYING PUPILS FOR INSTRUMENTAL/VOCAL LESSONS

Introduction

The Music Service trades directly with schools and supports them with the identification of children for instrumental lessons. This is almost always unique to each school setting due to the various factors that ensure instrumental teaching can take place including:

- constraints within schools' budgets. Where lessons are subsidised in part by the school, there is often a cap on the number of hours that can be bought from the Music Service.
- Space available for teaching.
- Any considered impact on curriculum time – e.g swimming clubs on certain days etc...
- Resources available within the Music Service and its terms and conditions with schools.

All these factors can impinge on the ability to scale up instrumental teaching in a school. It is therefore often the case that not every child that wants it can be given tuition on an instrument. But it is essential that all children have an equal chance to be identified.

Access and progression

Most schools therefore offer a Whole Class Instrumental Teaching programme (WCIT) in school as part of the curriculum, often in Y3/4, so that all children experience instrumental tuition during their time at school. This is then supplemented with smaller group tuition models for progression in subsequent years. It has proven to be an effective way of ensuring that all children experience instrumental music while supporting those children who wish to take their learning further.

Identification of small groups

To try and ensure equal access the Music Service recommends that, wherever possible, half a term is spent working with unselected groups of children. This period may need to be shorter at the request of schools where fees and contracts require the lessons to start sooner. A three-week minimum period is a good guide for schools to allow the Music Service teacher an opportunity to let each child undertake a sample lesson or series of trial lessons where time permits.

In secondary school it is harder to reach every child, and each school will find its own way to widen access as far as possible, often by arranging exemplar assemblies in partnership with the Music Service followed by letters home to children who show an interest.

The Music Service aims to recruit pupils from across the whole range of ability, gender, ethnic and social backgrounds. The choice of pupils is a matter for the school as much as for Music Service staff. Working in partnership with the Music Service, each school will establish its own principles for arriving at a final choice.

We recommend that identification should take place after a trial lesson, or series of trial lessons, in order to establish a child's aptitude for a particular instrument. This should not preclude them from receiving trial lessons on other instruments.

When a group of children is finally identified to start instrumental/vocal lessons, school staff, parents and Music Service staff need to agree on what the aims are for each child within the group.

The practice diary is an effective way of recording the termly targets for each group of musicians while keeping the parent and school informed.

Music Service teaching staff and the process of identifying children for instrumental lessons.

Music Service teachers have discussed at length our guiding principles for the identification of students. These include:

- The child shows a genuine interest or curiosity in learning the instrument, rather than the request of the parent/ guardian.
- The child has the physical characteristics needed to hold or play the instrument – often needing their front teeth for woodwind instruments or stature is of a size and height needed for various brass and string instruments.
- Teacher demonstration of the instrument and how it works is central to informing children about the instrument.
- All children try the instrument in a short sample lesson which is led as a positive experience for all children regardless of the outcome.
- Children like the sound of the instrument and have considered the implications of taking it home to practice. (Size and sound of instruments must be compatible with the parent)
- Children can focus in a small group setting and work cooperatively with peers.
- Terminology used by teachers is very important. 'Try outs' to 'Identify', not 'Auditions' to 'Select' or 'Test'.
- Where possible, have some input from the class teacher who knows the students well.
- We recognise that children come from varied backgrounds, with different levels of prior musical experience. We do not therefore 'test' for musical aptitude in isolation but will explore musical elements with the instrument during any trial period.

At the end of any trial period the Music Service teacher will communicate the outcomes to the schools who will inform their children.

It is recommended that schools do not 'reject' children within the process but retain a waiting list where upon children can be added should space become available. This should not preclude them from receiving trial lessons on other instruments.

Summary

To summarise, the complete process involves:

- An "open access" period, the length of which is agreed with the school, to include:
- communication (through the school) with all parents of pupils in the target group.
- All children in the target group receive a sample lesson to try the instrument.
- Decisions on recruitment, taken jointly with the school staff.
- Groups are created and a 'waiting list' is held centrally in school.
- Communication (through the school) with parents of children recruited or added to the waiting list.

A final "tuition" period begins, including:

- continued tuition for groups of pupils grouped by ability rather than year group.
- continuing monitoring and reporting on pupils' progress.
- on-going pupil participation in performance opportunities such as assemblies, concerts etc.

IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN PRO FORMA

This pro forma can be used by schools to assist in the identification of students

Agreed trial period in weeks:

Teacher.....

Number of children to be seen:

Instrument.....

Name	Year	School Paperwork received from parent/ or parent permission.	Trial lesson notes	School/ teacher comment	Outcome YES/ WAITING LIST

