

# Instrumental Music Service Parent Carer/Guide - 2026/27



◆ EDINBURGH ◆  
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

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## Welcome

There are many benefits to learning to play a musical instrument with The City of Edinburgh Council's Instrumental Music Service. This guide is designed to help you find everything you need to know about our service, the experiences on offer and the benefits your child can enjoy.

In addition to offering weekly instrumental lessons in all our schools, The City of Edinburgh Council's Instrumental Music Service has access to a full programme of ensemble activities including Edinburgh Schools' Junior Strings, Edinburgh Schools' Intermediate Strings, Edinburgh Secondary Schools' Orchestra, Edinburgh Schools' Training Wind Ensemble, Edinburgh Schools' Wind Ensemble, Edinburgh Schools' Rock Ensemble, Edinburgh Schools' Jazz Orchestra, Edinburgh Schools' Classical Guitar Ensemble and Edinburgh Schools' Choir. The IMS also host P7 Play Days for Wind, Brass and Strings and a S2/3 Play Day for Guitars.

Highlights of the previous year include our central ensembles performing at the Usher Hall, in our annual winter concert, in support of Childline, and our annual spring concert in March. In February, we had our second Edinburgh Piano Festival, with our young pianists performing for the renowned Scottish pianist Graham McDonald. In March, the Edinburgh Schools' Rock Ensemble and Edinburgh Schools' Jazz Orchestra again performed successful concerts, to capacity audiences, in the city's iconic Jazz Bar with Edinburgh Rocks! and Jazz in the City respectively. In May, the inaugural P7 Play Day for Wind, Brass percussion and S2/3 guitars, saw over 250 learners come together in Meadowbank.

In June, to finish this school session, an Instrumental Music Instructor Orchestra, joined by Royal Conservatoire of Scotland students and musicians from the Band of the Royal Regimental of Scotland, accompanied a massed choir of over 1600 primary age young people, in the Usher Hall, as part of the second Edinburgh Big Sing. June also saw Edinburgh Schools' Rock Ensemble complete a 3 date tour of the Highlands, performing and leading workshops in 3 Highland secondary schools. The last event of the school session was a sensational side-by-side performance from the Edinburgh Secondary Schools' Orchestra with the Youth Orchestra San Antonio, from Texas, of Shostakovich's Festive Overture, in the Usher Hall.

I wish to thank you again personally for your continued support with your child's learning and music making.

Jonathan Gawn – Wider Achievement Manager – Music and Learning

## Learning with us

The City of Edinburgh Council's Instrumental Music Service currently employs 83 highly qualified Instrumental Music Instructors and provides instrumental tuition to pupils in all mainstream primary and secondary schools across the city.



Pupils are offered the opportunity to learn strings, woodwind, brass, percussion, piano, guitar, voice, clarsach, pipes and Scottish drumming with our experienced and inspiring instructors. All our instructors are fully PVG checked and carry out regular safeguarding training.

Tuition may start as follows:

- Primary 4 – Upper Strings
- Primary 5 – Cello, Woodwind, Brass, Piping and Scottish Drumming
- Secondary 1 – Percussion, Piano, Guitar, Voice, Double Bass and Clarsach

***Due to the specialisms of the Instrumental Instructors, not all instruments are available in all schools. Please also note, we have a finite service capacity and as such the volume of new learner opportunities will be dictated by the current demand in each learning community and current capacity on individual instructors' current timetables.***

The City of Edinburgh Council's Instrumental Music Service aims to provide equitable access for all pupils to experience the expressive and creative qualities of music through learning to play an instrument. Our aim is to help as many pupils as possible realise their full musical potential through the playing of an instrument.

Learning to play a musical instrument is more than simply having an instrumental lesson once a week and learning to play a few tunes. Music in all its forms plays a huge role in our capital's culture and life. In our schools, music education – including learning to play a musical instrument – provides



enormous benefits for young people. In addition to the obvious musical benefits, the link between learning to play a musical instrument and enhancing the general learning ability of pupils has been widely recognised for some time.

## **Pupil benefits**

Through lessons and ensemble participation pupils benefit from:

- Increased confidence
- Increased imagination and creativity
- Increased commitment and loyalty
- New friendships
- Improved problem solving
- Improved self esteem
- Improved perseverance
- Improved communication
- Opportunities for personal expression
- Improved self-discipline and organisational skills
- Learning to be responsible
- Learning to work as part of a team
- Learning to appreciate the efforts of others
- Learning to co-operate and to take direction
- Learning to play an instrument is also fun, can relieve stress and improve all aspects of health and wellbeing



These valuable attributes are vital skills for learning, life and work, helping to ensure our children will have better life chances, securing positive destinations when leaving school and beyond into adulthood.

## **Starting lessons**

Instrumental instructors will organise an instrument demonstration in each school for the respective target year group. They will speak with interested pupils, demonstrating the various instruments and selecting pupils to start lessons. Instructors will contact the parent/carers of those pupils being offered lessons, via the school, with an invite to begin lessons.



Our selection process may involve a few simple tests, to ensure the most suitable instrument, and the Instrumental Instructor will have dialogue with the relevant staff members in the school who know the child well. This selection process is designed to be a positive musical experience that maximises accessibility and ensures equitable access to our service. It allows the instructor to select

pupils based on an ergonomic assessment, ensuring an appropriate instrumental fit, and providing an opportunity to identify potential lesson pairings, ensuring the best educational experience for the maximum number of pupils.



Depending on availability of instruments and space on the timetable not all pupils interested in tuition may be given a place. If your child does not gain a place their name will be kept on a waiting list and they may be offered tuition if a place becomes available at a later date, during the same school session. Please note, we are unable to advise on waiting lists or the potential future availability of lessons, due to the large range of factors beyond our control.

## **What to expect in lessons**

Lessons usually last 25 minutes and are given during the school day, usually on a rotation basis so pupils do not miss the same topic/subject every week.

Lessons, especially in primary settings, are taught mainly in groups to allow a greater number of pupils to participate. Within the groups, pupils will receive tuition tailored to their own individual needs.

If a pupil misses a lesson due to absence out with their control (sickness absence, exams, holidays, school trips etc.) then the instructor may be able to reschedule the lesson however, this cannot be guaranteed.

For long term absence due to illness or injury, a deferment may be agreed at the discretion of the Instrumental Music Instructor.

## Instruments

An instrument on loan is the property of the City of Edinburgh Council and must be treated with care at all times. It must be returned in good condition when requested.

Instruments across the service are a mix of instruments owned by the school and Instrumental Music Service. The respective owner is responsible for any repairs due to normal wear and tear. Damage caused through neglect or otherwise, will normally have to be charged for. You should therefore provide insurance for yourself. Household insurance policies may provide cover for musical instruments, although the extent varies, and an extra premium may be required. Please ensure that the policy covers the instrument when it is out of the household.



All damages or loss of instruments must be reported to your child's instructor as soon as possible.

We would advise that the instructor's advice is sought before purchase/private rental and that you use one of our recommended suppliers. Instruments can be bought through the school without paying VAT, and often at discounted prices. This must be organised through the school office. A list of recommended suppliers can be obtained through your instructor.

*Parents/carers purchasing their own instruments should also ensure these are insured in case of theft/damage as the City of Edinburgh Council cannot accept liability.*

## Commitment

As a member of the IMS, your child will be expected and encouraged to:

- Attend weekly lessons
- Practice their instrument regularly
- Participate in school and/or citywide ensembles

Performing is a very important part of any musician's training and provides opportunities to develop a child's self-esteem and confidence.



The City of Edinburgh Council offer many opportunities for pupils to perform at both a school and citywide level. Our annual series of concerts and events showcase the high standard of performance our young Edinburgh musicians achieve and ensure opportunities for all. Those taking part in these projects frequently comment on how enjoyable these experiences are, and all IMS learners are encouraged to participate in these life changing opportunities.



## Supporting your child at home

You can play an important role in supporting and encouraging your child on their musical journey:



- Offer support and encouragement
- Encourage home practice
- Encourage participation in playing as part of an orchestra or ensemble
- Attend performances where possible
- Encourage them to look after their instrument

## Keeping you informed

Instrumental Music Instructors will keep you updated on your child's progress, via your child's school reports and the school classroom staff. If you have any concerns or questions regarding your child's musical development, please contact your child's instructor, via your child's school, and they will be happy to advise.

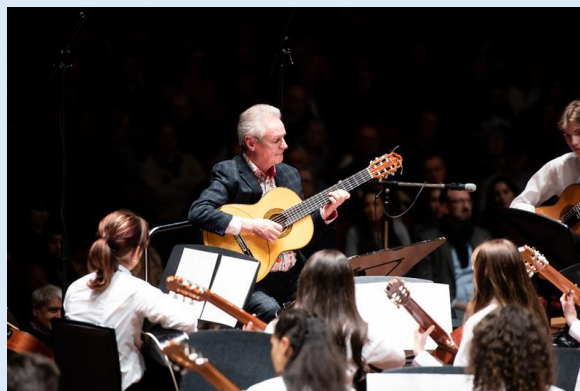
## Exams

There is no requirement to take exams unless this forms part of an SQA qualification option, and many pupils take part solely for the enjoyment and social interaction playing an instrument can bring. However, there are opportunities to take exams through external providers such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Music Teachers Board or Trinity College London.

These exams can be a recognition of achievement which can be recorded on university, college and employment application forms. There are fees for these optional exams, payable by the parent, and piano accompaniment may also be required.

## Extra tuition

Educationally it is not advisable that a pupil receives tuition on the same instrument from more than one tutor. Instrumental tuition requires an individualised approach to matters of technique and repertoire. As a result, lessons on the same instrument by more than one tutor can hinder progress and may result in lessons in school being withdrawn.



## Moving school

If a pupil transfers to another school within the city, every effort will be made to continue lessons. However, not all instruments are available within every school.

## Stopping lessons



Please contact your child's instructor, via their school, to inform them of any decision to stop lessons. To help us monitor and improve our service, it would be helpful if the reason for terminating the lessons is provided.

**All information was correct at time of publication – August 2026**

