

A Guide to Music at Deansfield Primary School

Why Music Matters

Music enriches our lives: it brings joy both as a listener and a participant; it can comfort and make us feel secure; it can challenge us and confront us. All human societies and ages engage with music. Rarely does a day go by without music influencing and affecting us.

At Deansfield Primary School we strive to provide the best music education for all children. We are committed to developing excellence in both provision and outcomes. We want all our children to learn to be active participators in music and not just listeners.

Experiencing and learning music systematically provides many benefits to children. Research demonstrates that it can enhance learning in other areas of the curriculum.

By providing all children at Deansfield with regular music lessons we are helping to develop the following skills and attributes:

1. **Pride and enjoyment** in acquiring musical skills and sharing them with others.
2. **Discipline** - starting and then finishing a task, even when it takes weeks or months.
3. **Co-operation** with others in a shared experience.
4. **Resilience** - not giving up when a task is hard or when you don't succeed as much as you had hoped for.
5. **Perseverance** - it takes years of playing to master an instrument. You need to dedicate ten years of practise to become fully accomplished.
6. **Commitment** - most of the music your child will do takes place in groups. The success of the learning depends on each child being committed to each other and persevering to produce a performance after many months of preparation.

The Music Curriculum

The music curriculum for all year groups is made up of 6 strands:

- Exploring and controlling pulse, rhythm, pitch, speed, loudness and sound quality through body sounds (e.g. clapping) and percussion instruments
- Singing
- Learning to play melodic instruments
- Performing music to a wide variety of audiences
- Composing and inventing new music
- Listening and responding to a wide variety of musical performances both live and recorded

Learning the Basics

Reception

At this stage children learn a wide range of simple songs, often including actions. The concept of pitch is introduced through the use of do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do.

Children learn to maintain a steady pulse and copy simple rhythmic patterns using both body percussion and hand-held percussion instruments.

Year 1

Children learn songs with a wider pitch range and with longer lyrics. They learn to play more complex rhythms and vary the pulse.

Children learn to play melodic instruments such as the metallophone and xylophone. Through these instruments they begin to learn standard musical notation.

All children's progress is monitored carefully. For children who reach a good level of hand-eye co-ordination and demonstrate excellent musical concentration, there is the opportunity to begin having weekly piano lessons with a visiting tutor .

During Year 1 children will have the opportunity to try out stringed instruments during their class music lessons.

Year 2

All children learn the recorder. There are 5 types of recorder: soprano, descant, treble, tenor and bass. In Year 2 we start on the descant recorder. The children follow a tutor book called Recorder Magic. This book introduces the main notes and key rhythms using standard notation. When a child has completed the first book, they can begin weekly lessons on one of the following instruments: violin, cello, flute, clarinet, guitar, drum-kit and piano. It usually takes most children a year to complete the book. However, some of these instruments are best started in Years 3 or 4(flute and clarinet in particular).

Year 3

It is during Year 3 that most children begin to have weekly lessons on a musical instrument in addition to the weekly whole-class music lesson.

Taking it Further

Years 4 to 6

During these Years children will develop their musical skills through the following activities:

- Exploring pulses and pulse patterns
- Using and combining complex rhythmic patterns – dotted rhythms, syncopated rhythms etc.
- Using, understanding and experimenting with musical features such as dynamics (loud-quiet) and tempo (speed).
- Consolidating and developing the reading of musical notations.
- Singing in harmony – initially through rounds and then moving onto simple 2-part songs which combine two separate melodies. By Year 6 children will sometimes be experiencing singing in 3-part harmony.
- Class Orchestras – where all children play their chosen instrument in a class band for part of the whole-class music lesson.
- Music Projects – children will take part in composition projects run by outside agencies, working alongside music students and music professionals.
- Exploring music from a range of historical periods and from a range of cultures. This will often be linked to topics and projects being done in their years groups. These topics will include: jazz, folk, Indian music, Tudor music etc.

Singing

Singing is an activity enjoyed by all cultures across the world. Some scientists speculate that humans learnt to sing before speech, and that language and communication developed out of singing. Whether this is true or not, the act of singing meets a deep human need.

At Deansfield we have a tradition of singing which goes back more than ten years. In that time children have had the opportunity to sing at some amazing venues including the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Festival Hall.

We believe that all children can enjoy singing and become good at it. Children learn how to sing in a healthy and unforced manner, gradually extending their pitch range and eventually learning to sing in harmony.

All children have the opportunity to sing in their weekly class music lesson and in a weekly singing assembly. There is also the opportunity to enjoy and learn how to sing in a choir.

Choirs

There are two choirs which are open to all children:

Key Stage 1 Choir rehearses on Tuesday lunchtimes. This choir takes children from Years 1 and 2.

Key Stage 2 Choir rehearses on Thursday lunchtimes. This takes children from Years 3 to 6 (with occasional children from Year 2).

Both of these choirs perform in Assemblies.

For children who wish to make a bigger commitment to choral singing there is also an After-School Choir

Monday After-School Choir

Children who have gained a basic technique in choral singing will be invited to join an after-school choir. This choir rehearses until 4.45pm. The music is more adventurous and challenging. **Only children who can commit to regular attendance will be considered for this choir.** Children need to be available for both evening and weekend performances.

Choir Performances

For children who show great dedication and attend rehearsals regularly, there are many opportunities to perform at a wide variety of outside venues, both during the school day and out of school hours. Only children who demonstrate regular commitment and who are prepared to work on singing technique are taken to these high-profile events which represent the school in the wider community.

Learning an Instrument

All children at Deansfield learn to play musical instruments.

The process begins by all children learning the **Descant Recorder** in Year 2. Children continue to play this in every subsequent year. There is an advanced recorder consort for children who wish to learn the full-range of notes and recorder types.

Children can choose to play one of the following instruments when they have learnt the tunes from the first recorder book and when they have learnt to sing a range of songs with confidence.

- **Stringed Instruments (violin and cello)**
- **Woodwind Instruments (recorder, flute and clarinet)**
- **Guitar**
- **Drum-kit**
- **Piano and keyboard**

In addition, we hope to be able to offer brass instruments in the near future.

Children get the opportunity to try all these instruments in their class music lessons during Years 1, 2 and 3. This enables us to identify which instrument would be most appropriate for each child to learn on a weekly basis. All children are unique - a few children will be ready to have formal lessons on an instrument while they are in Year 1; for others a later start would be more appropriate. Most children begin having weekly lessons on these instruments when they begin Year 3. But we have found that by the time children reach Year 4, all children in a class are playing instruments and having weekly lessons.

Weekly lessons on instruments are given by visiting tutors, all of whom are professional musicians who both teach and perform. Lessons are given in groups of 2, 3 or 4 and generally last half an hour. The lessons take place during the school day.

Once a child begins learning an instrument we expect them to persevere and continue to learn it right through to Year 6. We ensure full support and encouragement is given at school. But parents have a vital role in supporting children at home (especially when they feel like giving up). All children need to understand that there are 'ups and downs' and times when you don't feel like you are getting anywhere. But, by persevering year after year, there are great rewards and a sense of great achievement.

Instrumental Ensembles

There are opportunities for children to join a number of groups once they have learnt the basics on their instrument:

Recorder Consort

Woodwind Ensemble (Thursdays after-school)

String Orchestra (Fridays after-school)

How to be successful when learning an instrument

Commitment

It takes many years to master an instrument. In fact, it takes 10,000 hours of practice to reach a professional standard.

We encourage children to be committed to learning their instrument and help them realize that it will take more than a term to learn the basics. Once your child has chosen an instrument we expect them to stick at it right through to Year 6. We will guide them into choosing the best instrument for them and support them when they feel disheartened or inclined to give up.

All children can receive daily help at lunchtimes - a few minutes supervised practice can make all the difference.

Practice at home

Regular daily practice (even 5 or 10 minutes) is the key to success. A little and often is much more productive than a lot of practice the day before a lesson. As your child progresses they will need to spend more time practising.

Your child will be given weekly tasks by their instrumental tutor which need to be carried out each day at home.

Having aims and goals - performances, competitions and exams

The best aims and goals are ones that children set for themselves. For children who wish to challenge themselves there is the opportunity to perform in a wide variety of contexts. The most obvious place to start is in front of you at home. As they develop their confidence and skill, they can begin performing in front of their class and in assemblies. Once all the basics have been learnt, children can perform at venues outside of school.

Some children enjoy the excitement of competing in local music competitions. These give the chance to get useful feedback on their performance from professional musicians.

Finally, we encourage children to take exams on their instruments. Music exams are divided into 8 grades: Grade 1 being the starting grade and Grade 8, the final grade. These exams are run by two internationally renowned organisations: ABRSM (which stands for The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) and Trinity/Guildall. Both these organisations are linked to the major music colleges on the UK. We find that it is possible for children who work incredibly hard to reach Grade 4 standard by the time they leave Deansfield in Year 6. But all children have the capacity to reach at least Grade 2 by the end of Year 6.

Cost of Learning an Instrument

Deansfield receives some funding which is used to purchase instruments. Therefore you can borrow school instruments free of charge (except keyboards).

However the following have to be paid for:

- **Weekly Instrumental Lessons** To cover the cost of paying visiting music tutors we have to make a charge for lessons. Since children learn in small groups, this charge is significantly cheaper than your child learning with a private music teacher out of school. We will always try to help where we can - we want all children to have the opportunity to learn an instrument throughout their time at Deansfield.

- **Music and accessories** (reeds, strings, rosin)

- **Grade Exams**

- **Instrumental and solo singing competitions**

Current charges are available from the Music Teacher.

Outside Agencies

We are fortunate to be working with a number of music agencies who provide specialist help and support. We are always seeking out new opportunities for our children. At present we are actively involved with the following agencies:

Greenwich Music Service

Greenwich Music Service run a Saturday Music School at Corelli College where children can join a variety of ensembles including the Greenwich Youth Orchestra.

They also run an annual singing concert called Turning of the Year at Blackheath.

TrinityLaban

This is an internationally recognised music and dance college. They are able to provide a variety of music projects for our children. For example, our Year 6 children composed music for the National Maritime Museum.

Trinity also run the Animate Orchestra, a special orchestra designed for children in Years 6 to 8 to help bridge the gap between primary and secondary school.

Music for Youth

This is a national charity which promotes music making for young people. Every year our school takes part in one of the largest celebrations of music for young people when children from all over Britain meet together in different venues to make music for each other.

National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain

It is sometimes possible for children to attend rehearsals of this premier youth orchestra.

In conclusion

We hope this guide has been useful in introducing and explaining why and how we teach music at Deansfield. If it leaves any questions unanswered, our Music Teacher will be very willing to meet with you to discuss any issues or queries that you may have.

In the meantime we thank you for all the support that you give your children in their music making both at school and at home. We trust that the music your child makes will add a richness to your family life and provide many years of enjoyment and fulfilment for them.