



Gifted and Talented Music



Instruments and Performance

-  Encourage your son to play an instrument and to take the technical side of learning the instrument seriously. Being technically competent becomes increasingly important when the music they want to play gets more challenging.
-  Encourage your son to try a variety of instruments before they decide on which one, or ones suit them. This may seem expensive, but instrument hire schemes are flexible and it is possible to try a few instruments in a year for the same cost as sticking to just one.
-  Encourage their involvement in ensembles and groups. Musicians need to play in groups early on to improve coordination and understanding. The school provides opportunities for this, as well as the borough.
-  Regular practice is vital for improving on any instrument. A place where the instrument and music stand can stay out at all times will encourage casual practice. It should never be a burden to get the instrument out and play it.
-  Practice and improving is its own reward, but you can encourage them further with treats such as going to a concert or gig with them, perhaps every time they have achieved 50 or 100 hours of practice.
-  Having sheet music to work from is very important, although music books can be expensive; there are increasingly large numbers of websites that offer music for free, including teaching resources.
-  Ask to listen to them play on a semi-regular basis. They may seem to resent this at first, but it is important for them to feel you are interested.
-  Playing an instrument is a valuable and rewarding pastime. People who play instruments are proud of it and get great pleasure from it. The enjoyment is very important. It should always be enjoyable.

Music and Musicians

-  Encourage them to listen to a wide variety of music. Value their opinions on music. Explain to them your own opinions and talk to them about the music that you really love.
-  Support any opportunities for your son to work alongside others of similar interest and abilities. Investigate sessions at concert venues, summer schools and weekend music courses. A residential experience can be particularly beneficial.
-  For older children, consider additional opportunities through evening classes.
-  Encourage your son to keep a comprehensive library of music, in both sheet music and recorded form. Also collect articles relating to Music.

- 🎵 Spend time just browsing through books and magazines in the Music section of your local library; large bookshops (like Waterstones or Borders), and music shops such as HMV.
- 🎵 Check concert venue websites, as many hold workshops at weekends or in the holidays.

Composing and Songwriting

- 👤 Composing is a natural process of performing and experimenting with an instrument. Encourage your son whenever he presents his own material to you.
- 👤 Like performing, composing takes practice. For every minute worth of music a composer keeps, they will have discarded an hour.
- 👤 Encourage them to think about the music in advance of writing it; it is good to plan as this teaches important skills.
- 👤 Be prepared to listen to a lot of unfinished work, good music takes time to create.

General Advice

- Be aware that skills and enthusiasm shown by younger children do not always continue as the children get older. Meaningful and long-term commitment is more easily recognised in early adolescence. Pressurizing children who no longer want to devote much of their time to music may be counterproductive. However, there is a vital need to start musical activity early in life.
- Before deciding on a particular instrument, get expert advice. Some authorities organize preparatory lessons for beginners that act as taster sessions and aim to ensure 'instrument compatibility'.
- If possible, purchase the appropriate instrument. Going through an educational authority can reduce costs by not having to pay VAT. If not, look to hire an instrument from your local authority or music shop.
- Explore the possibility of financial assistance and the availability of scholarships and awards, either from the local area or trust funds and charities. Public libraries often have this information.
- Provide suitable rehearsal space and time. Establish a regular practice routine rather than allowing erratic bursts of activity. Talk to your child about what has happened in lessons and encourage the meaningful practice to follow them. If there is a practice record book, take the opportunity to record your comments.
- Establish regular communication with the specialist teacher and other experts. Taking note of the advice of professionals is important for development. Discussions with other able students are also to be encouraged.
- Support attendance at a range of regular extra-curricular activities – concert orchestra, jazz orchestra, string ensemble, percussion group, choir and so on.

- Encourage opportunities to measure your child's musical progress by entering external instrumental examinations, festivals and competitions. However, do not make grade attainment too dominating a goal. This can be counterproductive.
- Look to the needs of a variety of musical talents. Composition, for instance, needs substantial blocks of time, as well as competence in keyboard and computer skills. Many strands of musical activity are equally worthwhile. Experimentation is to be encouraged.
- Be prepared to display patience and understanding over the long-term development because of the nature of your child's musical ability. Social skills, tolerance and self confidence are parts of this development, as well as technical skills. There will inevitably be highs and lows. Your child needs help to learn from both successes and difficulties.