

Solihull Music Service Guitar Department
www.solihull.gov.uk/musicservice

A Guide for Parents / Guardians of Beginner Pupils

Solihull Music Service is pleased to welcome you to the challenging adventure of instrumental playing. We hope to provide stimulating and challenging opportunities for your child which will hopefully give a valuable creative dimension and a great life skill to your child.

The following points are intended to answer any questions that may arise in the early stages of learning to play the guitar.

Lessons

Lessons occur weekly in school, usually at the same time each week. This is a new routine which children have to get used to and your support is vital. As the nature of the lessons is group tuition it is likely that there will be other members of your child's class also making their way to his / her lesson. Make sure that the instrument and any music books are taken to school each week on the day of the lesson.

Practice

This is another routine that children have to get use to. You need to give your child every encouragement. Learning an instrument is not easy – it is a skill based activity which needs, ideally, some regular daily playing. Five minutes a day is much better than 30 minutes the night before the lesson. A regular time is good for some children but not for all. Generally, a little and often is the most beneficial way.

Instruments

With such a bewildering variety of shapes, makes and styles available the local music shops in Solihull and Birmingham have been very good over the years at giving advice and guiding new pupils towards the most appropriate instruments. The following points to note are:

Choose a nylon strung, 'classical' type instrument and do ask the shop to initially tune the strings up to pitch which will stretch them and enable them to settle much faster. A carry bag cover is essential. The lightly padded ones with the shoulder straps and side pocket are particularly good. A spare set of strings in the side pocket is a good idea.

Some shops may operate a loan / hire scheme which may suit better than an outright purchase but given the relatively inexpensive cost of beginner guitars in comparison to many other instruments these schemes may be rare.

If you are already in possession of a guitar - especially an old one – then taking it to one of the local music shops for a health check and general ‘MOT’ is recommended.

Sundry Accessories

There are many and varied accessories that can be bought - some necessary, some not. Most are not necessary at this stage but be guided by the teacher’s advice.

Music

From time to time your child will need to have new music. The local shops carry almost all of the music that we recommend but feel free to search the net and obtain it by mail order. There is seldom anything more frustrating for a teacher than to have a pupil who comes for many weeks without the necessary music for this will inevitably slow down progress. As lessons progress your child’s teacher will advise which book, if any, to buy.

The Future

As pupils progress they will be advised to join a borough or school instrumental group. This is strongly recommended as a natural development of the tuition programme. Rehearsing weekly as a member of a group is an additional commitment but the added value of getting together with other musicians, making music together and being part of something big cannot be over emphasized. This also serves to give the lesson some meaning and context.

But I’m not a musician.....

If you can recognise or even hum the signature tune of a television programme then you are a potential musician!

Music is a language. As with any other language if it is not heard, spoken or used in any way then it will not be absorbed and developed. Many people refer to themselves as being ‘tone deaf’. There is no such thing – they haven’t absorbed the language - and it’s never too late.

Encouragement and support are the most valuable things that you can give your child but don’t be afraid to try the guitar out for yourself. You never know, you may find it fun and slightly addictive. A great way to reinforce the skills that we learn in the lessons is to get your child to teach you to play. Beware though - they may be hard taskmasters!

If problems or queries do arise then don’t hesitate to contact your child’s guitar teacher - either via a message through the school or through the music service.