

## Music: Practical Tips for Supporting Your Young Musician at Home

### *How can I keep my child motivated to practise?*

- Regular short bursts of, ideally, daily practice is the best way to make steady progress. We recommend that beginners should start with 10 minutes at least three times a week. If practical, leave the instrument out and available to just pick-up.
- Endeavour to provide a 'Practice Environment' where your child can concentrate and ignore any distractions.
- Consider using the phrase 'playing time' rather than 'practice time'
- Encourage your child: sit with them and show an interest in what they are doing.
  - praise your child for each step forward
  - don't make judgments about the musical quality of your child's practising. Learning an instrument requires lots of squeaks, scratches, and many wrong notes!
  - explain to your child that learning happens in stages. Sometimes they will work on something for a long time with no apparent improvement, and then discover a sudden leap in ability. Other times, learning happens very quickly. The important thing to stress is that consistent practice will bring results.
  - help your child to understand that playing only familiar songs/pieces will not help them progress
- Ask them if they would like to record part of their practice, so they can listen to what they are playing. Play this back in a few weeks and get them to see what progress they have made.
- Have a strategy for practising:
  - have a goal for each practice session
  - tackle short sections at a time
  - work at the tricky bits, not the bits that are easier to play
  - practise slowly at first - only speed up when 'note perfect'
  - then...practise pieces right through and keep going even if a mistake is made
- Encourage your child to play their favourite 'fun' pieces **and** the more serious 'tricky' ones
- Encourage your child to make up music on their instrument. It may be best to stick to two or three notes to begin with, but enjoy playing around with rhythms, loud and quiet (dynamics) and fast and slow (tempo). Let your child 'play with' their instrument as well as 'play it'. They can make sound effects or make up a tune to a story they know well, or even better, have them make up their own story. Ask them to make up a sad song, a happy song etc...
- Encourage your child to have mini concerts: not at all formal, where you can invite family and friends to listen to new pieces that your child has learned.

- Use the green Communication Book weekly to communicate with the tutor anything relevant to your child's work at home. This can be what your child enjoyed, found difficult, any technical issues with the instrument and/or other pieces they may have worked on as well as anything not directly involved with their playing but perhaps something they saw or heard that inspires their music making. All communication in the green book will support the child's subsequent lesson.
- If your child is struggling with any element of playing their instrument or a particular piece, encourage them to work with one of our Year 6 Music Mentors, whose role in the school is to support other students in a friendly peer-to-peer situation with tips and advice.
- Don't let the first frustration (or the second or seventh) discourage you or your child – they are normal, and almost every child will hit a wall of some kind. One of the benefits of persevering through those times is that your child learns problem-solving. Something that seemed impossible to play two weeks ago is suddenly coming much easier. The learning process is rarely a linear line – with music or anything – so don't let bumps in the road stop you.
- Provide positive role models. Take your child to hear amateur or professional musicians perform.
- If you feel that it's all becoming a chore - back off for a while, liaise with their Music Tutor or Miss Campbell and devise a strategy to re-energise their commitment.
- **And finally, don't let the discipline of music get in the way of the joy of music-making.** Yes, it is hard. Yes, it can be frustrating. But the joy children experience when they really get 'in' to a particular piece of music is something that can rarely be duplicated. Like anything in life, you get out of it what you put in to it...

***Practice makes perfect!***

