

Solihull Music


[Solihull Music Service | solihull.gov.uk](https://solihull.gov.uk)

Instrumental lessons

A guide for parents

Welcome to Solihull Music

Solihull Music is the lead organisation for the Music Education Hub in Solihull and one of 122 hubs created across England.

The National Plan for Music Education 2022 published by the government set out the benchmarks for high quality music provision for all children and young people aged 5-18years old. The plan clearly sets outcomes for music education with equality of opportunity for all pupils, regardless of race; gender; where they live; their levels of musical talent; parental income; whether they have special educational needs or disabilities; and whether they are looked



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after children. *Solihull Music Hub* is funded to work in partnership with organisations and schools to improve the quality of music education.

As part of the Arts Council funding conditions the Hub is required to monitor and evaluate the quality and breadth of provision, collate data around music provision as well as deliver the following core and extension roles.

On 25 June 2022, the government published '[The power of music to change lives: A national plan for music education](#)'. Ministers said it was intended to "[ensure all pupils receive a high-quality music education, strengthen the creative pipeline and help create the musicians and audiences of the future](#)". The plan set out three goals to achieve this aim:

- All children and young people should receive a high-quality music education in the early years (up to five years old) and in schools.
- All music educators should work in partnership, with children and young people's needs and interests at their heart.
- All children and young people with musical interests and talents should have the opportunity to progress, including professionally.

Musical activities available

Musical activities delivered during the school day

Solihull Music is brought into schools and settings within Solihull to deliver the following musical activities during the school day:

- Instrumental and vocal lessons
- Music ensembles
- Curriculum delivery and support
- Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (WCET)

Music Centre Instrumental music lessons (Monday-Friday 3.30-8.00pm)

For who choose to attend instrumental lessons outside of the school day *Solihull Music* run a music centres at the Core in central Solihull, offering individual music lessons. For further information, please visit our website.

Group, choirs and ensembles

Solihull Music offers many exciting, varied and wide-ranging ensembles for pupils to join outside the school day from 4.30pm onwards and on Saturday mornings. For many pupils this is the highlight of their music making and offers:

- An opportunity to make music with others to the highest standards, from beginner to advanced level.
- High-class direction and coaching from specialist instrumental and vocal staff.
- A range of concerts, events and courses, both within the Borough and beyond.



Full details on the ensemble activities and instrumental lessons offered can be found on our website:

[Solihull Music Service | solihull.gov.uk](http://solihull.gov.uk)

Instrumental music lessons

These are delivered during the school day by Solihull Music. A total of 34 lessons will be delivered over the academic year with 5 make up weeks. **Lessons** will be timetabled weekly during normal school hours. Please be aware your child may miss a specific school lesson each week. This is a new routine which children have to get used to and will need to be reminded to bring their instrument and music on the day of the lesson. Whenever it is practical, lessons are delivered on a rota basis, to minimise disruption to the pupil's timetable.

Solihull Music offer lessons on the following instruments:

If your child's school is unable to offer any of following instruments listed below you are able to apply directly for lessons after the school day.

Brass	Woodwind	Guitar	String	Keyboard
Cornet	Flute	Acoustic	Violin	Piano
Trumpet	Clarinet	Electric	Viola	Electric Keyboard
French horn	Oboe	Bass	Cello	
Tenor horn	Bassoon		Double Bass	
Baritone	Saxophone			
Euphonium	Recorder	Ukulele		
Trombone				
Tuba				
Percussion	Vocal			
Orchestral	All genres			
Tuned / Untuned)				
Drum Kit				
Jazz				
Rock				
Orchestral				

Purchasing a musical instrument

Playing a musical instrument is a life-long source of joy, satisfactory achievement, and entertainment for yourself, and hopefully others. To invest in getting your child off to a good start, with a well-functioning instrument, will make the learning process both easier and more enjoyable!

There are a number of specialist music shops in and around the Solihull/Birmingham area that will give advice regarding the most appropriate instrument. Many shops will offer instalment plans and rent-to-buy schemes which may suit better than an outright purchase. It is also worth considering second-hand purchases whether from an advertisement, music shop, friend or the notice board at the Solihull Music Service. There are some excellent second-hand bargains, but always beware that there can be hidden defects.

Assisted Instrument Purchase Scheme

Instruments can sometimes be purchased without paying VAT through the *Assisted Instrument Purchase Scheme*. For further details please visit:

www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/vat-government-and-public-bodies/vatgpb7825

Hire of a musical instrument through Solihull Music

Solihull Music have a limited number of the larger and more expensive instruments for hire at the cost £20 per term. Please note that not all instruments are available and are issued on a first come first served basis and demand often exceeds supply. If you wish to enquire about the hiring an instrument please visit our website.

Maintenance of your instrument

The instrument will at some point – again, just like a car – require service. If the instrument is well maintained and cleaned regularly at the end of playing sessions, it will stay in good shape for longer, but might nevertheless need maintenance at some point to ensure pupils are able to reach their full potential.

Essential Accessories to support progress

Pupils will need a music stand at home as well as accessories such as spare string, reeds or valve oil. The instrumental teacher will be able to advise where and when these can be purchased for your child.

Your child will also require a music stand for practice at home in order for them to good develop good habits and posture whilst playing. Other accessories to consider will be the tutor book, spare strings, reeds or valve oil. For further information please refer to the next section.

Instrumental specific advice

Keyboard

Technology has advanced in such a way that even cheaper entry level models will be suitable for beginning keyboard lessons. The essential criteria for your instrument will be:

- Five octave keyboard- 61 keys
- Full size keys (as opposed to mini!)
- Touch sensitive keys
- A good range of sounds and styles (rhythms)

More advanced models will have plenty of other features but these are usually only of use to the more experienced player. You can look at your purchase in two ways, as a short term purchase or a long term purchase, buying into features that maybe won't be of use until further into your playing career. Keyboard stands are strongly advised in order to develop a good posture.

Woodwind

Reeds

If your child plays the Clarinet, Saxophone, Oboe or Bassoon, you will also need to buy reeds for your instrument. The reed is what makes the sound on the instrument, which makes it a vital piece of equipment. Reeds are of specific size for each instrument, i.e. a Bb Clarinet reed will not fit an Alto Sax, and an Alto Sax reed will not fit a Tenor Sax. Reeds are made in different grades of thickness.

For example, a beginner Clarinettist might start on a 1½ or 2, and then perhaps move up to a 2 or 2½ after becoming more advanced. When buying reeds, it is always better - and cheaper - to buy a box of 5 or 10.

ALWAYS consult with the teacher as to which reeds to buy, as the playing quality of the reed varies between different makes and grades, and sometimes even between individual reeds.

Your child should always have at least one spare reed in his/her case.

Other essential accessories - There is a wide range of accessories available for woodwind instruments. The most necessary are cleaners (appropriate to the instrument) for wiping out the instrument after playing, a music stand, and cork grease (for Clarinets, Saxes, Oboes, and Bassoons).

Guitar

Many of our young pupils start off playing acoustic classical guitar and will require a nylon strung acoustic model. These come in different sizes - 1/2, 3/4 and full size, which can be matched to the height/size of individual pupils. If your child wants to learn on the electric guitar or steel strung acoustic this is possible but it may be worth contacting your teacher first to discuss this, particularly if your child is in a group lesson.

A case is essential, the lightly padded ones with the shoulder straps and side pocket for music are particularly good. A spare set of strings in the side pocket is also good idea.

String instruments

Violins, violas cello and double basses come in all different sizes to suit the child's height and stature. Your child's teacher will advise you as to what size to buy. It is usually best not to buy without consulting the teacher first as information on the internet cannot always be trusted.

We recommend a **Stentor** model as a good starter instrument. There are a wide range of other instrumental models available, but Stentors are of a higher quality than a lot of other makes, and not necessarily more expensive.

You will be able to buy an instrument from a local shop or online, once you have been informed as to what size to buy. If you buy from a shop I would recommend calling in advance to check what they have in stock.

Essential accessories include:

Block of Rosin (for bow hair)
Spare set of strings
Large sponge/ Shoulder rest (Violin/Viola)
Spike holder (cello/ / double bass)

Tutor Book (please confirm with your child's teacher before purchasing)

Fiddle Time starters
Violin Time Jogger
Viola Time Joggers
Cello Time Joggers
Vamoosh Book 1

Brass

In addition to an instrument your child will require some of the following items:

Tutor Book (please confirm with your child's teacher before purchasing)

Accent on Achievement Book 1
The Jock McKenzie Tutor Book for Young Brass Players Book 1 (a CD that includes backing tracks is also available separately)
The Jock McKenzie book is published and sold by Mostyn Music as well as other suppliers.

Additional equipment

Valve oil (for all brass instruments except trombone)
Ultra Pure Professional and Fast are recommended products (except French horn)
Rotary valve oil is required for the French horn

Trombone slide lubricant: *Slide-o-Mix 'rapid comfort'* is recommended

Useful websites to help purchase instruments and/or accessories can be found below:

www.johnpacker.co.uk	(Brass and woodwind instrument suppliers)
www.alangregory.co.uk	(Tutor book and instruments)
www.prestoclassical.co.uk	(Tutor book and instruments)
www.normans.co.uk	(Instruments)
www.stringersmusic.com	(String instruments)
www.expressmusic.co.uk	(Guitar)

Sheet music and tutor books:

www.juneemerson.co.uk
www.mostynmusic.com
www.alangregory.co.uk
www.prestoclassical.co.uk
www.forsyths.co.uk

How can I ensure my child is making progress in lessons?

Practice

Practice means that your child spends time playing their instrument for an agreed amount of time, and it needs to be a regular - daily – activity. (Compare it to tooth brushing – one hour of brushing on Sundays will not make up for not brushing at all throughout the week!) It is really important that you as a parent/guardian encourage and reinforce this routine from the outset and make it a part of the family's daily routine.

Set aside a place where your child can practice undisturbed. Whenever possible, sit and listen, enjoy, and take pride in your child's accomplishments! Encourage your child to practice slowly and to take difficult passages apart to try and find out what the difficulty is. Things don't get better by just playing the music over and over again with the same errors. Your child's teacher will say how much daily practice is appropriate for your child, but as a general rule, 5-10 minutes per day for beginners, 20 minutes for intermediate players, and 30 minutes or more for advanced students.

Graded Music Exams

Your child will also be able to, if they wish, take graded music examinations through the using the Trinity College Examination Board. Your child will be entered when the teacher judges that they are ready and well prepared for the examination.

Music

Most learning will take place in a group situation. It is therefore of great importance to the progress of the group that new music is bought promptly for your child when requested by the teacher.



Communication with your child's instrumental teacher

Solihull Music provides a number of opportunities for parents to meet with their child's instrumental teacher to ensure progress is being made and parents are fully informed about the best way to support their child's learning.

Practice books

Solihull Music provides a **free** practice book for all new pupils. The book helps pupils keep a record of the pieces they are working on and practise targets set for each lesson. There is also opportunity for parents to help pupils keep a log of their weekly practice and space for parents to add comments if appropriate. If parents wish to contact their child's instrumental teacher outside of this means they can email the music service and request the message is forwarded to the appropriate teacher.

Reports

Parents are given the opportunity to request a written report at the end of the academic year which provides an overview of the skills, knowledge and experience the pupil has gained.

What else can I do to support my child?

Encouragement and support are the most valuable things that you can give your child but don't be afraid to try the instrument 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!

Solihull Music Service Ensembles

The Solihull Music Service currently offers many exciting, varied and wide-ranging ensembles for pupils to join.

For many pupils this is the highlight of their music making and offers:

- An opportunity to make music with others to the highest standards, from beginner to advanced level.
- High-class direction and coaching from specialist instrumental and vocal staff.
- A range of concerts, events and courses, both within the Borough and beyond.
- Great music, great people, great fun!

If you would like to join one of the groups please apply online on our website using the link below:

[Solihull Music Service website | solihull.gov.uk](http://solihull.gov.uk)

Saturday Music Centre

The Centre meets on Saturdays to complement and enhance the teaching of music in all of Solihull's schools and across the community. This is achieved primarily by creating opportunities for instrumentalists of all standards to play in varied ensembles, whatever their ability. We offer a full range of musical activities over the Saturday morning, including Rock and pop groups and a Jazz Ensemble.

Place, Dates and Times of Operation

The Centre meets at Langley School, Kineton Green Road - between 9.00 a.m. and 12.15 p.m. on Saturdays in term time. There will be at least 30 meetings in each year. Exact dates for each school year will be published in advance and are available from the admin office, or on the website.

Access

The Centre is open to all who are able to benefit from the activities available. No audition is necessary to join the Centre, although this may on occasion be required to maintain the balance of certain ensembles. ***Pupils will be able to join SMC during the first half of each term – any students wishing to join after ½ term will have to start at the beginning of each new term.***

