



May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

### **Music Pathway: The Orchestra**

Between constant pressures of testing, students schedule is loaded with lots of activities. However, at Yate Academy we believe that Music and in particular learning to play a musical instrument can truly benefit and add value to a child's development. Maybe they won't be the next Beethoven but they may have an easier time learning math, practicing good manners (including patience!), and becoming a team player.

#### **It improves academic skills**

Music and math are highly intertwined. By understanding beat, rhythm, and scales, children are learning how to divide, create fractions, and recognize patterns. It seems that music wires a child's brain to help him better understand other areas of math. As pupils develop, they will start reciting songs, calling on their short-term memory and eventually their long-term memory. Using a mnemonic device to do this is a method that can later be applied to other memory skills. Musical instrument classes also introduce young children to basic physics. For instance, plucking the strings on a guitar or violin teaches children about harmonic and sympathetic vibrations. Even non-string instruments, such as drums and the vibraphone, give children the opportunity to explore these scientific principles.

#### **It develops physical skills**

Certain instruments, such as percussion, help children develop coordination and motor skills; they require movement of the hands, arms, and feet. This type of instrument is great for high-energy pupils. String and keyboard instruments, like the violin and piano, demand different actions from your right and left hands simultaneously. "It's like patting your head and rubbing your belly at the same time". Instruments not only help develop ambidexterity, but they can also encourage children to become comfortable in naturally uncomfortable positions. Enhancing coordination and perfecting timing can prepare children for other hobbies, such as dance and sports.

#### **It cultivates social skills**

Ensembles require peer interaction and communication, which encourage teamwork, as children must collaborate to create a crescendo or an accelerando. If a child is playing his instrument too loudly or speeding up too quickly, he'll need to adjust. It's important for children to know and understand their individual part in a larger ensemble. The Orchestra workshop offers access to instruments pupils may never have seen or come into contact with before, in which teachers split students into instrumental groups and assign each child a task. Whether a team is responsible for choosing instruments or creating a melody, students work toward a common goal. "These are the kinds of experiences we have in society. We need more group interaction and problem solving."

#### **It refines the qualities of discipline and patience**

Learning an instrument teaches children about delayed gratification. The violin, for example, has a steep learning curve. Before you can make a single sound, you must first learn how to hold the violin, how to hold the bow, and where to place your feet. Playing an instrument teaches pupils to persevere through hours, months, and sometimes years of practice before they reach specific goals, such as performing with a band or memorizing a solo piece. "Private lessons and practicing at home require a very focused kind of attention for even 10 minutes at a time". Group lessons, in which students learn to play the same instruments in an ensemble, also improve patience, as children must wait their turn to play individually, and in waiting for their turns and listening to their classmates play, pupils learn to show their peers respect, to sit still and be quiet for designated periods of time, and to be attentive.

#### **It Boosts Self –Esteem**

Lessons offer a forum where children can learn to accept and give constructive criticism. Turning negative feedback into positive change helps build self-confidence. Group lessons, in particular, may help children understand that



nobody, including themselves or their peers, is perfect, and that everyone has room for improvement. "Presenting yourself in public is an important skill whether you become a professional musician or not". This skill is easily transferrable to public speaking and, of course, once a child is advanced enough, they will possess musical skills that will help them stand out.

### **It Introduces Children to other Cultures**

By learning about and playing a variety of instruments, pupils can discover how music plays a critical role in other cultures. For instance, bongos and timbales may introduce children to African and Cuban styles of music. Although the modern-day violin has roots in Italy, learning to play it exposes children to classical music popularized by German and Austrian musicians. Versatile instruments, such as the violin and piano, can accompany a wide repertoire of styles, including classical and jazz (which originated in the American South). It's important to familiarize children with other cultures at a young age because this fosters open-mindedness about worlds and traditions beyond the ones they know.

These benefits of music education are why we have decided to offer students from Year 7 to join an **Orchestra**. Each pupil who attends these sessions would have the opportunity to try a variety of orchestral instruments (Strings, woodwind, Brass & percussion) and develop those skills to eventually take part in a short concert. If you wish your child to be apart of this initiative, please complete the attached slip and return to the Music Department by the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

Yours faithfully

Helen Brett-Reynolds  
Head of Creative Arts

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### Orchestra Participation – Year 7

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor group \_\_\_\_\_

Which instrument (including voice) do you wish to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had lessons before on this instrument? \_\_\_\_\_

If YES have you taken any music exams? \_\_\_\_\_

Which exams have you taken? \_\_\_\_\_