



East Lothian
Council

INSTRUMENTAL
music
SERVICE

**PARENT
GUIDE**

Contents

Welcome	3
Learning with us	4
Pupil benefits	5
Application	5
Lessons	6
Instruments	6
Registration & selection	7
Commitment	7
Supporting your child at home	7
Keeping you informed	8
Exams	8
Extra tuition	8
Moving school	8
Stopping lessons	8
Contact us	9



Welcome

There are many benefits from learning to play a musical instrument with East Lothian Council's Instrumental Music Service. This guide is designed to help you find everything you need to know about our service, the experiences on offer and the benefits your child can enjoy.

In addition to offering weekly instrumental lessons in all our schools, East Lothian Instrumental Music Service is committed to ensuring our young musicians have access to a full programme of ensemble activities.

Highlights of previous years have been seeing the young people perform at events such as our Macmillan Charity Concerts, Secondary School Ensembles' Weekends, Primary School Ensembles Days, ELC Piano Festival, Senior Ensembles' Concerts and Competitions, Young Musician of the Year competitions, our opera for East Lothian, Catriona and the Dragon, collaborations with the Countess of Wessex String Orchestra, and more recently, the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland Engage programme.

I wish to thank you again personally for your continued support with your child's learning and music making. We always welcome any feedback on our current service, so if you have any questions, concerns or comments regarding our service please email: ims@eastlothian.gov.uk

Jennifer Marr

Team Manager - Instrumental Music Service



Learning with us

East Lothian Council's Instrumental Music Service currently employs 20 highly qualified Instrumental Instructors and provides Instrumental tuition to pupils in both primary and secondary schools across the local authority.



Pupils are offered the opportunity to learn brass, woodwind, strings, percussion, piano, guitar and pipes with our experienced and inspiring Instructors. All our Instructors are fully PVG checked and carry out regular safeguarding training.

Please visit our [YouTube Channel](#) for more information on specific instructors and instruments. String tuition may start at Primary 5 and percussion at Secondary 1. All other tuition is offered from Primary 6 onwards. ***Due to the specialisms of the Instrumental Instructors not all instruments are available in all schools.***

Learning to play a musical instrument is more than simply having an instrumental lesson once a week and learning to play a few tunes.

Music in all its forms plays a huge role in Scotland's culture and life. In our schools, music education - including learning to play a musical instrument - provides enormous benefits for young people.

East Lothian Council's Instrumental Music Service aims to provide equitable access for all pupils to experience the expressive and creative qualities of music through learning to play an instrument. Our aim is to help as many pupils as possible realise their full musical potential through the playing of an instrument.



In addition to the obvious musical benefits the link between learning to play a musical instrument and enhancing the general learning ability of pupils has been widely recognised for some time.

Pupil benefits

Through lessons and ensemble participation pupils benefit from:

- **Increased confidence**
- **Increased imagination and creativity**
- **Increased commitment and loyalty**
- **New friendships**
- **Improved problem solving**
- **Improved self esteem**
- **Improved perseverance**
- **Improved communication**
- **Improved self-discipline and organisational skills**
- **Opportunities for personal expression**
- **Learning to be responsible**
- **Learning to work as part of a team**
- **Learning to appreciate the efforts of others**
- **Learning to co-operate and to take direction**
- **Learning to play an instrument is also fun, can relieve stress and improve all aspects of health and wellbeing**



These valuable attributes are vital skills for learning, life and work, helping to ensure our children will have better life chances, securing positive destinations when leaving school and through into adulthood.

Applications

Instrumental Instructors will organise demonstration sessions in each school for their target year group. They will then invite all interested pupils to a taster session, during which they will select pupils to start lessons. Following this selection procedure schools will directly contact the parent/carers of those pupils being offered lessons with an invite to register for the Instrumental Music Service.



Our selection process may involve a few simple tests, to ensure the most suitable instrument, and the Instrumental Instructor will have dialogue with the relevant staff members in the school who know the child well. This selection process is designed to be a positive musical experience that maximises accessibility and ensures equitable access to our service. It allows the instructor to select pupils based on an ergonomic assessment, ensuring an appropriate instrumental fit, and provides an opportunity to identify potential lesson pairings, ensuring the best educational experience for the maximum number of pupils.

Depending on availability of instruments and space on the timetable not all pupils interested in tuition may be given a place. If your child does not gain a place their name will be kept on a waiting list and may be offered tuition if places become available at a later date.

Lessons

Lessons usually last 25 minutes and are given during the school day, usually on a rotation basis so pupils do not miss the same topic/subject every week.

Lessons are taught mainly in groups to allow a greater number of pupils to participate. Within the groups, pupils will receive tuition tailored to their own individual needs.

If the pupil misses a lesson due to absence out with their control (sickness absence, exams, holidays, school trips etc.) then the Instructor may be able to reschedule the lesson however, this cannot be guaranteed.

For long term absence due to illness or injury, a deferment may be agreed at the discretion of the Instrumental Music Service Manager.



Instruments

An instrument on loan is the property of East Lothian Council and must be treated with care at all times. It must be returned in good condition when requested. The Instrumental Music Service is responsible for any repairs due to normal wear and tear. Damages caused through neglect or otherwise will normally have to be charged for. You should therefore provide insurance for yourself. Household insurance policies may provide cover for musical instruments although the extent varies and an extra premium may be required. Please ensure that the policy covers the instrument when it is out of the household.

All damages or loss of instrument must be reported to your child's instructor as soon as possible.



We would advise that the Instructor's advice is sought before purchase/private rental and that you use one of our recommended suppliers. Instruments can be bought through the school without paying VAT, and often at discounted prices. This must be organised through the Instructor. A list of recommended suppliers can be obtained through your instructor.

Parents/carers purchasing their own instruments should also ensure these are insured in case of theft/damage as East Lothian Council cannot accept liability.

Registration & selection

In order to commence tuition all pupils must be registered. Please click [here](#) to express an interest in your child receiving lessons with the Instrumental Music Service.

For new pupils, once a pupil is successfully selected the Instructor will contact the parent, via the school, to notify you that your child has been successfully selected for lessons. On receipt of the Confirmation of Interest Form, from the school, parents/carers will have 7 days to complete this form for their child. The Instrumental Music Service will then be able to contact you directly to complete registration for lessons.



Commitment

As a member of the IMS, your child will be expected and encouraged to:

- **Attend weekly lessons**
- **Practice their instrument regularly**
- **Take part in regular ensemble rehearsals**

Performing is a very important part of any musician's training and provides opportunities to develop a child's self-esteem and confidence.



East Lothian Council offer many opportunities for pupils to perform both at school level and also at Authority level (e.g. East Lothian Schools Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Guitar Ensemble, Piano Festival etc.).

Every year we organise a variety of [concerts](#) and [events](#) which showcase the very high standard of performance our young East Lothian musicians achieve. Those taking part in these projects frequently comment on how enjoyable these experiences are.

Supporting your child at home

You can play an important role in supporting and encouraging your child on their musical journey:

- Offer support and encouragement
- Encourage home practice
- Encourage participation in playing as part of an orchestra or ensemble
- Attend performances where possible
- Encourage them to look after their instrument

Keeping you informed

Instrumental staff will arrange a parent consultation session for all parents during the school year. Your child will also have a practice diary or you can log on to your child's virtual learning environment to see the work set by the tutor and your child's engagement.

Exams

There is no requirement to take exams unless this forms part of an SQA qualification, and many pupils take part for the enjoyment and social interaction playing an instrument can bring. However, there are opportunities to take exams through external providers such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Music Teachers Board or Trinity College London.

The exams can be a recognition of achievement which can be recorded on university, college and employment application forms. There are fees for these optional exams, payable by the parent.

Extra tuition

From an educational standpoint, it is not recommended for a pupil to receive instruction on the same instrument from multiple tutors. Instrumental tuition relies on a personalised approach to technique and repertoire, which can vary significantly between teachers.

Receiving lessons from more than one tutor on the same instrument can lead to conflicting guidance and hinder the pupil's progress. For this reason, pupils receiving lessons through the Instrumental Music Service are not permitted to take additional private lessons on the same instrument. This ensures a clear and focused learning experience that supports steady progress.





Moving school

If a pupil transfers to another school within East Lothian then every effort will be made to continue lessons.

Stopping lessons

Please contact us via e-mail at ims@eastlothian.gov.uk or write to us to inform us of this decision. To help us monitor and improve our service, it would be helpful if the reason for terminating the lessons is provided.



All information correct at time of publication – August 2025

Contact us

For enquiries, feedback and further information please contact:

Instrumental Music Service

Education Business Unit

East Lothian Council

John Muir House

Haddington EH41 3HA

Email: ims@eastlothian.gov.uk