



**ST MARY'S
COLLEGE**

EST. 1869

MUSIC AT ST MARY'S

PARENTS GUIDE TO MUSIC



Community • Justice • Growth

WELCOME

ST MARY'S COLLEGE MUSIC

Welcome to the world of music! We are delighted that you and your daughter have decided to pursue learning an instrument or voice at St Mary's College.

We believe that music is a lifelong skill that can bring joy and enrichment to our lives. We have developed this guide to help parents and caregivers assist their daughters as they learn an instrument or voice. The first 12 months of learning an instrument can often be challenging however we believe with the right support every child can be successful at music.

Hamish Buckley
Head of Music

WHY LEARN MUSIC?

Research shows that musical training strengthens the areas of the brain responsible for language processing, wiring neural pathways in specific and meaningful ways.

- There is a link between musical training and spatial intelligence.
- Students of the arts learn to think creatively and solve problems by imagining various solutions and rejecting outdated rules and assumptions; there is not only one right answer in the arts!
- Students who study the arts are more successful on standardised tests and very often achieve higher grades in school than students who do not study the arts.
- Students of music learn how details are put together painstakingly and what constitutes greatness, not mediocrity. Through music study, students learn the value of sustained effort to achieve excellence and the rewards of hard work.
- Music study enhances teamwork skills and discipline. In order for an ensemble to perform well, all players must work together towards a single goal.
- Music provides children with a means of self-expression. Self-esteem is a by-product of this self-expression.

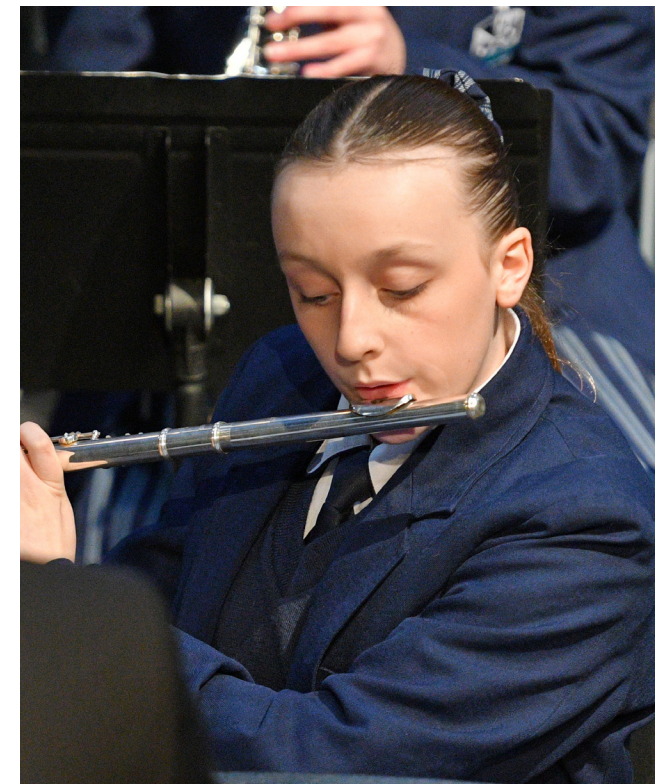


THE TRUTH ABOUT MUSICAL TALENT

Although some people find certain activities easier than others at first, and some people have some physical gifts that others may not have, every child has some degree of musical talent. Of course, some can sing in key at a young age or may have a great sense of rhythm, but at the end of the day, hard work continues to trump natural talent.

We believe that all students can learn music and the quality of practice is the most important factor in their success. It takes time for students and parents to see results in action.

At some point in their musical journey, the music will get tough, it will get rough and it will be time to embrace a wonderful teaching moment where parents and caregivers explain what having 'grit' mean to your child.



WHY STUDENTS QUIT THEIR MUSICAL INSTRUMENT (AND HOW PARENTS CAN PREVENT IT)

Most students quit playing not because they do not have musical talent but rather because:

1. **Parents and students think they are not musically talented.** There are some children who pick up an instrument and sound decent immediately, but they may hit a wall later and have to work to overcome it. Playing a musical instrument is a craft that, if practiced correctly, is something that all children can find success in.
2. **Students do not know how to get better.** Without the proper tools and practice habits, students can become frustrated and want to quit. It is the role of music teachers and parents to give students ownership over their learning. Teachers must teach students why, how, where, and when to practice, and parents must obtain minimal knowledge about how students learn music in order to support them at home.

3. **Music is not seen as important as other subjects.** Research clearly shows the benefits of music to a child's development. If parents see music as a core subject (like maths or English), the less students will quit.
4. **Students are too busy.** Between school, sport, music and other activities, parents grow weary of having 'one more thing' to be on top of. The enduring social and psychological benefits of music are as enormous as those of sports. Budget time accordingly, and children should have at least ten minutes a day to practice an instrument.
5. **Students stop practicing in the holidays.** Statistics show that students who do not read over the summer holidays find themselves behind once school starts - the same goes for playing an instrument! A year of musical instruction can be forgotten if students do not find small ways to play during the holidays.

HELPING YOUR DAUGHTER PRACTICE

Parents and caregivers should expect that music teachers assist students by teaching them:

1. How to put together and care for their instrument.
2. What to practice (e.g. scales, exercises, musical pieces, improvisation, etc).
3. How to practice:
 - a. Using a metronome and tuner
 - b. How to set goals for each practice session
 - c. Breaking sections down into little 'chunks'
 - d. How to practice 'chunks' at a very slow speed, then increase the tempo systematically
 - e. Importance of repetition

There are also a number of things parents can do to maximise the success of their children.

Encouragement and Patience

Step one in any child's musical development comes with your unconditional support and encouragement. You are their first and most important audience, so play nicely, even when they may not. Avoid trying to correct them and be careful of one-liners about earplugs. Encourage them. Never complain or nag about practice. Create an environment where learning is safe and welcomed.

When to practice?

Ideally practice should happen every day and at the same time every day. Most parents however set a guide of 5 days of practice per week. Parents must help children get in the habit of practicing, just like brushing teeth and completing homework. Multiple practice sessions are more valuable than one intensive practice session.

How long should my child practice?

Beginner students should use the 10-minute rule. Ten minutes of practice a day (for beginners) is better than nothing and 99% of the time, ten minutes turns into twenty or even thirty minutes. If the practice is goal related (learn 'X' scale or 'X' piece), the time will take care of itself.

Middle School students should practice for approximately 30 minutes, while Senior School students for 45 minutes to 1 hour. This should however be over several practice sessions.

Where to practice?

Ideally, parents should provide a quiet area with a chair and sturdy music stand. There should be proper lighting and minimal distractions, such as TV, computer, other children, pets or phones.

How to practice?

Parents do not need to be musical to help their children practice. Students should create goals for each practice session and ensure they meet these goals. Students should avoid always starting at the beginning of a piece, instead working on small 'snippets' that give them trouble. Slow practice is vital. If mistakes are made, it is more than likely that the piece is being practiced at a tempo that is too fast. Practicing with a metronome is huge and can lead to significant improvement.

Celebrate all successes

Learning an instrument is challenging (particularly in the first 12 months). Learning to play an instrument is a journey full of peaks, valleys, and plateaus. While you will definitely be proud when you watch your child perform, it is important to celebrate the little victories along the way. Celebrating will help your child keep a positive attitude when they are struggling or having difficulty tackling a new concept or song.



FURTHER INFORMATION

This guide is a brief overview for parents seeking to help their daughter achieve success in music. Of course, there is much more to write and discuss.

Please do not hesitate to contact your instrument tutor or any St Mary's music staff member if you or your daughter are having difficulty learning their instrument or if we can assist in anyway.

We also recommend 'The Music Parents' Guide: A Survival Kit of the New Music Parent' by Anthony Mazzocchi, available on Amazon.

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