PARENT INFORMATION GUIDE

Forth School of Music

PIANO LESSONS REDEFINED

KeyNotes Music

WHY KEYNOTES MUSIC?

- At Forth School of Music we deliver a pioneering curriculum which covers not only the foundations of piano playing but also general musicianship, listening skills, composition and improvisation
- Each level has been designed with careful consideration of piano and music pedagogy, and how children best develop their knowledge and skills when learning to play the piano
- Each workbook is based on a story or a topic, so that the children feel the pieces that they learn have meaning and direction towards a cohesive endpoint
- Our curriculum is cyclical which ensures that students' foundations are secure and firmly embedded in a way that both supports and challenges them
- Group lessons are becoming increasingly popular for their ideal setting to motivate and inspire pupils

"I'M AMAZED AT HOW MUCH THEY ARE LEARNING IN THE SESSIONS. LEARNING AS A GROUP AND THE GRADUAL APPROACH DEFINITELY WORKS"
HANNA AND ALEX'S MUM

OUR PHILOSOPHY:

- Children should enjoy playing the piano and learning all about music. The group setting really helps to ensure that our lessons are enjoyable, as does our bespoke curriculum (which includes games, singing and a lot of creativity!)
- Singing plays a key role in our lessons and in learning how to play the piano. Before learning to play a piece we will always sing it with lyrics, finger numbers and note-names to ensure students are internalising the melody
- Creativity is extremely important within our method. We always include some composing and improvising in our workbooks, and the very nature of our pieces illustrating a story or topic is in itself a creative pursuit
- Our weekly performance expectations and our big performance for 'Watching Week' at the end of each workbook, ensure that KeyNotes learners are very accustomed to performing!
- We don't agree with methods that are linear in nature and throw all learning points at children at once, so we break them up – starting with how to find the notes of the keyboard, reading rhythms and more general musicianship skills, such as learning to describe music using musical vocabulary

"OLIVIA ABSOLUTELY LOVES HER KEYNOTES LESSONS AND GOES TO PRACTICE WHAT SHE HAS LEARNED AS SOON AS SHE GETS HOME! SHE LOVES THAT THE SONGS ARE ALL PART OF A STORY AND THIS REALLY HELPS HER TO UNDERSTAND HOW MUSIC WORKS"
OLIVIA'S MUM

LESSON STRUCTURE

Each lesson has a set of objectives that the children are expected to meet.

Lessons follow a structure that the children become familiar with: we begin with a starter where the concept and skill for the lesson are introduced, through a game or a song (or both!)

The piece for the lesson is then sung using lyrics, note names, and finger numbers,and modelled by the teacher at the piano.

The middle section of the lesson sees children practicing their pieces on the keyboards with headphones, while the teacher helps individuals, both challenging and supporting where necessary.

The last part of the lesson is where children perform their pieces to each other and as part of a whole class performance. The children may have accessed the piece differently – one playing the melody in the right hand, while another plays the melody in both hands, and another plays the melody in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The approach is adjusted to ensure that each learner reaches their potential.

LEVELS AND THEIR OBJECTIVES

Our 4-5 year old students begin lessons in the Little KeyNotes program. This is a curriculum that uses games, singing, colouring and many other props to introduce students to the notes of the piano, 5-finger C position and basic rhythms. Each week, students add a new note to their repertoire and learn pieces based around a theme such as Animal Alphabet or On the Farm.

Students aged 6+ can begin in our Storytellers program. Songs are used to illustrate stories and students learn keyboard geography, finger numbers, rhythms, and musical elements through learning to play those songs. Many even sing with their own playing! Storytellers books come in both a pre-reader and a reader version (the latter having pitch notation) and will be used depending on the age and prior knowledge of the student.

Once keyboard geography, finger numbers and rhythms are secure, we begin to focus on reading music and piano technique. Our Foundations One curriculum uses genres such as Nursery Rhymes, to illustrate how music is used to represent moods, feelings and characters, as well as how it is adapted for different purposes. As such, each lesson begins with a listening task where we use musical elements to compare two different versions of the same song. Repertoire for this level includes solo pieces as well as ensemble and duets (four hands on one piano!).

Foundations Two is similar to Foundations One in its approach but the objectives focus on reading the bass clef and grand stave, with more complex repertoire and higher expectations in technique and the ability to achieve variation in articulation and dynamics.

Finally, our KeyNotes Progression curriculum is for those who are secure in their hands together playing and grand stave reading. Workbooks focus on particular piano genres and how they are idiomaticities, such as the Minuet.

Across all levels, students are given composition tasks in order to bring together all of their new knowledge and understanding in a very creative way!

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM OUR LESSONS

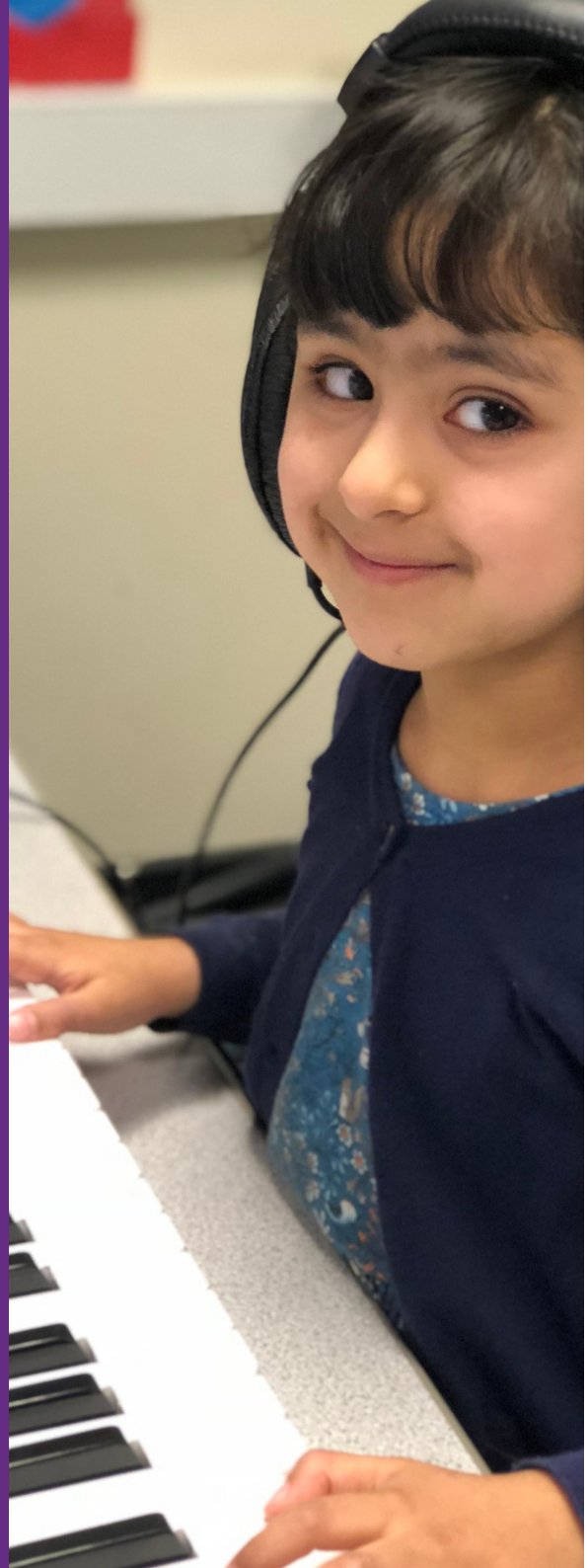
Lessons take place at your scheduled lesson time.

Payments for lessons can be made termly.

Stickers are given out at the end of each lessons and there are also growth mindset certificates given out where a child has shown determination to overcome challenges within the lesson.

While parents are asked not to stay in the class* on a weekly basis, each workbook culminates in a 'Watching Week' where parents are invited in to watch the performances from the workbook.

*except for your first week and only if your child wishes



You will be given a log-in to your own member's area on our portal which will have your attendance, lesson dates, invoices, and extra downloads. It also has a practice log where you can log the times your child practices.

Practicing is key to your child's steady progression and enjoyment of learning the piano, giving them confidence in their ability and in turn enabling them to take on new challenges with a positive mindset. We provide videos in order to help you to support your child's practice at home.

At the end of each workbook, you will be given some feedback on how your child has progressed with relation to a set of objectives for each level. Your child may be encouraged to stay at the same level for another workbook to really consolidate their knowledge and skills, or will be invited to move to the next level.

"MY DAUGHTER STARTED HAVING LESSONS 3 WEEKS AGO AND ABSOLUTELY LOVES IT! SHE WAS ALREADY STRINGING A FEW NOTES TOGETHER AFTER THE FIRST LESSON!" SASHA'S MUM

"I FIND THE LESSONS CHALLENGING BUT IT IS FUN TO LEARN WITH OTHER CHILDREN. I ALSO FIND THE LESSONS AND PLAYING THE PIANO VERY CALMING"

NIA, AGE 7

Contact us

Email: info@forthschoolofmusic.co.uk
Phone: 07803549241

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