INSTRUMENTS IN THE SCHOOL BAND

Instrumental balance is one of the most important aspects of a successful band. Many primary school bands tend to be 'top heavy' because they don't offer enough bass instruments.

This sheet is a guide to help both parents and children make a list of the five most-preferred instruments. Please remember to be flexible as musically different physical features such as lip shape, teeth, overbite, finger span, height and size can all affect the student's suitability for certain instruments.

Your child will be assessed at the band auditions. Please keep in mind that every instrument is suitable for both boys and girls.

BARITONE/EPHONIUM

The baritone (or euphonium) is where James Morrison's career began! It is a bass instrument, therefore crucial to the balance of the band. Baritone players are in demand in every high school because of the instrument's rich, warm tone that strengthens the bass line. We will try to assist with sourcing an instrument to hire.

TROMBONE

Another important instrument, reinforcing that all-important bass line. The trombone is a favourite for young and old because of its unique slide system. Like all brass instruments, the player needs to use 'buzzy', raspberry-'blowing' lips to produce a sound. The trombone is not for short-armed children! It is also a jazz band instrument.

TRUMPET

Another popular and well-known brass instrument is the trumpet. It is a higher pitch, so tends to play the more melodic and harmonic parts in the band. It is a versatile instrument used in styles such as classical, pop, jazz, rock and modern. The trumpet is fine for children of any size able to 'buzz' their lips. Getting tooth braces later can affect the tone and require a transition period, but his is often assisted with orthodontic wax and teeth guards to protect the gums.

FRENCH HORN

This special brass instrument has a beautiful mellow sound and features prominently in movie soundtracks and orchestras. Competent horn players are in demand and French horns are a popular music scholarship choice. A high level of musicality is required for this instrument.

PERCUSSION

Playing percussion refers to more than just the drum kit. Percussionists are also required to play the bass drum, conga drums and tuned percussion such as the glockenspiel, xylophone and tam-tam drums. There is also a range of auxiliary percussion, including triangle, tambourine, maracas, etc. Percussion has been very popular the last few years and children hoping to secure a position on this instrument must also attempt a co-ordination exercise at the interview stage. Some sort of keyboard at home is beneficial but not essential.

KEYBOARD

BASS GUITAR

and

FLUTE

This woodwind instrument uses a reed to produce its beautiful rich tone. It is very popular in primary school bands and most Band Method Books are centred around the budding clarinetist's capabilities, so progress is quick. Fondly referred to as the 'pickle stick' the clarinet is compact and easy to transport. By Year 6 some clarinet players will have the opportunity to try the bass clarinet for a term or two.

CLARINET

SAXOPHONE

Our keyboard players reinforce the bass line, so they must learn to read in the bass clef. During band rehearsals the school keyboard and amplifier are used, but a piano or keyboard is essential for home practice. Fortunately, for the keyboard there are no physical demands so progress is very fast. We only take 1 or 2 keyboards each year. No previous experience is necessary. This is a jazz band instrument.

Another popular instrument in recent years with both boys and girls is the bass guitar. It plays the bass line and plugs into school amplifier during rehearsals. This instrument plays many different styles of music, including jazz. Only one bass guitarist is chosen for Junior Band each year.

One of the most well-known woodwind instruments is the flute. It is played by both boys and girls, and being highly pitched means it often carries the melody line. Although not a jazz band instrument, it has a rich history, is lightweight and easy to transport to and from school.

Although made of brass, the saxophone is a woodwind instrument which uses a reed like the clarinet. We recommend alto sax to start with unless your child is tall, in which case they may cope with the slightly bigger tenor saxophone. Saxophones play many styles of music, including jazz. They are very popular in primary school but can be expensive to purchase.