

Junior Fundamental Music Course at Matrix

The role of the JFC parent

Parents don't often get the chance to share in formal learning processes and so JFC can offer parent and child some really special time together.

Please read the following information to get the most out of the course and get everyone off to a good start.

The parents' role is extremely important

At home

Your role is one of gentle encouragement...and applause, when invited!

In lessons

Parents are very welcome to stay in the lessons to share the music with their child. However, we ask you to try to be invisible! Sometimes a teacher may ask parents to do specific things, but otherwise please take a back seat and let your child follow the teacher.

Children need to attend regularly to keep up with the class. You can support before the lesson by encouraging a positive frame of mind (and checking music books, clean hands, loo visit etc).

Practising is required at home, but this is not just playing the keyboard: it's also listening, singing and writing. In fact, listening is most important. Ideally, children will play or sing every day for a short time to enjoy consolidating what they did in the lesson.

Please encourage your child to sing with all their playing at home as well as in lessons.

Position a CD player near the piano or keyboard so your child could try playing along if they like to do this. Try to make time to enjoy listening together. Do download/transfer the CD to an ipod or similar.

Keep the keyboard and CD accessible and inviting.

'Messing around' and making things up is a good thing!

Why not keep up with your child so you can enjoy playing duets together?

4 JFC parent 'DON'T's!

Don't show children what to play

It can be very tempting to show which notes to play - even to press their fingers down - please don't do it! It's not a short cut by any means. Children become independent at the keyboard much more quickly if parents stand back. In the long-run, please be assured: it's the easier option!

Don't react to mistakes

Wait for your child to self-correct – whether this happens in the next few seconds or the next few

weeks. Don't even flinch if you hear a wrong note! Just applaud the effort and if you feel it's the right time to make a comment, do it in a specific way ('I loved this part because...', 'That really made me feel...' and so on).

Please trust us on this one, even if you don't believe it at first: we have been doing this for a long time and can see what happens further down the line!

Don't point to the notes on the page as children play

We approach notation in age-appropriate ways. To start with, children trace the notes as they sing, and are not asked to look at them as they play, as this is not how they are learning and results in an unmusical performance. Towards the end of the first book, the children will gently be introduced to sightsinging and this is steadily developed into sightplaying exercises later on.

Don't write the notes in the book

If you would like to learn alongside your child, we would encourage you to try to learn as they are learning. However, if you decide you need to write notes into the book, we would ask you to photocopy the page to write on. We would like the children's eyes to eventually go for the dots, not your writing!

Now for something positive after all those 'don'ts'!

The 'ideal' JFC parent...

Enjoys sharing the course materials at home with their child, singing and perhaps playing together, but stands back when their child is working something out on the keyboard.

Is fully involved, but lets their child be independent at the keyboard right from the start, and lets them enjoy the piano in their own way...even if the child spends just a few seconds playing the class pieces and then much longer improvising!

Encourages their child to practise in positive ways, and gives only the occasional push to help overcome an appropriate challenge. Many parents report that early mornings are a good time to practise.

Understands that the course is developmentally appropriate and that the children are learning because they are enjoying themselves.

Communicates with their teacher and/or the office. We like to hear successes and we need to hear your concerns.

You are also always welcome to contact Lindsay MacKenzie, our principal teacher, with any worries or, of course, successes!

Enjoy the course!