



# VIOLIN

LEARNING THE VIOLIN THROUGH WHOLE  
CLASS ENSEMBLE TUITION (WCET)

## WHAT IS A VIOLIN?

The violin is a wooden string instrument. It's the smallest and the highest-tuned member of the strings family. It has four strings tuned a fifth apart. The strings are G, D, A, E. The strings can be plucked or bowed. The violin is placed between the shoulder and the chin.

Violins are important instruments and are used in a many different musical genres and traditions including classical, country and bluegrass jazz, some forms of rock and traditional music. In some of these traditions the violin is sometimes called the fiddle. Famous performers of the violin include the classical violinists Yehudi Menuhin, Nicola Benedetti, and Nigel Kennedy who can be heard and seen playing in the video below:

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDXBnS8mZ0E>

In WCET violin lessons the music will cover a range of styles including traditional, pop and film music. There will be opportunities for children to play in front of friends in their class. Large scale opportunities could include performing in school assemblies to parents or even out of school in one of the events organise by Leicester-Shire Schools Music Service.

## WHAT IS INVOLVED IN LEARNING THE VIOLIN?

In WCET lessons the violin is taught in a fun and engaging way, with children actively involved in making music from the beginning of the very first session. Each pupil is given their own instrument that they responsible for and are encouraged to play it outside of the regular weekly formal lessons. The teacher explains that learning an instrument is great fun and offers many advantages for your people, but also, at times, it will be challenging and maybe even frustrating. They will explain that when they were learning they too became frustrated and fed up but that they kept at it and it eventually clicked. In WCET lessons children will develop their skills as real musicians learning self-worth, peer-appreciation, how to receive feedback, and how to support each other: all skills that can be taken outside of the classroom into their daily lives.



During the course of the year the children will develop many violin playing techniques. These will include being able to:

- ✓ Explore sounds on the instrument, for example a pitch bend;
- ✓ Read pitches for the open strings and more advanced reading notes on the D & A string;
- ✓ Sing and clap simple songs accurately and together;
- ✓ Play a variety of repertoire in the key of D Major;
- ✓ Play as part of an ensemble;
- ✓ Lead whole class performances;
- ✓ Improve their performances by responding to feedback

## WHAT IS A VIOLIN WCET LESSON LIKE?

**Violin WCET lessons are not just about learning to play the violin but will also involve children in creating their own music and listening and responding both to recordings of music and also the performances of other pupils.**

Lessons typically begin with rhythm games based on a rhythm they have already learnt. They may involve clapping, or playing the strings by plucking or using the bow by copying back different rhythmic patterns. They may then work in

small groups and, using a blank rhythm grid, compose their own rhythms and then add notes to these. They will then practice their compositions and play them to the other members of the class. Making music as performers and composers lies at the centre of string WCET lessons.

Children are encouraged to take ownership of their own work and learn how to work with others in making and performing music.

## STEPHENS STORY



**STEPHEN**  
YEAR 4

Steven was a Year 4 boy with assessed autistic and sensory needs. He finds it hard to sit still and will often find too much noise in the classroom difficult to handle. He is prone to temper tantrums and shouting out.

At the beginning of the year he chose to learn viola because he preferred the lower pitched sound.

He didn't like playing pizzicato because it hurt his fingers too much and was really keen to learn to play with the bow. We adapted his instrument with stickers at the bridge end of the fingerboard so he knew which open string was which.

As the year progressed he switched between playing his viola and the school's glockenspiel on days where his fingers hurt and wore headphones when the noise was too much for him.

Steven was given 1-2-1 support from a Teaching Assistant from Easter onwards and with Steven's assistance they played his viola between the two of them – Steven bowing and his Teaching Assistant putting her fingers down to change the notes for him.

He happily took part in the end of the year string WCET performance at the De Montfort Hall on his viola with his "double act" partner to the one side and his glockenspiel to the other. He told his teachers afterwards how much he had enjoyed the whole experience.