



WOODWIND

LEARNING WOODWIND INSTRUMENTS THROUGH
WHOLE CLASS ENSEMBLE TUITION (WCET)

WHAT IS THE CLARINET?

The clarinet is part of the **Woodwind** family; instruments that are blown in order to make a sound. The following instruments are part of the family;



Woodwind instruments were originally made out of wood but nowadays they are also made from metal (flutes and saxophones) or even plastic or rubber.

Flutes and recorders are played by blowing directly into the instruments whilst clarinets and saxophones are played by blowing air past a single reed which is attached to a mouthpiece which goes inside the mouth.

Oboes and Bassoons are called double reed instruments because the sound is made through two reeds vibrating against each other.

Woodwind instruments have a large pitch range and can play very low and very high notes. Different notes are produced by making the tube longer or shorter either through pressing the 'keys' in order to cover the holes or covering holes directly with the fingers.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN LEARNING THE CLARINET?

Most WCET lessons are on the clarinet or mixed clarinet and saxophone. Due to the pitch of the instrument, flutes need to be taught in a class of their own. Oboes and Bassoons are very challenging for young pupils and are mostly taught in smaller groups to high school pupils.

WHAT IS A CLARINET WCET LESSON LIKE?

Many lessons will begin with a 'warm up'. This could involve a call-and-response, where the teacher (or pupil in the later stages) plays or sings something and the children respond on the instrument in the way they think best or they play along to a backing track. In the early lessons children spend time getting a good sound without squeaking and then learn how to tongue (to play separate notes) or learning to play smoothly or how to tongue notes crisply. Every lesson will involve children playing a piece of music and over the course of a few lessons working on it making it better and better. They will also be given the opportunity to perform perhaps in assembly or outside of school at one of our large scale performances.

All lessons will involve some listening, either to each other and/or to recordings of music. It's important that children learn to make their own musical decisions and to think for themselves about how to improve. Often they'll be asked their own views about how music might be best played and to discuss this with their friends. They'll be taught how to practice on their own or with others so they can become good player as quickly as possible. Learning to play woodwind instruments is hard work but great fun – it is a slow burn instrument - getting the right sound can seem to take a long time but once this is achieved, progress is really fast.

PEN PORTRAIT OF LUCY, LAWRENCE, EMELIA AND JACK:

This group of students began learning the clarinet in a 10-week whole-class WCET project in Year 4. They then were in a continuers group at their primary school in Year 5 and Year 6. Upon leaving primary school they continued learning privately as a group and also joined the Junior Concert Band. Three of them have recently passed ABRSM Grade 1 clarinet and the fourth is hoping to take it in November. They have all just begun a second year at JCB.



When I first started learning it was amazing when the note 'E' worked - I felt I had achieved something on an instrument I hadn't played before. At the end of the Year 4 project I was surprised by how tuneful the whole class sounded.

LUCY | YEAR 5



It was really satisfying when we got to put the whole clarinet together. Now I know lots of notes and scales and I can't wait to improve even more. It is a huge accomplishment from where we started.

I would tell a new pupil starting out to persevere and never give up - you can progress and perform.

LAWRENCE | YEAR 4



JCB (Junior Concert Band) is great because we get to socialise with people we wouldn't normally meet. I loved playing '500 Miles' and 'Hickory Dickory Rock'. It is really satisfying to nail a piece you were struggling with before.

EMELIA | YEAR 5



In the future, I want to do more grades and (eventually) get my own children into playing.

JACK | YEAR 4