

## Junior Fundamental Course

### OVERVIEW

Age of students	6 or 7 years at the start of the course
Lesson format	Group lesson, up to 10 students
Frequency	Weekly lessons in term times, around 36 per year
Lesson duration	60 minutes (includes class changeover)
Course duration	Two years initially - see below for course progression

### MATERIALS & COSTS

We arrange for your materials to be ready for you in the first lesson. Each set of materials lasts 6 months.

Please see our Fees page for current pricing: <https://www.matrixmusicschool.co.uk/fees>

### INSTRUMENT AT HOME

Children will need an instrument at home to practise on. Please provide either a good sounding and regularly-tuned piano at concert pitch (A=440Hz) or a keyboard or electronic piano with regular sized keys. (Yamaha starter keyboards with regular keys often have the code 'PSR'.)

### ABOUT

Traditionally, music is taught as an intellectual activity, often starting with reading music. This is how the children learn at the beginning of the course:

Listen - sing - play - read/write - create

In this way, the keyboard playing becomes the expression of what the children have already absorbed. This natural and musical approach mirrors the acquisition of language skills. Yamaha emphasises 'timely education': for this course, this means the playing moves swiftly and there is more focus on notation than JMC, the younger course.

It is exciting to watch our students pick up music that they hear around them and teach themselves how to play it – and wonderful to hear students perform music they have composed themselves.

We stage several concerts each year - every child has the opportunity to take part in an annual ensemble concert, and can also watch the older children in composition concerts and performers' platforms at Matrix. Yamaha celebrates the work of the young composers with Junior Original Concerts: Matrix students frequently represent the school at both national and international levels.

## COURSE PROGRESSION

This is the proposed pathway for Junior Fundamental Course students:

*Junior Fundamental Course (JFC) - weekly group lessons (1 year)*

*Junior Extension Course (JXC) - weekly group lessons (2 years)*

*Junior Advanced Course (JAC) - weekly group lesson + individual lesson (2 years)*

*Advanced Extension Course (AXC) - weekly group lesson + individual lesson (course length 2-4 years)*

## CURRICULUM

All activities in JFC start with listening. Ear training is a very important element of this first course (next to the enjoyment of music, of course!) - we take advantage of the children's ears which are still very receptive at this age.

### Singing

Through singing, children experience different moods, images and many musical points in an enjoyable way.

In addition to learning songs with lyrics, we sing solfege songs. Solfege is a fixed-do system of notes ('do' is C, 're' is D and so on):

*do re mi fa sol la si do\**

Solfege is a fundamental part of the teaching method, as it is the way that children can learn music as they would a language; and it is extremely important for pitch awareness.

*\*A note about letter names: These are used to describe the key that music is in - C major or A minor and so on – and are introduced more formally later on. We find that children having lessons on a second instrument become happily bilingual!*

### Rhythm

During lessons children respond to the pulse or rhythm of the music, helping to develop more musical singing and playing performances. There are also rhythm ensembles included, with CD backing tracks.

## Playing

Playing in lessons consists of keyboard games, repertoire and ensembles. Keyboard games introduce new keyboard concepts in an enjoyable way.

Repertoire is the name given to the more substantial pieces that the children learn to play. Our goal is primarily for the children to enjoy music and to express that at their own level.

The children experience playing in two-part and three-part ensembles in their first year – we take advantage of the keyboards to make an orchestra or band!

As all the playing is an expression of what the children have absorbed by listening and singing, our main purpose is not simply to find the right note with the right finger - that will be a 'side-effect' - how the music is expressed is what's important.

## Notation

The children learn to play their pieces very musically, as they absorb the music through listening and singing first (rather than sightreading). However, notation is a big part of the curriculum, and includes writing music and singing from notation.

## ROLE OF PARENTS

The role of parents is crucial - please read the download '[how to support your child](#)' on the JFC page.

How you work together is so important that, after booking a class, we ask all parents to attend a session just for parents just before the start of the course to talk about this.

## FURTHER NOTES

We would ask you not to book individual piano lessons in addition to the group lessons – one to one lessons are coming later on in the course and are arranged with our teachers. Adding further piano tuition at this stage disrupts the learning process.

Please communicate about your child's progress with your teacher - we love to hear about successes and we need to hear about concerns. We also welcome feedback in the office where we are best reached by email.

JFC is a fantastic way for children to learn music - we look forward to welcoming you on the course!