

Article for Mum's in The Know Fleet-

Musical Instinct at Play – Free session for Mums in the Know!



Carol O'Callaghan, founder of [Musical Instinct at Play](#) has spoken to us about taking up music lessons, the appropriate age to take them up and what to look for from a good music teacher. Carol offers **piano teaching**; runs a **music focus group**, as well as teaching **Musical Theory**. She qualified with a Distinction in piano and teaching and specialises in teaching children aged 5 – 16 years old. Read on to hear her expert advice as well as a FREE taster session for Mums in the Know readers!

Why Learn the Piano?

- Builds Confidence
- Engenders a sense of creativity
- Improves dexterity, motor skills and co-ordination
- Improves mental agility and improves cognition
- Teaches perseverance
- Fosters a sense of self-expression and thus alleviates stress
- Promotes social skills
- Teaches discipline and boosts listening skills
- The list is endless!

What to look for in a teacher:

- Enthusiasm and energetic drive
- An ability to walk in the shoes of the pupil and 'speak their language'. An ability to impart knowledge in an effective way.
- Lessons that are tailored and structured in accordance with the pupil's individual needs?
- Varied, fast paced, interesting and progressive lesson plans
- Look for teachers who cover all genres of music with a balanced emphasis on modern and contemporary Music.

- Experience and previous good results achieved with teaching Musical Theory through the ABRSM; teaching as well as musical expertise

What to look for when selecting a Piano Teacher:

- At first lesson or free taster session does the Teacher engage with the Child more than the Parent (hopefully the Child!).
- Do they ask the child's taste in Music and ask their aspirations regarding what they hope to achieve by having lessons?
- Can the Teacher easily connect with the child and/ or both Parent and child made to feel at ease?
- Does the Teacher project creativity or talk about his/her own innovative methods of motivating and inspiring the young learner?
- Is a lengthy contract produced on first meeting (hopefully not).
- Does the Teacher look to the Parent for some commitment in taking an active part in the child's lessons/practice at home?

Appropriate age for Lessons:

- I personally teach as young as 5 (but only 20 mins session), however my experience is that the optimum age is 7/8 years.

Carol's top tips to sustain interest and practise:

- IF a child is not practicing I draw up (on a separate piece of chart) 'Practise Schedule of just 3 sessions in the week, of 10 minutes each to begin with, for a 4 week period. I ask both the Parent to sign off each session and if possible to attach a reward system to it....eg at the end of the 8 week term buy them something they want.....(sorry but I find this very effective)...Once practise is back on track I increase the practise time a little in accordance to the grade.
- Lots of praise and encouragement to get the child to perform to family members and relatives at every possible opportunity.
- Regular feedback to Parents is also key which will then be transmitted back to the child.
- Set goals for the child each term. That way the child can see her/his own progress and inspired to achieve more.
- **Why choose Musical Instinct at Play for your child?**
- Carol says...."If I do not enjoy my teaching then how can I expect my pupils to be inspired and motivated to unlock their musical instinct within? I will always endorse the philosophy that all children have an innate artistic ability, which if nurtured positively can transmit to great achievement....."
- You only have to observe young children at play when there is no restriction or parameters imposed upon them. Their learning develops more effectively if they have freedom to be creative and allowed to learn at their own pace. A good teacher will be a patient observer of how children learn, ready to enhance the experience by facilitating a platform to learn freely but never diminishing the experience by forcing too many rules and their own bias onto the child."
- Very experienced and creative Piano/Music Teacher who has been living and teaching in Fleet for 15 years
- Possesses an ethos in her teaching of 'enjoyment and freedom'.

- Great results with teaching Musical Theory through the ABRSM- Eliminates any fear and anticipation of theory being too challenging.
- Piano/Recorder/Musical Theory taught through the ABRSM- Beginner to Grade 8. Exams encouraged but happy if the child does not wish to do exams.
- One-to-one sessions or group sessions available for Recorder and Theory if desired.
- Lots of success with shy pupils.