“Perfect practice makes perfect”

Although the saying goes “practice makes perfect”, practising incorrectly simply means that you become better and better at making mistakes! This guide is intended to help you as a parent help your child to achieve “perfect practice”, thereby making the most positive use of practice time.

Where?

Make a place available for practice which is well lit, which gives your child plenty of room, and which is free from distraction (especially radio, television, and other brothers and sisters!).

Buy a music stand if you do not already own one, a collapsible stand can be purchased from most music shops, and can be positioned so that your child sits or stands correctly during practice. A good quality stand should cost approximately ten to twelve pounds, and will discourage bad habits such as propping the music up on the mantel-piece or lying it on the bed!

When?

If possible, encourage your child to practice at a set time each day, e.g. just before breakfast or soon after they get home from school. This helps to establish practising as a part of their daily routine. Practice can be effective when placed during a normal school homework session. It allows a break from intensive work, whilst keeping your child mentally alert. This not only helps the homework but also encourages the view that playing an instrument (or singing in the case of voice tuition) is a recreational activity, and something to be enjoyed!

How?

You do not need to know about music to help your child, since the advice given here does not require musical knowledge. You can, however, find out more by visiting the internet link on the back of this form.

Encourage your child to view playing or singing as a hobby, an activity which is there to be enjoyed both for its challenges and its fun. Give encouragement and praise when-ever possible, and do listen to your child perform their pieces from time to time.
Practice is better done little and often, everyday if possible, certainly at least four times a week if any real progress is to be made. Ten or fifteen minutes is quite sufficient for younger children, although this will need to increase as your child advances in their playing ability.

Practice sessions should follow a set routine. You will find a suggested pattern on the back of this leaflet.

Every practice session should include some fun playing, just to enjoy the instrument, but should also include time spent on areas which need improving.

Practising music is much more like learning a poem by heart than reading a book. The music needs to be broken into small sections, which are then repeated until they improve. Merely playing the piece through from beginning to end is not sufficient.

Bear in mind that it can take several practice sessions before improvement is apparent.

**Ensemble membership**

If your child has the opportunity to play in a music ensemble, this is probably the greatest incentive to practise that there is. Making music with others is very rewarding and brings many benefits, both musical and social.

Most primary schools have orchestras or choirs, and secondary schools all have ensembles of various kinds.

In addition, the Music Service runs six Music Centres, which generally meet on Saturday mornings, groups range from absolute beginners to advanced.

**For further information contact the nearest Music Centre;**-

Scarborough Music Centre: 01609 532783 - Nigel Blenkiron
Selby Music Centre: 01609 536805 / 07791 752361 - Chris Hirst
Skipton Music Centre: 01609 535177 / 07791 752 369 - Anne Heaton
Northallerton Music Centre: 01609 536716 - Sue Hallows / Janet Devlin
Whitby Music Centre: 01609 533254 - Bob Butterfield
Harrogate Music Centre: 01609 534980 - Stephen Price / Jane Donald
Practice Structure

Warm up routines
Your child’s teacher will suggest suitable routines for warming up, these are designed to get muscles, fingers, brain, eyes and ears ready for the practice session.

This can lead to:-

Playing a familiar piece or pieces
Your child can spend a few minutes playing through something they know well. They should be ready for…

Practising work set for this week
Attention should be focused on areas which require special attention. Target areas of difficulty and allow enough time to do repeat practices of the awkward passages or technical exercises. This is an important stage of practice, and requires good concentration. Once concentration begins to wane, its time to move on to…

Performing music
Perhaps a performance of the work just practised could now be attempted, or simply finish the practice session by playing for fun!