



KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL
BIRMINGHAM

Dear Parents and Guardians

Music is one of the glories of King Edward's School, both in the classroom and beyond. I write to introduce it to you in all of its unique scale, quality, and ambition, and to ask you to tell us both about your sons' musical achievements so far and his aspirations for the future.

I also write to send you a link to a short form which we would like you to complete by Monday 22nd June 2026.

[Music at King Edward's School](#)

Everyone is welcome in music, irrespective of experience — many boys take the first steps of their musical journeys at King Edward's; you can use this form to request instrumental lessons, to apply for him to join our ensembles, and to tell us about his musical dreams and ambitions.

Music at King Edward's

The 80-strong KES/KEHS Symphony Orchestra is possibly the finest in any school anywhere, regularly programming and performing to the highest level major works of the symphonic repertoire. A significant number of the school sings with KES Choir, 81 at last count and more still sing with the KES/KEHS Choral Society. There are eight major weekly-rehearsing ensembles, as well as wind and swing bands, and numerous string quartets, piano trios, and wind and piano quintets. In my time here there has been only one player of the harmonica, but he was the National Youth Champion; the BBC Young Musician of 2018 was a pupil at KEHS.

In the lower school, boys have twice-weekly class-music lessons. The curriculum, which includes homework, is the first part of an academic-music pathway which boys follow throughout their time at school. The first year's work is intended both to be accessible for all, and challenging for the most-experienced musician. Many boys choose music at GCSE and A'-level, and boys regularly go on to study music at Oxbridge and Russell Group universities. There is an after-school club, Clef Club, especially for composers, and we maintain a 'blog where we celebrate our public events, and where pupils write about their musical enthusiasms. You can register to receive our email updates and read about our work at: www.kingedwardsmusic.com.

There are lunchtime concerts, evening recitals, orchestral and choral concerts, an annual recital at the Barber Institute, carol services at St. Philip's Cathedral, concerts in local preparatory and primary schools, and regular concerts in the Town Hall and Symphony Hall. Masterclasses have been given by Martin Roscoe, Krysia Osostowicz, and Daniel Tong, and lectures by Professor Robert Pascall (of Cambridge University), and Alfred Brendel. We play to an audience of about 5000 each year.

The Ruddock Hall in our Performing Arts Centre is the main venue for rehearsal and for performance. Seating 450, its concert hall opened in 2012, and is one of the finest venues in the Midlands. The hall has a Steinway model D grand piano and an organ. Boys may use our practice rooms, our good stock of pianos, our percussion, our harpsichord, and our spinet before school and at lunchtime; and many compose at break and lunchtimes in our music library.

A major strength of co-curricular music is our close co-operation with King Edward VI High School for Girls, in partnership with which most of our work is done. This extra dimension expands still further the opportunities available to the boys.

The greatest success at King Edward's is to be had by boys who try everything, who are the most active in every part of the rich life of this school. To this end, we have an outstanding team, 30-strong, of visiting instrumental teachers between them delivering over 250 weekly lessons. They offer the chance to learn all the orchestral instruments, piano, organ, percussion and guitar, as well as singing. 150 pupils take ABRSM practical and theory examinations each year, qualifications valuable both in themselves, and for university admission.

About instrumental lessons

The school offers tuition in violin, viola, 'cello, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, orchestral percussion, gurbani sangeet (Indian classical music), drum kit, guitar, piano, organ, jazz piano and singing. About half of this year's Shells at King Edward's have instrumental lessons in one, two, or three instruments.

In part, lower-school instrumental teaching takes place in academic lessons, but the timetables are so arranged that any particular subject is missed at worst once every five weeks. Individual music lessons are proven to improve academic performance, social development, resilience, concentration, and even physical wellbeing — attributes that more-than offset the minimal disruption to time in the classroom.

With the guidance of our expert team, boys' progress can be very swift. To make the most of the opportunity, we ask parents to support their practice, helping them to acquire good habits of daily work. A few minutes of concentrated practice each day produces the best and quickest results, and can be a restoring break from homework.

Trial lessons

For those new to music we promote the instruments which we believe provide the quickest route into ensemble playing: we offer a course of free lessons to those wishing to try the viola, the oboe, the bassoon, the French horn, the trombone, and the double bass. These are invariably popular, and often ignite a life-long enthusiasm for music and for ensemble playing.

How to request instrumental lessons

You can request instrumental lessons by using the following form: [Music at King Edward's School](#)

We will allocate your requests to our teachers, and they will contact you. Our teachers are self-employed, and the contract they will ask you to sign is between you and the individual teacher. Lessons cost about £20 per half hour, and are paid one term in advance. The contract remains current until your son leaves the school, or until written notice is provided one-half-term in advance of the date when you wish lessons to cease. If written notice is not provided, a charge of one term's fees will be payable.

Associated Board examinations

King Edward's is a centre for Associated Board instrumental examinations, and there are three examination sessions each year. Whether or not boys have lessons with our teachers, we encourage them to sit instrumental and theory examinations in school: it is convenient for you and them, we can offer the department's support, and it is important that we know about their achievements.

Ensembles and concerts for Shells

Shells take part in our junior ensembles, in small-scale chamber groups, and in KES Choir — this is a major ensemble, 81 strong, in which we encourage every boy to sing.

The Shells' Recital is held in the Ruddock Hall early in the academic year. Every Shell is invited to be part of it, irrespective of experience, and many parents attend to meet us.

Each year there are ten Instrumental Evenings. Unlike our prestigious Lunchtime Recitals, which are by invitation only, the Instrumental Evenings are for all. Boys can volunteer to play, and we expect many of our young musicians to take part.

Your son can volunteer to be part of the Shells' Recital or to join KES Choir by visiting [Music at King Edward's School](#)

Borrowing instruments

There is a stock of school instruments, which boys are entitled to borrow. We ask only that you check your household insurance policy to make sure that it will underwrite the instrument's replacement. Young musicians, however, benefit greatly from the chance to play and learn from their own instruments, and most boys are in this happy position.

Most musicians use the insurance services of Allianz Musical Insurance, and we recommend them.

Contacting us

Our music administrator, Miss Shim, will answer your questions, and may be contacted using kesmusic@keschools.org.uk or by telephoning 0121 415 6041.

You can register for e-mail updates on our work at www.kingedwardsmusic.com.

Please submit your forms to us by Monday 22nd June 2026: [Music at King Edward's School](#)

We look forward to welcoming your sons to the music department.

Yours faithfully

Martin Leigh

Director of Music