

# Strings Handbook

## Violin & Viola

- Violins are the highest sound of all the stringed instruments
- Very popular orchestral instrument
- Violin usually plays the melody part, viola the harmony part
- Easy to learn at the beginning but initial progress can be slow
- Instrument sizes: 1/8, 1/4, 1/2, 3/4 and full size
- Recommended starting grade is Year 1



## Viola

- Has a unique tonal quality with pitch lower than the violin and higher than the cello
- Has its own clef - Alto Clef
- Violists are in high demand for orchestras



## Cello

- Players always sit down with the Cello
- Popular because it plays both the melody part and bassline
- Cellos are light to carry but are a little awkward due to the size
- Between 8-12 cellists needed for most youth orchestras
- Easy to learn at the beginning
- Instrument sizes 1/8, 1/4, 1/2, 3/4 and full size
- Recommended earliest starting grade is Year 2

## Double Bass

- Most students sit on a stool when playing, but some advanced players prefer to stand
- Orchestras are always needing bass players
- Plays the bassline - often considered the engine of the orchestra
- Used for multiple styles of music: Classical, Jazz, Contemporary
- Easy to learn at the beginning
- Quite fun to play
- Instrument sizes: mini-bass, 1/2, 3/4
- Recommended earliest starting grade is Year 3



## Individual Lesson one student - 30 minutes

- Standard format for instrumental lessons.
- Repertoire and rate of progress is specifically designed for each student.
- Care and attention is taken to establish sound musical and technical facility on the instrument.
- Preparation towards A.M.E.B. exams can be covered in these lessons.
- Exam Class is a requirement for exam students. This class includes aural tests, general knowledge and sight-reading practice together with performance practice. (See section on Exam Class)

## Shared Lesson two students - 30 minutes

- This lesson is designed as an introduction to the instrument where beginning students learn the same material.
- It is highly recommended that students move to Individual lessons after the first year of learning.
- Developing students often learn at a different pace and therefore may learn different material. In this case, the shared lesson is frequently divided into 2 x 15 minute sessions.
- The Teacher's time is shared equally between both students. Their rate of progress will not be as fast as for students enrolled in individual lessons.

## Individual<sup>45</sup> Lesson one student - 45 minutes

- Only for students who are preparing for grade 3 or beyond exams levels.

## Lesson Calendar

- Students receive 32 weeks tuition over the course of the year, divided into 3 Cycles.
- For specific dates, please see current Guidelines and Payment Schedule which is a separate document and can be found on the school Website.

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cycle 1</b> Mid Feb – Mid May</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cycle 2</b> Mid May – Mid Aug</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cycle 3</b> Mid Aug – Nov</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Make-up Lessons</b> Nov – Mid Dec</p>
11 lessons	11 lessons	10 lessons	

- Lessons are timetabled throughout the School day.
- They are organized, whenever possible, not to clash with Specialist Class lessons.
- Initial commitment of at least one cycle.
- A student who attends lessons on time and comes fully equipped, benefits most during the total lesson time.
- Lessons may be grouped with other students prior to a performance, in order for small ensembles to rehearse together. These will be arranged at the discretion of the Teacher.

# String Ensembles

## Beginner Strings



## Junior Strings



## Chamber Strings

## String Quartet

- Ensemble for new students of the violin, viola, cello and double bass.
- Weekly rehearsals – length of rehearsals is governed by the number of students.
- Designed to reinforce technical grounding covered in lessons.
- Introduces reading, clapping and writing exercises.
- Opportunity for students to play the same material together.
- Generally Students progress into Junior Strings after one year of Beginner Strings.

- For students who have been learning between 6 months and 2 years.
- Listening exercises, dynamics and part playing are introduced.
- Parts are arranged to cover the level a student is currently playing.
- Technique, posture and tone development are taught through group exercises.

- Independent learning of parts is required to enable rehearsals to focus on the development of musical interpretation and understanding.
- Rehearsals pinpoint the articulation and attack required for each phrase and defines the correct technique for building the group sound.
- Performance etiquette, awareness of stage plan, stage presence and support of other students, are developed throughout the year.
- Chamber Strings alternates with the Concert Band in playing the National Anthem in Assembly for two terms.

- Specialized ensemble for advanced students
- Enrolment in Chamber Strings is a pre-requisite
- Ability to sight-read and learn parts independently is essential.
- Fine ensemble listening skills are nurtured

(If you are learning an instrument outside school and wish to join Chamber Strings, please find the Essex Ensembles Handbook.)

# Solo and Ensemble Performing

- Concerts encourage and motivate a student to focus on a goal.
- The experience develops the student's ability to feel comfortable when performing.
- It highlights the progress of a student from year to year.
- Two major performances are arranged each year.

## String Concert – Term 2

- Solos and/or small group items.
- Larger ensembles.
- Students organize the concert; learn stage management and announcing of items.
- Prior to the performance, rehearsals may change time in order for ensembles to rehearse together. These will be arranged at the discretion of the Teacher
- A notice is sent to students a few weeks before the concert.



*"I just wanted to say thanks for all the incredible work you and the Music staff put into Showcase last Friday night, the standard seems to be getting higher every year! I enjoyed the arrangement of 'Trepak' by Tchaikovsky and am glad that my daughter was able to be part of it. I really enjoyed the whole night; the kids were great!!"*

*Penny (Parent of a Year 6)*

## Showcase – Term 4

- Whole school event which includes choirs, marimba groups and all school instrumental ensembles.
- A combined strings ensemble is rehearsed and prepared for this concert.
- Prior to the performance, rehearsals may change time in order for ensembles to rehearse together. These will be arranged at the discretion of the Teacher.

*"The two strings ensemble pieces were fantastic, now I see how my daughter's part fitted into the big picture. I will certainly be buying the DVD to revisit!" Kevin (Parent of a Year 2)*



# Australian Music Examinations Board

- The A.M.E.B. is the organization that delivers independent examination services.
- Exams are available for: Piano, Singing, Strings, Brass, Woodwind and Theory.
- The majority of exams are held at the AMEB studios, 259 Auburn Road, Hawthorn.

## Exams for Stringed Instruments

- Exams are available for all stringed instruments.
- An applicant must be approved by the Instrumental Teacher.
- It is a requirement of all students preparing for an exam to enroll in the Exam Class.
- It is expected that students preparing for a Grade 3 or above exam receive weekly 45 minute lessons.
- Students are required to have established a regular practice routine, independent learning skills and the listed technical standard before preparing for an exam.
- It is important a student be in command of the material presented at exams to make the most of the experience.

## Exam Class

- A unique opportunity for participants to improve motivation and receive positive peer support whilst preparing for individual exams.
- Designed to cover additional exam requirements such as aural tests, general knowledge, and sight-reading.
- Performance practice is conducted parallel with preparation taught by the Instrumental Teacher.
- Exam Class is offered to students after approval from the Instrumental Teacher.

## Information for Exam Class

- Classes commence the week beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> February and end 11<sup>th</sup> November.
- Classes may be streamed into levels and run before and/or after School.
- The maximum number of students per class is 5.
- Please mark all possible available times on the enrolment form found in the Exam Class Handbook or Theory Class Handbook.
- Make-up classes will not be provided.
- Written consent from a parent needs to be received to change to a different class time.

## Theory Exam

- A group class designed to prepare students for A.M.E.B. Music Craft or Theory of Music Exams (Theory Exams).
- A pass in Theory Exams is a pre-requisite for higher level instrumental exams and VCE Music Units 1-4. However, an earlier start is favoured at most schools.
- Knowledge of Theory supports a student's understanding of notation, including intervals, rhythm, pitch and musical language for their instrument.
- Students are expected to complete set theory exercises during and outside class time.

# String Instruments

- String instruments come in different sizes.
- During primary School, on average, a student might use:
  - 3 different violin sizes,
  - 3 different viola sizes,
  - 2 to 3 cellos sizes,
  - 2 double bass sizes.
- A student is sized at the beginning and throughout the school year.
- It is imperative a student plays on a correctly sized instrument, to prevent incorrect technique and posture.
- An instrument should be stored in its case in a cool dry place.
- The Instrumental Teacher will notify you which size is correct for your child. Often shops they say they can size your child. It is preferable to leave the decision to the instrumental teacher. The sizes and approximate ages in the charts below are only a rough guide.

Violins:



SIZE	4/4	3/4	1/2	1/4	1/8	1/10	1/16	1/32
AGE	11+	9-11	6-10	4-7	2-6 Years Old			
Arm Length	58.5cm	56cm	51cm	47cm	42cm	38cm	35.5cm	35cm

General guidelines. Measurement in cm, with left arm perpendicular to the body from the neck to the left wrist joint. Some prefer to measure to the palm.

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## Typical Sizes of Cello

Samples based on "Academy" model



CELLO SIZE	CELLO HEIGHT	CHILD HEIGHT	APPROX. AGE
4/4 (Full Size)	121 cms	155 + cms	12 + years old
3/4 (Three Quarters)	115.5 cms	134 - 155 cms	9 - 12 years old
1/2 (Half Size)	101 cms	101 - 145 cms	7 - 11 years old
1/4 (Quarter Size)	89 cms	109 - 117 cms	5 - 9 years old
1/8 (Eighth Size)	77 cms	104 - 125 cms	4 - 7 years old
1/10 (Tenth Size)	71 cms	< 104 cms	3 - 4 years old

## Hire instrument from school

- The advantage of hiring an instrument from School is the availability of a larger instrument as soon as the need arises.
- It is recommended a parent insure the instrument under their house contents.
- A hire agreement form and instrument will be given to a student at the first lesson.
- A hired instrument is to be used only by the student whose name is written on the tag.
- An instrument comes with a bow, rosin and a shoulder rest.
- When damage occurs:
  - The Teacher will assess, and, if need be, take it to an expert repairer at your expense.
  - Do not try to repair it - modern adhesives can seriously damage both the sound and value of an instrument.
- When a new string is provided the parent should purchase a replacement for the School.
- Hire of a school instrument extends across term holidays.
- There is a small charge for hiring an instrument over the December/January holidays. Please email the Instrumental Co-ordinator to make arrangements.
- A hired instrument is to be returned at a student's final lesson for the year.

## Purchase of an instrument

- Details of recommended string instrument stores can be obtained from the Teacher.
- Correct instrument size needs to be professionally managed. Contact the Teacher before purchasing a stringed instrument.
- A second-hand instrument is preferred as the sound has had time to develop.
- A shoulder rest, rosin and spare set of strings are required.
- An instrument should be identified with name and class, preferably with a key tag or directly onto the outside of the case.

## Storage of Instruments at School

- All instruments are to be stored in the classroom. A student needs to talk to the class teacher to negotiate a safe place out of the way of regular traffic.
- Please do **not** leave your instrument above lockers outside the classroom.

## What you need for the first lesson

### Music Book

- A scrap book, usually 64 blank pages, can be purchased from the School for \$2 or from a supermarket.
- When a music tutor book is required, the Teacher will advise the name and price of the book and music shops where it is available.
- A display book with plastic inserts is necessary for ensemble rehearsals.

### Music Stand

- A music stand for practice at home is essential for each student.
- To practice without a music stand involves the use of incorrect muscles and can result in playing becoming painful.
- Compact fold-up metal stands, available at most music shops, cost \$30-40.

## Music Bag

- A bag used purely for your child's lessons is highly recommended to keep music books, scrapbook, ensemble folder and the Music Record Book together.
- The student's name should be written on the bag.
- Something similar to the picture below is recommended. However, any bag will work well.



## Music Record Book

- Each student is required to use the Music Record Book supplied by the School at the first lesson, with a \$10 charge per book on your School statement.
- Sometimes called a "Little Green Book" or "Music Diary"
- This is the main communication tool between teachers, parents and the student.
  - Teachers write weekly goals to be achieved, progressive lesson count and urgent messages.
  - Students should place it on the **music stand** and read before each practice session, and complete the practice register on each page.
  - Parents are encouraged to sign the practice chart before each lesson.
  - It should be kept with the student's music books and be brought to each lesson.
- Replacement books can be requested from the Instrumental Teacher and will be charged on your School statement.
- When a student fails to bring their Music Record Book to 4 consecutive lessons, a new book will automatically be provided and charged on the School statement.

## Accessories

### Violin and Viola

- Shoulder rests are not encouraged for beginner students
- The alternative is Poly-pad, a shaped foam cushion, available from School for \$14

### Cello

- Rubber stoppers attached to the end pin are recommended for daily use
- A round rubber disk called a 'donut' is recommended for playing during concerts, especially when on a wooden floor
- A chair/stool of an appropriate size will be recommended by the Teacher.

### Double Bass

- Either a donut (as above) or a small wooden board with divots is recommended.
- A stool of an appropriate size will be recommended by the Teacher.

## Practice

- Parents should encourage their child to establish a regular practice routine.
- Practice should be in a room with:
  - limited distractions,
  - a door that can be closed,
  - an area where a music stand can remain assembled.
- A student should aim to practise for 10 minutes for a minimum 4 days a week, with an increase in time as the student progresses. Regular practice is important for both the development of general music skills, muscle memory and co-ordination.
- Beginner students should play the exercises and pieces covered in the lessons 3-5 times and count aloud at all times whilst playing.



## Helpful Hints

- A student should enquire at the Music Office when a Teacher cannot be located.
- The night before a lesson, a student should place the instrument, music and Music Record Book alongside the school bag.
- A student may wear a watch or bring an alarm clock as a reminder to go to a lesson. Please do not bring mobile phones to school.
- Occasionally a student loses interest in learning their instrument. These may be momentary lapses of enjoyment and with the right encouragement a student can persevere through these times. If you are concerned, contact the Instrumental Teacher to talk over how best to support your child.
- A student's progress may slow for a short time because they are facing a difficult technique or concept that takes more effort to achieve. Extra support during these times will enable your child to overcome and work through these moments. Please contact the instrumental teacher for specific advice. Or the following points may help:
  - Make an agreement with your child about how many days a week they will practice.
  - For a regular practice routine, it's best to set a specific time of the day when one reminder from a parent should help.
  - A practice chart on a wall that your child can see often, using stickers or stars, and having short, medium and long term rewards.
  - Opening the instrument case and getting ready for "practice later" often inspires the "pick up the instrument and play straight away".

## Instrumental Music Guidelines Payment Structure and Schedule

These two pages have been combined into a separate document called "Guidelines and Payment Structure (current year)". It can be found on the school website <http://www.essexheightsps.vic.edu.au/page/76/Instrumental-Music-Program>



# Enrolment for String Lessons

Student

Class

## 1 Select your Instrument

- Violin
- Viola
- Cello
- Double Bass

## 5 Select the Type of Lesson

- Individual (1 student, 30 minutes)
- Shared (2 students, 30 minutes)
- Individual45 (only AMEB Gr3 or above)
- Enrolment in String Ensemble

## 2 Have you had lessons before?

- No, go to question 5
- Yes, go to question 3

## 6 Do you have an instrument?

- Yes, go to question 8
- No, go to question 7

## 3 How long have you been learning?

- Years/terms

## 7 Do you need to hire from School?

- Yes
- No

## 4 Have you done an Exam on your instrument?

- No, go to question 5
- Yes. Please complete an Exam history form.

## 8 Special requests:

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## Parent/Guardian Authorization

- 1 I agree with the current Guidelines & Payment Schedule and conditions in the Strings Handbook.
- 2 I have discussed the conditions with my child and the responsibilities are understood.
- 3 The enrolment is ongoing until the School receives a withdrawal in writing or my child leaves the school.
- 4 I agree to my contact details being available to the Instrumental Teacher.

Name

Phone

Work:

Mobile

Email

Signature

/ /20

Office Use:	Date received	MM
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