

Mentoring FAQ

Please note:

All of our professional mentor team hold current enhanced DBS certificates that are checked annually. They all attend regular professional Safeguarding training in line with the DfE guidelines.

For further information about our safeguarding policies for our mentors working 1-2-1 with young people, please refer to our policy documents and our online Mentoring Session Safeguarding Guidance document that can be found on our website here: www.swms.org.uk/policies

How many mentoring sessions will I receive?

Most students receive six sessions spread across the academic year (two per term). However, we can also arrange one-off consultancy sessions to support students with specific needs, such as conservatoire applications or other areas of interest.

How long does each mentoring session last?

Most sessions last between one hour and an hour and a half.

Where are mentoring sessions held?

Most mentoring sessions take place online via video call. However, we understand that video calls may not suit everyone, so in-person sessions can sometimes be arranged when appropriate and feasible.

Can my parent or guardian join me during my session?

Absolutely! We encourage parents to sit in on the first session. After that, it's up to the student, family, and mentor to decide what works best. Younger students may feel more comfortable with a parent present. However, in our experience, sessions tend to be most effective when the conversation flows directly between the mentor and student.

I already have a music tutor. Do I need a mentor as well?

Yes, a mentor serves a different purpose than a music tutor. Your tutor focuses on developing your technical and performance skills, while a mentor helps you explore how music fits into your life, offering guidance, encouragement, and industry insights. A mentor will not replace or supplement your instrumental lessons but will support your overall musical journey.

How does SWMS work alongside my music tuition?

If you need guidance on finding a suitable instrumental or vocal tutor, you can contact Tracy Hill for more information. Our network of mentors and tutors provides expert advice and support.

For students receiving tuition funding through SWMS via an MDS grant, we require a tuition information form at the start of the year. We will then liaise with your tutor to arrange termly progress reports and maintain an ongoing conversation about your learning goals. These reports play a key role in shaping your Individual Training Plan (ITP) for the year.

Additionally, you will be invited to attend Tuition School workshops, which complement your regular lessons. These workshops provide opportunities to work one-on-one with a specialist tutor, helping you stay on track with your goals.

What will we talk about during my session?

A wide range of topics! Each session is unique and tailored to your individual musical journey. However, some common themes include:

- *How your music learning is progressing – successes and challenges*
- *Your practice routine and areas of focus, listening suggestions*
- *Your SWMS music activities, including discussions about recent workshops and how to make the most of upcoming ones*
- *Short courses, residential courses, and your SWMS budget*

Your mentor is there to support and guide you, helping you make the most of your musical opportunities.

How does SWMS choose my mentor for me?

We take great care in matching students with the right mentor. Factors we consider include:

- *Your musical interests, instrument specialism, and current abilities*
- *Your personality and learning style*

Our goal is to pair you with someone who can offer the best support and guidance for your development.

What happens if we don't get on?

Most SWMS students find their mentoring sessions valuable and enjoy connecting with someone who understands what it's like to be a musician. All our mentors are experienced in working with young people and are committed to helping you succeed.

*It's completely normal to feel a little awkward in the first session—it can take time to build a comfortable, open conversation. However, if you have any concerns or don't feel your mentoring sessions are working as expected, please reach out to **Jennie Troup** or **Tracy Hill**. They'll be happy to talk things through and help find a solution that works best for you.*

Can I change my mentor if my goals or interests change?

Yes, we understand that students' goals and interests can evolve over time. Mentor placements are reviewed before the start of each academic year, and we take student requests into account when making assignments.

If you feel that a change would be beneficial during the academic year, please reach out to Jennie Troup or Tracy Hill to discuss your needs and explore possible options.

What if I need to reschedule a session?

If you give your mentor reasonable notice, they will do their best to find an alternative time for you. However, mentors are busy professionals, and if a session is canceled at short notice or missed entirely, they reserve the right to charge for the session without offering a reschedule. This fee will be deducted from your SWMS budget.

Can I contact my mentor between sessions?

Yes—within reason! If you have an urgent or time-sensitive question that can't wait until your next session, most mentors are happy to receive a short message. However, any communication should either come from your parent or include them (cc'd in the email). Please keep in mind that mentors have busy schedules, and response times may vary, especially if they are working internationally. If you don't receive a reply, you are always welcome to reach out to Tracy Hill or Jennie Troup, who will do their best to assist you.

Do I have to do anything prepare for my sessions?

Spending a little time preparing beforehand can help you get the most out of your sessions. The best conversations happen when both you and your mentor come ready with questions, updates, and topics to discuss.

If it's your first session, your mentor will want to learn all about you and your musical journey. Take a moment to think about your music-making activities and interests so you can share a full picture of your experience.

For future sessions, it's helpful to:

- *Review your previous session report*
- *Remind yourself of key discussion points and any targets you set*
- *Consider any new challenges, achievements, or areas where you'd like guidance*

A little preparation goes a long way in making your mentoring sessions as productive and rewarding as possible!

How can I make sure I make the most of my mentor sessions?

To get the best out of your mentoring experience, keep these key principles in mind:

- **Be honest** – If you're struggling with something or not enjoying an aspect of your music learning, don't ignore it or make excuses. Your mentoring sessions are a safe space to find solutions, not to cover things up.
- **Be an active listener** – Pay close attention to the conversation, follow the discussion, and don't hesitate to ask if something isn't clear or if you have a different perspective.
- **Ask questions** – Great questions lead to great insights! Come prepared with anything you'd like advice or guidance on.
- **Be open to new ideas** – If your mentor suggests a new practice routine, give it a try! If they recommend a composer or band, take the time to listen. Embracing fresh ideas can open new doors in your musical journey.
- **Take responsibility** – Your mentor is there to offer support and guidance, but it's up to you to take action. Just as your teachers provide strategies and techniques for improvement, it's your job to put them into practice.

By staying engaged, curious, and proactive, you'll make the most of every session and gain valuable insights to support your growth as a musician.

Are there any forms or paperwork connected with my mentoring?

Yes, there are a few key documents to help track your progress throughout the year:

- **Individual Training Plan (ITP):** *During your first mentoring session, your mentor will help you create an **Individual Training Plan (ITP)**, outlining your priorities and learning goals for the year. This plan will be revisited, updated, and reviewed together as you receive activity feedback and tuition reports.*
- **Final Review:** *In your last session of the year, you'll go through your completed ITP to reflect on your progress. If you're under 18, a parent or guardian will also need to sign off on the final document.*
- **Session Reports:** *After each mentoring session, your mentor will write a short report summarizing key discussions and progress. A copy of this report will be sent to both you and your parents.*

These documents help ensure that your mentoring sessions are structured, productive, and aligned with your musical development.