



South West Music School

Applications FAQ 2025–26

Who can apply?

To be eligible, students need to meet the following criteria:

- Live in the South West of England
- Be between 8 and 16 years old (current students may continue with us until the age of 20)

Am I applying for a particular programme?

Not at this stage.. South West Music School offers programmes and support related to age, ability and interest. However, if you are specifically interested in composition, music production and/or song writing, please include this in your application form.

How much does it cost?

If you are applying for a grant from the Music and Dance Scheme, the amount eligible is set by the DfE. However, for those not eligible for a fully funded place, we can adapt the student package of activities to meet individual budgets. Information on our fees can be found on our website - www.swms.org.uk.

I'm part of a band/ensemble – can we apply as a group?

Our application process is for individual students. However, we are always happy to receive applications from your bandmates.

Do I need grades?

No. Grade exams can help us understand your technical ability level, but we base decisions on your applications, video recordings, and the audition.

Do I need to read music well?

No. Reading music is obviously a useful skill to develop, but we recognise that musicians learn music in many different ways (by ear, lead sheets, chord charts, tab).

I am not a classical musician, can I apply?

Yes! All genres, all instruments are welcome.

Who should I ask to write my musical reference?

If you have music lessons, your music tutor is the best choice. Alternatively, your school's Director of Music or an ensemble leader are good options.

What should a musical reference include?

Ideally, the reference will outline how long they have known you and provide an overview of your technical abilities, musical strengths, your motivation, and enthusiasm for music.

What happens after I submit my application?

We will email you with our decision. You may be invited to attend either an in person audition or an online chat. At the audition we will ask you to perform two short pieces of contrasting style. These can be your online audition clips. Our audition panel will likely ask you a couple of questions about the pieces. You will then be invited for an informal chat to discuss your musical interests.

Further information about the audition dates and process will be sent with the invitation.

What happens if I'm successful at the audition/interview?

Congratulations! We inform successful students by email. This email will tell you which programme we have placed you on, and an overview of the programme's activities. We will then provide you with the opportunity to apply for grant funding and discuss costs. If you have questions at any point of the enrolment process, the office team will be on hand to help out. You can find contact details on our homepage and on your offer email.

Can I apply again if I am unsuccessful?

Yes, we very much welcome students to apply again each year if they are unsuccessful with their application or audition.

Any further questions - please email t.hill@swms.org.uk

www.swms.org.uk