

A close-up photograph of a violin, showing the body, strings, and the scroll. The wood is a warm, reddish-brown color, and the strings are a light yellow. The background is dark and out of focus.

Young Strings

Parent / Carer Handbook

September 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 Welcome to Young Strings

RNCM Young Strings aims to help pupils become confident, expressive musicians, who have a deep understanding of all the elements of music. This underpins our approach, which integrates instrumental, musicianship and ensemble training. Our experienced tutors, who are highly skilled musicians and teachers, work together to help pupils develop their co-ordination, their aural, rhythmic, and improvisation skills, and their musical knowledge, as well as a firm technical foundation on the instrument of their choice.

At Young Strings, there is a strong emphasis on making music and enjoying it, nurturing a lifelong love for music amongst pupils, whatever their musical path may be. Most of our teaching is in groups and our pupils have fun learning together through musical games, singing and movement as well as through playing their instruments.

Young Strings is a non-selective, open-access, programme where every child is encouraged to work to their full potential. We promote strongly an environment in which pupils are supportive of each other; peer appraisal is an important part of their learning. Involvement of parents/carers is also encouraged, particularly regarding the youngest pupils, as this can aid progress significantly.

1.2 Course Structure

Stage 1: Saturdays, 9.00 -10.20am, Manchester High School for Girls

This is a foundation year for children who are 5-6 years old. During this year, children attend two classes per week. One class focuses on pitch and rhythm training through singing (Kodály) and the other on developing the musical, physical and emotional/social skills required to be a musician through whole body through movement (Dalcroze).

Stage 2: Saturdays, 9.00 – 11.00am, Manchester High School for Girls

At the start of their second year at Young Strings, children choose to begin learning violin, viola, cello or double bass. For two years, they have three classes per week: an instrumental lesson in a small group (usually 2-4 children), musicianship and ensemble. In addition, they will have occasional individual lessons with their instrumental teacher.

Stage 3: Thursdays, 4.30 – 6.30pm, RNCM

This stage of Young Strings offers a unique opportunity for emerging string players to develop strong musicianship and ensemble skills. There is no instrumental tuition at this stage. Pupils play in a large string orchestra, have lessons in Dalcroze and Kodály, and are given the opportunity to take part in chamber music, masterclasses and performances.

1.3 Teaching Staff

Young Strings tutors are highly trained professionals. They have extensive experience of working with young children and provide wide-ranging areas of expertise.

1.4 Key contacts

Sarah Crooks – Head of Young Strings

sarah.crooks@rncm.ac.uk

07979 241015

Bryony Taylor – Administrator.

bryony.taylor@rncm.ac.uk

0161 907 5398

07979 241014 (emergency number during class time)

1.5 Entering and leaving the building

Unless notified otherwise:

RNCM (Thursdays)

- Entry to the RNCM for pupils is via the door to the Brodsky Restaurant on the Rosamond Street West side of the building.
- Your child will be signed in and out by a member of YS staff
- Collection is from the Brodsky Restaurant Door also.
- The canteen area welcomes parents while they are waiting

Manchester High School for Girls (Saturdays)

- Entry to the Music Department is via the Drama Department door off the main car park
- Your child will be signed in and out by a member of YS staff
- Collection is from this door also

2. Academic matters

2.1 Timetables

Young Strings is operating for 32 weeks for 2024/25

2.2 Reporting

- The first point of call to find out about your child's progress is the tutor. Please feel free to approach them before or after lessons. You are welcome to ask to visit a lesson if you would like to (see section 2.3).
- Young Strings tutors will use moodle to communicate with you and your child about weekly practice. They will also post resources here.
- Our Open Evening/Morning is held annually, usually in the spring term.

2.3 Your Role

Throughout your child's time at Young Strings, you will be encouraged to be involved in your child's learning and to support their practice at home. You will play an integral role in your child's progress. We encourage commitment and enthusiasm from our

pupils, and would ask that you support us in our aim for pupils to enjoy regular practice at home. Younger students benefit enormously from adult supervision. The feeling that you are enjoying their progress and music-making will enhance their own sense of enjoyment and reward.

2.4 Performances

Regular performance opportunities are an integral part of the Young Strings programme. Each child at Stage 1 and Stage 2 has an opportunity to perform within their instrumental lesson groups to their cohort once a year; parents / carers are invited. Concerts for ensembles and musicianship groups take place on Saturdays and Thursdays at the end of the autumn and summer terms with informal Play Days at the end of the spring term. Some of the concerts take place away from the RNCM site and full details are circulated in good time to parents.

2.6 Musical instruments / repairs / books

At Stage 2, Young Strings loans instruments to pupils, unless they prefer to provide their own. Music books and other accessories are provided by families. At Stage 3, Young Strings loans cellos and double basses to pupils. Violins and violas are provided for families in receipt of a bursary. Families borrowing instruments from Young Strings must contribute towards repairs and insurance excess should the instrument be damaged while on loan as per the loan agreement (currently £50). Please note that Young Strings staff are not allowed to purchase music books or accessories on behalf of students.

2.7 Private lessons

It is not permitted for tutors to undertake private lessons on RNCM premises.

Young Strings tutors are discouraged from giving additional private lessons to Young Strings students during Stages 1 and 2. Young Strings believes that group tuition, alongside Musicianship and Ensemble training, provides pupils with an excellent foundation in instrumental playing. We recommend that you don't seek additional tuition from external tutors either as pupils can find it confusing and upsetting to experience different teachers' teaching methods concurrently.

2.8 Attendance, arrival and departure

Students are expected to attend all lessons and activities each week. Registers are kept and all absences monitored. Please ensure that your child arrives on time for the start of Young Strings.

If you need to collect your child early from a class, please let the Administrator know in advance. You must also make a note at this point if someone else is going to collect your child at the end.

In exceptional circumstances, if you are going to be late when collecting your child you must inform the Administrator on the Young Strings emergency phone number: 07979 241014.

2.9 Absence

Please inform the Administrator if your child is going to be absent, giving as much notice as possible.

3. Safeguarding

The College is committed to ensuring that its application and recruitment processes act to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students and staff, prevent unsuitable individuals from working at the College and that all applicants are treated fairly and lawfully.

All staff are subject to a criminal records check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) prior to the commencement of their employment with the College and we have the following 'safeguarding' policies in place which you can obtain a copy of from the key contacts identified in 1.4

- Safeguarding Policy
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy
- Physical Contact Between College Staff and Students
- Relationships Between College Staff and Students

These policies can also be downloaded [here](#).

If any child or parent has a safeguarding concern, this should be raised with the Head of Young Strings or any of the key contacts in Section 3.1.

3.1 Key safeguarding contacts are:

Emma Hilton-Wood, Academic Registrar - Designated Senior Person
Emma.hilton-wood@ncm.ac.uk

Paul Hynes, Head of Human Resources - Designated Senior Person (deputy)
Paul.Hynes@ncm.ac.uk

Aled Tudor, Head of Junior Programmes – Child Protection Liaison Officer
Aled.Tudor@ncm.ac.uk

Sarah Crooks, Head of Young Strings – Child Protection Liaison Officer
Sarah.Crooks@ncm.ac.uk

3.2 Duty of care

All adults working with children under 18 or vulnerable adults are accountable for the way they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources and safeguard those in their care. Staff have a duty to maintain a professional relationship with students and to do nothing that would compromise their educational responsibilities.

3.3 Reporting alleged or suspected incidents

If a pupil or their parent / carer are concerned about something they see or hear or if they are uncomfortable with anything that happens in class, they should contact the Head of Young Strings or report it directly to their own tutor. Any issues will be treated with sensitivity and taken seriously.

If you have suspicions or are concerned that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse you must immediately inform the Head of Young Strings or a RNCM Child Protection Liaison Officer (see section 3.1). Parents / carers / students should report any such suspicions or concerns regardless of the potential cause(s) or source(s) of such abuse and must not carry out their own investigations.

3.4 Complaints

Any complaints concerning safeguarding should be addressed in the first instance to the CPLO. If appropriate, these will be referred to the Designated Senior Person. All complaints and concerns will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. Any complaints regarding non-safeguarding matters should be addressed to the Head of Young Strings in the first instance.

3.5 Student welfare

Young Strings places great emphasis on providing a safe and caring environment for its students. Trained First-Aiders are present at all times during hours of operation. The Administrator, Student Chaperone and Head of Young Strings are qualified First Aiders. The Administrator should be contacted first in all instances when First Aid is required.

3.6 Students with disabilities

Young Strings will seek to provide appropriate facilities and support for disabled students. The College's approach to support is based on an individual assessment of needs. If you would like further details, or an opportunity to discuss disability issues, please contact the Young Strings Office who will liaise with the College's disability advisors.

3.7 Health and safety

Please ensure that your child knows to follow any instructions given to them by their tutor or by a member of the RNCM staff (who all wear College identity badges) in the event of an emergency. Health and safety procedures are provided in Appendix I.

3.8 Security

Please be mindful of the fact that the RNCM is accessible to the public and has not been designed with young children in mind. It is therefore very different from a school environment. While your child is in our care we have measures in place to ensure that s/he is well-supervised: registers are taken at the start of every class and students are escorted between classrooms by a member of staff. There is an employed Chaperone who assists with supervising pupils in between lessons, and during lesson-time toilet trips.

Instruments and music owned by the student must be clearly labelled on the outside of the case / cover with the full name of the student. Other belongings (including clothing) should also be labelled. Students are strongly advised not to bring anything with them of value that they do not directly need for Young Strings. Students must not leave their instrument unattended. The College cannot be held responsible for losses or damage to student's property, including instruments.

4. Standards

4.1 Policy on physical contact between College staff and students

There may be occasions when physical contact between a tutor and student is necessary as part of a lesson, e.g. when giving tuition, advice or guidance on posture or technique in relation to playing. The College has a strict policy to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place. A copy may be requested from any of the key contacts in 1.4

4.2 Bribery and gifts

There is no expectation whatsoever that students should provide gifts to tutors but the College recognises that due to the nature of one-to-one and small group teaching students may wish to give a gift in appreciation of help and guidance provided by their tutor and this is acceptable up to the value of £10.

4.3 Expectations of pupils

We ask for your support in our promotion of excellent standards of behaviour from the children, both during class and when moving around the RNCM/Brooks building.

Young Strings tutors are very experienced educationalists who strive to create an inspiring and supportive environment, where all children can achieve and enjoy experiencing music. Tutors will speak to you if they are concerned that your child's behaviour is disruptive.

Outside of lessons, please keep reminding your child that the RNCM and MHSG are institutions of education, where students and staff members are working hard behind every door. We ask that your child does not run or make excessive noise within the building.

In lessons we ask that pupils:

- Have a positive attitude
- Arrive on time
- Attend every week and explain any unavoidable absence when necessary
- Enter the room in an orderly manner and be careful around instruments
- Be organised and have their instrument and books with them
- Show respect to other members of the group and the teacher
- Follow instructions
- Try their best in the lesson
- Listen to others when speaking and performing
- Behave well and contribute to the lesson
- Not to leave the room without asking
- Practise between lessons
- Keep their instrument in good order
- Pack away in an orderly manner and leave their area tidy.

4.4 Footwear and clothing

Due to the physical nature of Young Strings classes, all students should be dressed appropriately. Attire should be similar to that worn for a school PE class i.e. loose-fitting and flexible. Tracksuit trousers / leggings and a t-shirt are perfect. Skirts are not suitable. During Musicianship classes children will work in bare feet so shoes and socks (not tights) that are easy to take off and put back on are more suitable.

4.5 Mobile phones

Pupils and staff are not permitted to make or receive phone calls / texts or use other media whilst teaching is being undertaken.

4.6 Use of photography and recording devices

The College will seek permission from parents / carers to take captured images of students occasionally and some of these may be used for training, recording and archival purposes. The College will seek separate permission if the images are to be used in published material and / or multi-media relating to the College.

Staff may make sound recordings of classes for assessment purposes.

Parents and carers may take photographs / videos during Young Strings concerts but these images must remain for personal use only. It is not permissible to upload images to websites/social media.

4.7 Organised trips outside College

Detailed, specific guidance will be distributed to staff and parents / pupils in good time prior to any concert or other event which take place off the RNCM premises.

Staff are advised not to take children or vulnerable adults alone in a vehicle. If this is unavoidable, parents / carers and the Senior Tutor will be informed. Children should sit in the rear of the vehicle and use seat belts. Staff will ensure that they have appropriate car insurance (business use) in order to carry children and / or instruments.

5. General

5.1 Fees

Invoices are sent to parents at the beginning of the Academic Year. Fees may be paid annually, termly or in ten instalments. One full term's notice is required for withdrawal of a student from Young Strings; otherwise the fees must be paid.

Parents must:

- pay fees according to the deadlines given by Student Finance and by the requested methods of payment or an alternative agreed with Young Strings at the start of the year.
- contact Student Finance immediately should a change in circumstances mean that they are unable to pay the fees. In this case they must make arrangements for a more suitable payment plan and / or request a bursary from Young Strings. A sustained failure to pay the fees will result in the withdrawal the child's place and parents will still be liable for the full annual fee.

In the event of grave misconduct by any child the Senior Tutor will have the right to expel or suspend the child immediately and that in the event of such expulsion or suspension no proportion of the College fees will be refunded.

5.2 Leaving Young Strings

Parents must give a term's notice in writing (letter or email) if they want to give up their child's place at Young Strings. Verbal communication cannot be accepted.

The following penalties apply in lieu of notice unless special dispensation has been given.

- Leaving mid-term – pay up to the end of term.
- Leaving at the end of term – pay the first four weeks of the following term.
- Leaving at the end of the academic year – payment in lieu of notice will not be required provided notice is given before September.

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. bereavement or material change to personal circumstances) the Student Finance Office may offer fee dispensation if a student does not complete a full academic year. In the first instance, parents / carers must send a letter to the Senior Tutor, stating their child will be leaving and giving full details of reasons. Notification of any dispensation in fees offered by the Student Finance Office will be given in writing.

5.3 Bursaries

Bursary forms are sent out to all Young Strings families before the start of every year. Forms should be returned by the deadline with proof of family income. This should refer to the current financial year and can include P60 / proof of benefits / confirmation from employer or accountant (signed) / proof of student status. If parents / carers have a change of circumstances during the academic year we will be able to provide them with an application form on request.

Please note that bursary applications must be renewed every year.

5.4 Car parking

Parking at MHSG is free in the school car park.

Please note – no parking facilities are available for parents on the RNCM site. Street parking is available – some unrestricted. Alternatively, the multi-storey car park at the far end of Booth Street West offers secure parking.

5.5 Communications

All communications should be undertaken through the Young Strings office and not to the tutor directly. Students / parents / carers should always read the notices on the Young Strings' noticeboard. These keep everyone up to date with current activities.

Tutors are not permitted to contact students using social networking sites.

5.6 Food and facilities

On Thursdays, parents are welcome to use the facilities at the RNCM whilst they are waiting. The café will be fully operational during term time.

On Saturdays, parents are welcome to use the entrance area to wait but are not permitted to use any other areas of the school.

Appendix I: Health and Safety Procedures

RNCM Fire Alarm Procedures

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded (an oscillating electronic wail), all persons must leave the building immediately via the nearest, safest available exit. Follow the green 'running man' signs out of the building. If necessary, use any emergency release buttons on internal / external doors by breaking the glass protecting them.

There are two exits from the upstairs studios – the 'normal' exit via the internal stairs and Reception and the designated fire exit on the far wall. If both exits are clear staff could use the internal exit to evacuate the building. In the event of that exit being blocked staff must use the designated fire exit on to the external fire escape stairs.

The exit from the Brodsky is from the designated route past the kitchens, or via Main Reception.

The fire assembly point is located on the car park at the rear of the library building on Rosamund Street. All persons evacuating should make their way to this point and remain there until further instructions are given.

If a fire is discovered: Immediately operate the nearest fire alarm call point (red plastic boxes mounted on walls near to points of exit) by pressing the glass panel until it breaks. Do not attempt to fight the fire.

MHSG Fire Alarm Procedures

Evacuate the building on hearing the fire alarm and leave by the nearest fire exit.

The Fire Assembly Point is on the netball courts

In both buildings:

Chaperones and / or the Administrator will help classes evacuate. If the pre-instrumental class has finished, chaperones and / or the Administrator should assist the tutor of the nearest large studio class.

If we have to abandon classes the collection of children will be organised by the Administrator or the Head of Young Strings. If it is necessary for families to leave without their instruments the Administrator will arrange for them to be collected at a later date.

- Do not use lifts.
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
- Do not re-enter the building until authorised to do so.
- If unable to evacuate safely, disabled persons / mobility-impaired persons should wait at the refuge point and use the refuge point voice panel to speak to a member of the Emergency Response Team. Tutors should wait at the refuge point to be evacuated by either the Emergency Response Team or the Fire Services. Instructions are posted at each refuge point.
- At the fire assembly point tutors must check their class register to ensure all children are present. If any children are missing, inform the Administrator.
- Once the 'all clear' has been given, normal activities can resume.

