

**T**HESE days many parents enrol their children in a host of extracurricular activities. This oftentimes results in children getting tired or bored of the never ending cycle of classes.

This is particularly true with music lessons where children repeatedly practise playing an instrument that they do not enjoy.

The extra examinations related to these lessons only add to their already hectic schedules making this extracurricular activity a chore.

However, this is not the case at Nilai International School (NIS). The school's music room is a place of laughter and enjoyment and is indicative of the fun that is being experienced inside.

Inside the room, a group of Year 1 students are learning the fundamentals of music notation through interactive games and a variety of percussion instruments.

NIS' music room is also equipped with a piano, a dozen keyboards, an electric drum set, an acoustic guitar as well as bongos, tambourines and glockenspiels.

The music teacher, Deborah Gan, says that the main aim of the music lesson, especially for the younger children, is for them to have fun. The classes are structured, according to the IGCSE syllabus, to cultivate and nurture young children's interest in music.

Younger children, who begin music lessons at three years old in the Early Years preschool programme, are exempted from examinations for the music lessons but will be graded internally by the music teacher.

Their grading is based on

# Hitting the right notes



Gan says that music lessons should cultivate and nurture children's interest in music.

their interaction, behaviour and aptitude in class, and parents will receive periodic updates on their children's progress.

Students from Year 6 onwards are required to sit for internal examinations and the evaluation

will be reflected in their overall grades.

Students who opt to take up music from Year 9 onwards will prepare for the IGCSE music examinations, where they will be tested on their musical knowledge

and ability.

The latter will encompass a recorded performance that will be sent to invigilators abroad for grading.

Students will also be required to write their own compositions.

## Countless benefits

The learning experience should be fun and the new school song that was written by NIS students, with arrangements by Gan, can attest to this.

The school also has a music club, which further encourages students to nurture their musical talents as it hosts various activities, including jam sessions, band practices and concerts. So far, the music club has performed two recitals during the Chinese New Year and Christmas festivities.

According to Gan, students at NIS gain many benefits from being exposed to music lessons.

The younger children have an outlet for musical fun in addition to learning new skill sets.

Meanwhile, older children develop a sense of discipline as all aspects of music require patience, practice and perseverance.

These values will also positively impact their attitude towards their studies in other subjects.

Many students are seen practising and rehearsing in the music room after their lessons have ended and this is a clear indication that they are enjoying themselves and are feeling the music being taught.

■ For more information, call 06-850 2188 or visit [www.nis.edu.my](http://www.nis.edu.my)

## Measuring a child's progress

WE often think of education as a linear progression. Students go from primary to secondary and then to tertiary. There is something satisfying about this systematic movement from A to Z. And that is as it should be.

Kids feel motivated when they have clear milestones. We all want our progress to be clearly quantified and measured: we want to mark each stage of improvement.

The problem, though, is that a child's education rarely fits into a one-dimensional, linear pattern. The reality is much more complicated than that. In fact, we have to question what we even mean by the word "progress".

Consider Child X: he might be getting better at scoring in school exams, but he is also becoming less and less inquisitive – he is no longer questioning and interpreting what he has learnt. Has Child X really made good progress?

Progress in one area can often mask or even cause deficiencies in other areas. Thus, kids with the best spoken English do not necessarily make the best writers.

On the contrary, some of these kids feel that they can coast along on their superior language abilities and shy away from the hard work of picking up complex structuring and thinking skills.

In their first few years of school, it might seem like they are improving, purely because they find each year's exams to be quite easy. However, later on, when they are called upon to write more thoughtful essays, it will quickly become apparent that they have been stagnating in certain key areas.

Blind spots occur when a whole group of children is forced to work towards achieving pre-ordained, inflexible goals. These children, with their different learning styles and different interests, are

expected to conform to a single standard. The truth is that educational growth rarely proceeds along a straight line.

Cosmotots-igd, an IQ development and educational foundation that provides supplementary education for children, tries to move beyond this linear view of education. Its central belief is that each child has an unlimited potential for intellectual growth. There is always something new to discover, there are always new skills to learn, and there are always new directions to pursue.

Cosmotots mentors ensure that every student is treated as an individual. Mentors tailor each lesson to each class and they work on a range of different skills within each class. This personalised approach means that children are able to move beyond limited, strict divisions between levels.

■ For more information, visit [www.cosmotots.com](http://www.cosmotots.com)



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