

Talented tubas and fabulous flutes – Medway youth have the X-factor

From flute, cello and trumpet to the lesser-known fife, children across Medway are unveiling their musical talents as part of a new initiative.

Medway became one of the first areas in the country to be selected as a music hub last year, a scheme that will see nearly £900,000 invested in music education over three years, from 2012 to 2015.

Aimed at giving all those aged five to 18 the chance to learn to sing, play a musical instrument or perform in a choir, the scheme is now making noise at schools across Medway.

At St Margaret's Junior School in Rainham, pupils have been learning to play a range of instruments, including ukulele, oboe, and fife, to name a few, since last September.

The primary on Orchard Street established its own music school in 2009 in partnership with the Medway Music Association and so naturally welcomed this extra focus on music education.

Headteacher Paul Gabbett, said: "For me, it's about giving children that exposure to music and the confidence and

enthusiasm it can spark in them. If even one or two dozen go on to continue playing into their teenage years and adulthood, then that's a fantastic achievement."

The school holds music lessons on three days a week, and has specialists coming in throughout the year to inspire pupils to give it a go. The first year of tuition, usually in small groups, is free before children move on to small group or individual classes. Out of the school's 339 pupils, around 100 have moved on to take up the small group tuition, in everything from percussion and drums to strings and brass.

Erin Wiggan, aged 10, has been learning the flute at school for just over a year. "I never thought I'd be able to play anything other than the recorder. Now, I'm playing the flute, recorder, keyboard, and from time to time, I have a go on my friend's guitar I've also written my own song on the keyboard, it's only short, but it's a start."

Elena West, aged nine, has been learning to play the oboe for around three months. "We had a demonstration in our assembly of a musician playing the oboe and I just thought, wow, wouldn't it be amazing if I could do that," she said.

