

Sarah Watts



# Teacher Notes

For those primary school teachers who don't play an instrument or read music, the thought of teaching a class full of children how to play the recorder can be daunting. These teacher notes, in conjunction with *Ready, Steady Recorder!* are here to help.

For those teachers who can already play an instrument, I hope these notes will also assist with the teaching and processes of playing the recorder and using my new tutor book.

## First Steps

Getting the children to grips with the recorder is the first step. A good idea for the very first lesson is to ask the children one by one to blow into their recorders. Once they have all made a sound and are confident with their new instrument, you can then move on to the first step in the book – playing the first note (correctly!).

The book starts with *The Grand Recorder March*; this is an energetic and rhythmic tune that can be used in any way you like. It could signal the start of a lesson, and you may like to move to the music, or just feel or clap the beat. This is very easy to do, even without any prior knowledge of rhythms. Another idea is to play the piece as the class enter the room and ask them to listen out for the recorders.

## Playing the First Note

The book shows the proper way to blow a note, first by whispering 'du', then breathing in through the mouth and blowing gently into the instrument. Always start the note with a 'du' sound: this known as tonguing.

At this stage it's good to remind the children that gentle blowing is what is needed – sometimes the word breathe is better than blow! I liken playing the recorder to gently blowing bubbles. If you blow too hard, the bubble will pop!

It's good to encourage the children to listen to the sound they are making. Is it nice? Who can make the best sound?

## Learning the Other Notes

Once children have mastered the first note, each new note is then learned by playing a four-bar song just on that note. The song words explain what the note is, how to play it, and where it goes on the music!

Once each note is learned, there is a colourful collection of short pieces with jazzy accompaniments to play and perform. Many have funny words or actions which are there to encourage and help. As a teacher, you can learn these easily before the lesson and show the children what they are going to learn that day.

## Rhythms

Learning how rhythms work is an essential part of learning to play an instrument and it is a good idea for you to work through the rhythms in the book before you start teaching the children, so you have a full understanding.

*Rhythm Rhymes* are very short rhymes which teach rhythmic notation in a quick, punchy way. It's a good idea to say the rhyme first and, after that, clapping the rhythm will be easy. The rhyme will tell you all you need to know about the length of notes you are clapping and is a fun way to remember what things mean.

Clap rhymes often with the class, then lengths of notes are learned quickly. You could even try using your feet and walking the rhythms. Children could do this on their way home too!

## Games

Games are a great way to teach instruments and the *After Me!* game within the book is a call and response game played with a jazzy accompaniment. Play this often, especially at the beginning of lessons, and it will remind everyone what the notes are.

## Rewarding Progress

Once each note is learned (or whenever you feel it appropriate), play the *Take a Bow Fanfare* and get the children to take a bow. This is also a great time to award a sticker for a new note learned or a performance of the day. You can be as creative as you wish!

**'I hope this gives you a good idea of where to start and how to use the book and teach the recorder. It's a great instrument and I hope you enjoy playing and teaching!'**

*Sarah Watts*

