



The ISM's annual survey of teaching rates

Conducted February 2026 to May 2026

 ISMusicians  ism_music  independent-society-of-musicians  ISM_music

ism.org

CONTENTS

Experience and qualification	1
Survey results for private music teachers	3
Survey results for part-time music teaching in schools – employed	6
Survey results for part-time music teaching in schools – self employed	9
Group/Ensemble teaching	12
More information	
– Legal services, insurances and more	13
– Professional development from the ISM Trust	13
– About the ISM	14

Fees for private teaching and part-time teaching in schools

Thank you to all of you who responded to our recent survey of tuition fees. The survey was conducted by an independent statistics company, Naylor Research Partnership, and was open from 12 February to 4 May 2026. In total there were 1084 respondents that answered enough questions to be included in the results. The results in this report are based on all respondents, both ISM members and non-members.

The reference point for most of the survey questions was September 2025 and the survey covered the following parts of the sector:

- Private teaching
- Employed part-time teaching in schools
- Self-employed part-time teaching in schools

The survey results are summarised in this document. These are not recommendations. Competition law prevents us – and other trade associations and organisations – from recommending rates for musicians’ freelance work.

Experience and qualification

Previous reports had shown a steady increase in the proportion of less experienced teachers completing the survey, but this has receded slightly this year.

Years of teaching experience

	Frequency	% 2026	% 2025
0-5 years	90	8.3	10.5
6-15 years	236	21.8	21.5
More than 15 years	749	69.1	68.0



The highest music qualification held by respondents remains a music degree or equivalent. The results show very little change from previous years.

Highest qualification in music or teaching

	Frequency	% 2026	% 2025
Music Degree or equivalent (BMus, BA, etc.)	377	34.8	35.0
Master’s Degree	284	26.2	23.4
Postgraduate Diploma	155	14.3	14.3
Diploma	130	12.0	13.6
Grade 6-8	63	5.8	6.5
PhD	37	3.4	2.8
Other	23	2.1	2.6
HND or equivalent	6	0.6	0.7
Grade 1-5	4	0.4	0.5
None or experience only	4	0.4	0.6



What instruments do respondents teach?

There was no significant change from previous years in the main instrument of choice, although piano/organ continues to increase its’ lead over other instruments.

Main instrument taught

	Frequency	% 2026	% 2025
Piano or organ	524	48.3	47.1
Vocal	170	15.7	12.9
Strings	121	11.2	13.1
Woodwind	108	10.0	9.8
Multiple	57	5.3	4.7
Guitar	36	3.3	4.9
Brass	28	2.6	3.2
Percussion	21	1.9	2.4
Other	16	1.4	1.7

Survey results for private music teachers

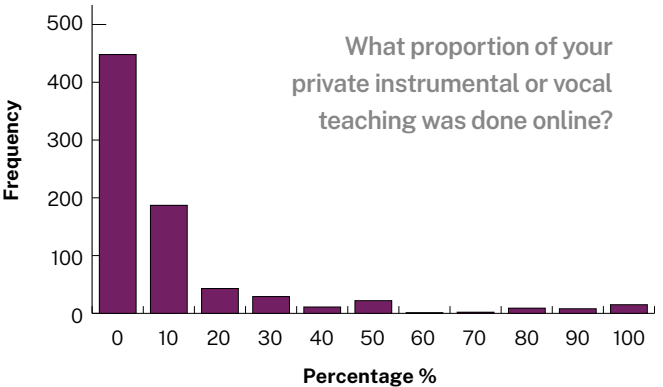
Ninety-four percent of respondents had done some private teaching in the past year. Forty-four percent of respondents reported doing no online teaching at all (compared to 37% last year). Of those that do teach both in person and online, the vast majority charge the same fee for both.

Fifty percent of respondents had increased their rate since September 2024 (up from 43% the previous year). The average increase being £3.20 per hour. The median increase was £2 per hour. However, London’s average increase was £4.36 per hour compared to the rest of the

country at just £2.93. Like last year, almost half of teachers (48%) expect to increase their rates by September 2026.

The median hourly rate for private teaching was unchanged from last year at £40, though there were increases in the 20th and 80th percentiles. The fees charged ranged from £9 to £105 per hour (£14 to £150 last year).

The bottom 20% and top 20% of rates charged for face-to-face teaching, along with the median are shown in the table below, with comparisons since 2021.



Hourly rates for private teaching

		Bottom 20%	Median	Top 20%
Face-to-face teaching	From September 2025	£35	£40	£50
	From September 2024	£33	£40	£46
	From September 2023	£32	£37	£45
	From September 2022	£30	£36	£44
	From September 2021	£30	£35	£40

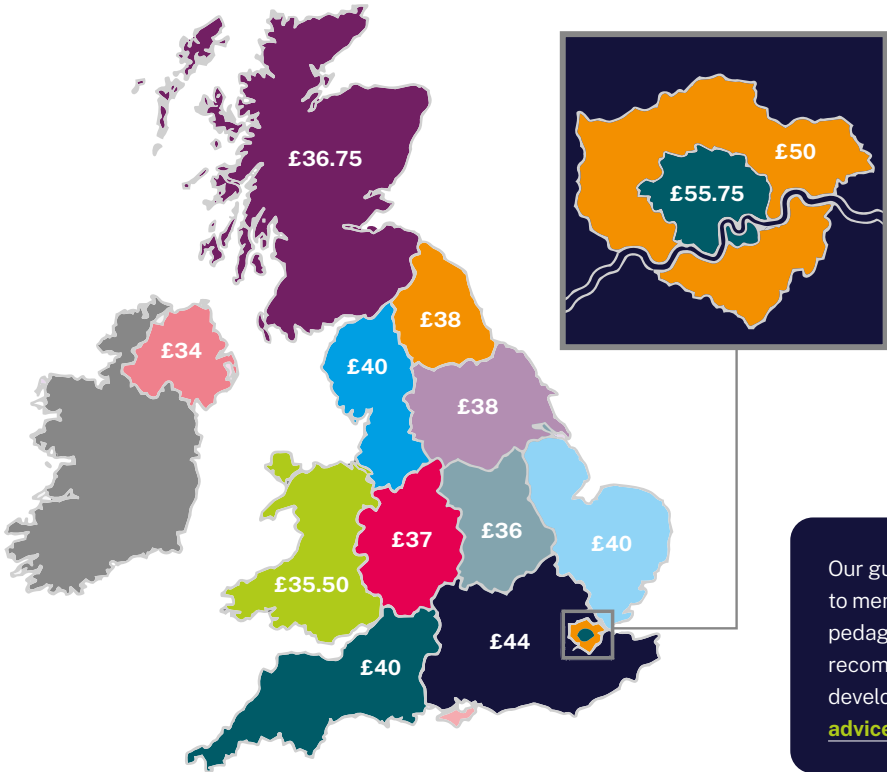
Most regions saw an increase in median rates, however, the gap between the ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ regions is also increasing, with the ‘top’ areas enjoying median increases of more than 10%.

You can read our tips on how to set your own fees, including how to assess where you fit within the overall range of fees and how to negotiate with your pupils and parents, by visiting ism.org/advice/tips-for-setting-music-tuition-rates

Hourly rates for teaching by region

	Bottom 20%	Median 2026	Top 20%	Median 2025
Inner London	£44.60	£55.75	£70	£50
Outer London	£42.33	£50	£60	£45
Elsewhere in South East England	£38	£44	£50	£40
East England	£36.40	£40	£45	£38.50
North West England	£34.20	£40	£44.80	£36
South West England	£34	£40	£45.20	£36
Yorkshire	£33.92	£38	£42	£36
North East England	£30.40	£38	£43.20	£38
West Midlands	£34	£37	£40	£38
Scotland	£33	£36.75	£44	£36
East Midlands	£32	£36	£40	£33.25
Wales	£30	£35.50	£43.20	£36
Northern Ireland	£31.36	£34	£40	£32

Private tuition: Median hourly rates
(overall median rate: £40)



The ages taught this year are very similar to those reported in the previous year.

Age of pupils

	Frequency	% 2026	% 2025	% 2024
Under 11	740	72.7	74.9	82.8
11–18	844	82.9	83.1	91.7
Adult in education	280	27.5	27.0	29.0
Adult not in education	737	72.4	68.9	75.9

Our guide, *How to...Teach adult learners*, is free to members and takes you through altering your pedagogy for older learners, as well as providing key recommendations for maintaining motivation and developing this side of your business. Visit ism.org/advice/teach-adult-learners

Survey results for part-time music teaching in schools – employed

This year’s results show a sharp decline in the number of respondents teaching in schools from 35% last year to 21% in 2026. There were a number of comments from respondents regarding forced self-employment and suggestions that it is harder to find students because of the changes to VAT at independent schools (where VAT is now added to the lesson costs) and state schools restricting pupil premium use so making lessons less affordable for low-income families. Some teachers reported being asked to do additional duties without an increase in pay.

The number of teachers reporting that they were employed in more than one establishment continues to decrease, from 37 last year to 18 this year.

Establishments taught at by employed teachers

Type of establishment	Frequency	% 2026	% 2025
State-funded school (including grammar, academy and free schools)	53	23.5	24
Music Service or Hub	52	23.0	19.3
Independent school	90	39.8	31.6
Specialist music school	12	5.3	8.2

Thirty-nine percent reported that their rates had increased during the year, almost the same as last year (41%) but still a lot lower than was reported in 2022/23 (61%).

This is supported by a lot of the general comments which mention not having pay rises for many years. **The average increase was £1.85 per hour, down nearly £1 per hour from last year (£2.62).** Median rates increased in state funded schools but elsewhere were flat or slightly down, although **41% do expect their rates to increase in the next year, up from 32% last year.**

Hourly rates for employed music teachers by establishment type

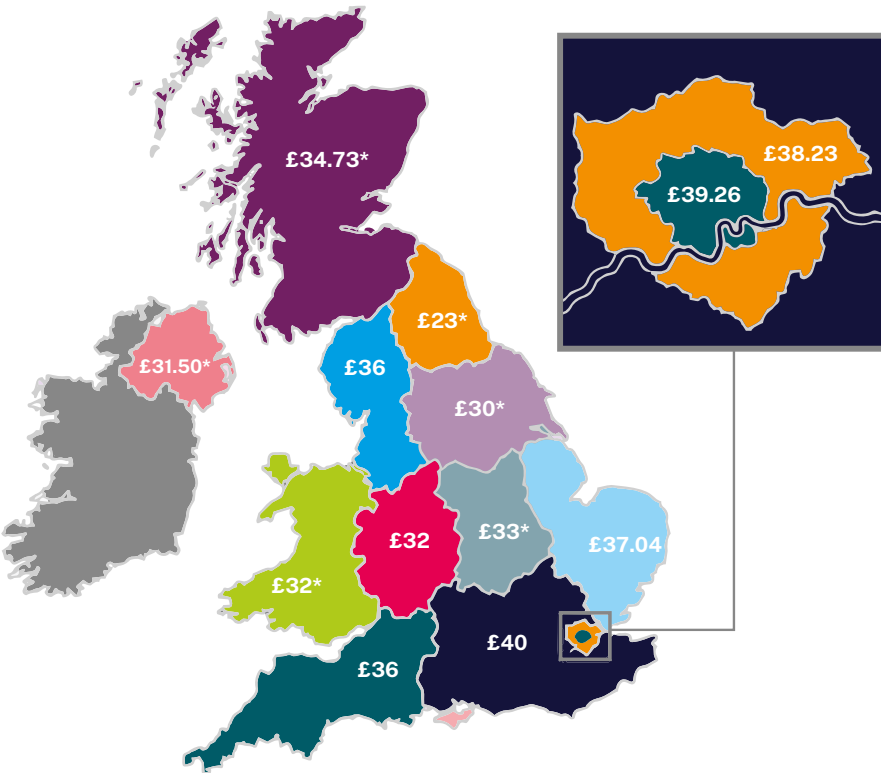
Type of Establishment	Bottom 20%	Median 2026	Top 20%	Median 2025
State-funded school (including grammar, academy and free schools)	£30	£36	£42	£34
Music Service or Hub	£22	£31	£36	£31.91
Independent school	£34	£38.23	£45	£38
Specialist music school	£30.40	£43.80	£46.80	£44

Regional data shows median rates in London fell slightly, with increases in regions where sample sizes were valid.

Hourly rates for employed music teachers by region

	Bottom 20%	Median 2026	Top 20%	Median 2025
Elsewhere in South East England	£30.14	£40	£45	£38.50
Inner London	£31.40	£39.26	£47.40	£40
Outer London	£33.88	£38.23	£46	£39.15
East England	£34	£37.04	£41.11	£36
South West England	£34	£36	£41.50	£34.68
North West England	£28.28	£36	£43.04	£33
West Midlands	£24.20	£32	£36	£30.32
Yorkshire*	-	£30	-	£29
East Midlands*	-	£33	-	£36.75
Wales*	-	£32	-	£34*
North East England*	-	£23	-	£33.24*
Scotland*	-	£34.73	-	£32*
Northern Ireland*	-	£31.50	-	£30*

Employed teachers in schools: Median hourly rates (overall median rate: £36)



Pay progression routes

The survey asked if employers provided any means to improve pay over a period of time such as a salary scale or years of service. Only 9.7% said that this was part of their contract compared to 7.6% last year.

Zero-hours contracts

Zero-hours contracts are a type of ‘atypical’ working where an individual (who can be either an employee or worker) has no minimum set contracted hours.

The decline in the number of respondents employed in schools makes it difficult to compare data relating to zero hours contracts, but the figures indicate a rise in such, up from 43% last year.

	Frequency	% 2026	% 2025
Yes	127	56.2	43.1
No	61	27.0	28.3
Not answered	38	16.8	28.6

Holiday pay

Thirty percent of employed teachers said that their employers were complying with the Harpur Trust v Brazel 2022 Supreme Court Judgement, significantly higher than last year (20%). However, there are still more than 30% of respondents that don’t know how their holiday pay is calculated and 16% who believe their employer does not comply.

There has been a large increase in the proportion of employers identifying holiday pay separately on payslips – now standing at 37% compared to 24% last year.

Pension scheme

More than 60% of respondents reported being in their employers’ pension scheme, compared to 42% in 2025, with two thirds being in the Teachers’ Pension Scheme.

ISM members have access to our specialist in-house legal team (ism.org/my-ism/speak-to-our-legal-team) for queries relating to contracts, holiday pay and pensions.

Survey results for part-time music teaching in schools – self employed

Four hundred and eight respondents had worked in schools as a self-employed visiting teacher since September 2025, up from 337 last year. It would appear that many of the new respondents are working in state-funded schools (249 up from 167 last year).

Of these, **26% said they would prefer *not* to be self-employed (down from 30% last year) but their establishment did not offer any other option.**

Self-employed teachers by establishment

	Frequency	% of individuals 2026	% of individuals 2025
State-funded school (including grammar, academy and free schools)	249	61.0	49.6
Music Service or Hub/ music school	45	11.0	13.6
Independent School	144	35.3	39.2
Specialist music school	17	4.2	3.9

Hourly rates

Forty-nine percent of self-employed respondents set their own hourly rate, with 43% reporting that the rate was set by the establishment. 53% reported that their fees had increased since September 2024 by an average of £2.15 per hour. Half of those responding expect their rates to increase this year.

The median hourly rate across all establishments was £40, up slightly from £38 last year. This year, figures for Music Hubs and specialist music schools have been combined because of relatively low numbers. Taking this into account, fees for these music-focussed establishments have increased a lot more than at state-funded schools, bringing them closer. As in previous years, fees are much higher at independent schools, and have increased by more than twice the rate of inflation.

Hourly rates for self-employed music teachers paid by establishment

	Bottom 20%	Median 2026	Top 20%	Median 2025
State-funded school (including grammar, academy and free schools)	£32.60	£37	£42	£36
Music Service or Hub/specialist music school	£31.04	£36	£40	£32.90 ⁺
Independent school	£40	£48	£54	£38.00

⁺combined

Median rates in outer London have increased by more than 10%, with rates in inner London dropping sharply. South West England is the only other region with an increase slightly above inflation.

Hourly rates for self-employed music teachers paid by region

	Bottom 20%	Median 2026	Top 20%	Median 2025
Outer London	£38	£50	£56	£45
Elsewhere in South East England	£40	£45	£52	£44
Inner London	£33.30	£42.50	£58.20	£46
East England	£37.60	£40.50	£45.60	£39
South West England	£32.40	£38	£42.84	£36.50
West Midlands	£36	£37	£44	£36
Yorkshire	£30	£36	£41.20	£35
North West England	£32	£36	£40	£34
East Midlands	£31.20	£35	£38.16	£33
North East England	-	£38*	-	£37.50*
Scotland	-	£35*	-	£35.50*
Wales	-	£33.50*	-	£34*
Northern Ireland	-	£32.50*	-	£30*

^{*}small sample sizes so results should be treated with caution

Self-employed teachers in schools: Median hourly rates (overall median rate: £40)



^{*}small sample sizes so results should be treated with caution





Group/Ensemble teaching

Twenty-four percent of all respondents said they offered group or ensemble teaching lessons.

For group lessons teaching one instrument, the median rate *per student* was £18. When charging *by group*, the median rate was £40.

For teaching or leading an ensemble, the median rate was £10.75 *per student*. When charging *by group*, the median rate was £41.14. However, there were many comments stating that ensemble hours are treated as part of their general employment.

More information

Legal services, insurances and more

ISM members have access to our **24-hour legal helpline** and **specialist in-house legal team**. The legal helpline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to offer members advice about any legal matter; our specialist in-house legal team are there to assist members with issues affecting their professional work.

As an ISM member, you receive **public liability insurance cover up to £10m** in the event of claims against you relating to injuries to third parties or damage to their property in the course of your work; an **unpaid fees service** that recovers overdue payments owed to you in relation to your work; **DBS, PVG and Access NI checks** and advice; **listings on our Music Directory** to help you promote your services, obtain work, and access an active community of music educators. Find out what else you are entitled to as an ISM member at ism.org

The ISM also produces advice pages and guides, offering guidance on topics including writing a risk assessment, negotiating a contract and safeguarding. Our *How to...* guides look at topics including teaching adult learners and becoming an instrumental teacher.

Professional development from the ISM Trust



The **Teachers' Pack** is a free guide for all instrumental and vocal teachers, whether you are employed, working freelance in schools or teaching privately. It covers issues which all music teachers need to know about, including finding work, setting rates, recovering unpaid fees, safeguarding, criminal record checks and tax.

Our webinar series covers need-to-know subjects such as safeguarding, graded examinations, changes in primary and secondary curriculum, setting your tuition fees, teaching students with SEND, GCSE and A Level music, progression, curriculum and assessment and more.



About the ISM

The Independent Society of Musicians (ISM) is the UK's largest non-union representative body for those working in music, including music teachers. We are also a nationally recognised subject association for music. Since 1882, the ISM has been dedicated to promoting the importance of music and protecting the rights of those working in the music profession. We support over 11,000 members across the UK and Ireland with our unrivalled legal advice and representation, comprehensive insurance and specialist services.

Our members come from all areas of the music profession including performers, educators, composers and songwriters, music therapists and more, and from a wide variety of genres and musical backgrounds. As well as working musicians, our membership also includes part-time and full-time music students, those in the early part of their career right through to retired musicians. We campaign tirelessly in support of musicians' rights, music education and the profession as a whole. The ISM provides the secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education and regularly produces research into issues affecting the sector.

We are a financially independent, not-for-profit organisation with no political affiliation. This independence allows us the freedom to campaign on any issue affecting musicians. In 2021, the ISM was named Individual Member Association of the Year at the UK Association Awards and in 2024, the ISM was awarded a prestigious new kitemark by the Council for Subject Associations (CfSA), recognising the 'exemplary work' we do as a subject association.