

KENT MUSIC

YOUTH-LED SPACES

Kent Music's Music Labs

At Kent Music, we work with young people in making music of all kinds, mostly with instrumental ensembles, but also soloists and vocalists. In 2017 we began our Music Lab programme, starting in Folkestone before branching out across the county in different ways.

Music Labs, branded as 'Creative spaces from Kent Music', are spaces heavily informed by the young people who attend them to create the kind of music they felt most passionate about in a safe and supportive atmosphere.



Today the Folkestone and Thanet Music Labs function as weekly groups at our Music Centres. These youth-led spaces allow participants to choose what to play, how to play and make decisions about how the sessions are run.

The youth-led ethos of Music Labs has a huge impact on not only the students and tutors who attend, but also Kent Music as an organisation.

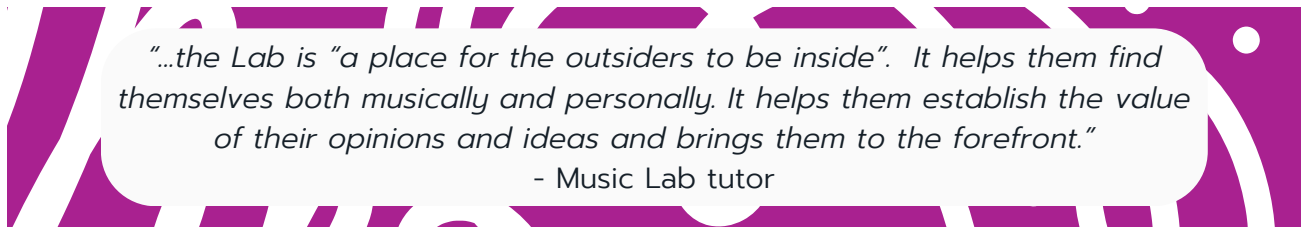
What need drove the creation of the Music Labs?

The initial reason was that there was a clear absence of any alternative creative or contemporary programme in Folkestone from Kent Music or other providers.

Our annual survey of schools showed a rise in the number of schools offering GCSE music and a decline in the number of schools offering vocational KS4 option. Our data showed

that schools were able to provide western classical ensemble opportunities for their pupils, but many were lacking in opportunities for pupils to explore areas such as pop performance, song writing and music production.

Commentary from local CYP (children and young people) told us that the lab-style activity is something that young people cannot access in school and that they wanted to participate in it. Pre-pandemic members travelled from outside of the district to attend demonstrating its potential for a more regional offer.



"...the Lab is "a place for the outsiders to be inside". It helps them find themselves both musically and personally. It helps them establish the value of their opinions and ideas and brings them to the forefront."

- Music Lab tutor

What do the children and young people do there?

Thanet Music Lab

Thanet Music Lab started as a pop orchestra and developed into the 'Thanet Music Lab' after the Covid pandemic. The intention being to provide CYP with the opportunity to identify things they want to work on and take time to explore the skills and techniques they need to achieve their joint aims.

This lab allows pupils to explore genres and artists of their choice with a focus on developing performances of songs they choose.

The key to its success is the versatility of our lab staff, this is essential to providing pupils with the breadth of opportunities through a lab. Staff who are skilled on a range of instruments and styles is essential to the running of Thanet Music Lab.

Folkestone Music Lab

Folkestone Music Lab is a creative space allowing CYP who attend to choose their own personal musical aims for development in a range of areas such as performance, song writing and composition, music tech and production.

The intention of the lab is to provide CYP with a versatile space where they can explore the music they love and that interests them, learn from our professional tutors and work together where that fits with their personal aims.

The lab is open weekly throughout term time, pupils have the freedom to explore both short and long term aims and goals for their music making.



What have we learned from running the Labs?

Running Music Labs in Folkestone and Thanet as youth-led spaces has taught us the importance of providing safe and inclusive environments for young peoples' creative expression.

By empowering young people to take ownership of their musical projects, we have seen first-hand the positive impact that access to resources and mentorship can have on their development as artists.

Additionally, the Music Labs have helped to foster a sense of community among young musicians, providing opportunities for collaboration and networking. Overall, we have learned that investing in young people's creative passions can have a transformative effect, both on their individual growth and on the cultural landscape of the communities they inhabit.

The Music Labs, as youth-led spaces, have significantly informed Kent Music's work. This includes our organizational methods, music offerings, and how we approach young people taking charge of their own music education. Through youth empowerment, we have been able to create a more inclusive and participatory environment that better serves our community.

The Music Labs have inspired us to prioritize young people's perspectives and needs in all aspects of our work.

Find out more about the Labs on our website:

Folkestone Lab: www.kent-music.com/fml | Thanet Lab: www.kent-music.com/tml

"There is no ability threshold - if you can't play a note, you are as welcome as the most confident player."
- Music Lab tutor