

Violins get an encore

■ School brings music to all pupils, again

by Chris Hunter
chunter@thekimgroup.co.uk

WHEN children at Archbishop Courtenay Primary School were first handed violins last month, they had no idea they were embarking on a musical path first worn by their pioneering forbears more than 100 years ago.

In 1897 the school in College Road, Maidstone, then called All Saints' School, earned its place in musical history by breaking with tradition and offering violins and lessons to all its children, rather than a gifted few.

The approach became known as the Maidstone Method, in honour of this first-ever group lesson; and so called "Maidstone violins" from the era are still in circulation today as a reminder of the town's role in bringing music to the masses.

A century later in October 2007,

head teacher Louise Stubberfield was also unaware of her school's musical past when she took the decision to spend a government grant on lessons for all the children.

She said: "The reason we started was that each school has a grant to support children learning instruments.

"Quite often this goes to just one or two children but we decided to spend it on everyone.

Recorder

"Originally we thought they could learn the recorder; then we thought we could go a bit further and teach them violin."

It was only with the arrival of violinist Katherine Tindall from Kent Music that the head teacher found she had taken the same decision as her Victorian predecessor.

"They were thrilled to find out" she said. "They really look forward to Wednesday morning and are making really good progress."



■ Nine-year-old Caroleen Penfold

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■ Above and right, Katherine Tindall from Kent Music with pupils at Archbishop Courtenay

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