I have been teaching all styles of contemporary electric and acoustic guitar at Parmiter’s School for the past five years. Although some students prefer to learn as a vocation, others require help in preparing for music grades (for which I have a 100% pass rate for Rockschool, RGT, Trinity and ABRSM exams; most achieving a merit or above) as well as GCSE and A level performances. Some enter for music competitions or audition for music colleges. In this capacity, one student in particular was especially appreciative of the advice and support given in preparation for an audition at Leeds College of Music - where I myself gained a BA (Hons) in Jazz.

Bespoke lessons are planned and prepared for each student. In this way, students enjoy structured, holistic lessons that move with direction. This can be seen in the way that all technical work or theory is geared towards repertoire. Hence, not only is there cohesion in the lesson, but elements of musical study that may otherwise appear disparate (or unnecessary) have their worth revealed within a musical context. Consequently, the performer is enriched by an understanding of synergy that pushes him or her to develop all aspects of musicality; one feeding off the other. In this way, I feel my teaching style has evolved over the past seven years to become exceptionally pragmatic. Although I endeavour to teach elements of reading and theory, (and have produced several hand-outs on these subjects) I feel that most students become more engaged, and consequently, make faster progress, when music itself is used as a vehicle to teach these elements. For example, the guitar chords in James Brown’s “Pappa Got A Brand New Bag” is a great introduction to semi-quavers. Beyoncé’s “Love On Top” perfectly demonstrates gospel semi-tone key changes. A Bourree by Bach or Handel could serve as a good example of phrasing which is not tied to beat one, but instead beat four.

There are regular discussions with students and parents to ensure all parties are “reading from the same hymn sheet.” At times, this may result in a change of direction - possibly looking at acoustic guitar instead of rock or vice-versa. As the teacher also offers classical and bass guitar lessons, this direction can be more drastic if desired; at least as a taster. One may feel it is paramount for the chosen repertoire to motivate the student, whilst nonetheless creating balance with the introduction of pieces or styles of music that may not have otherwise been considered.

Detailed notes are made weekly to monitor progress and enable the composition of constructive reports. In turn, students make notes of the week's practice so that, as well as being clear themselves of their target for the week, parents are kept up to date. Where appropriate, parents are also contacted directly on matters including progress and attendance. This preparation and communication instils a sense of confidence in the parents and students, which in turn is met with trust and tenacity. The student, parent and teacher are aware that they are part of a team; all working together towards the student’s development. Technology is also used extensively - recording Youtube tutorials not only of what a student is learning, but also with the relevant accompaniment to give their part context during the week. Recent examples of this can be found by following the link to my new Youtube channel, obtained via the homepage of guitarteacherbushey.co.uk. Class work is further supported with hand-outs being produced using programmes including Sibelius and Word. All of these articles are tailored as much as possible to the lay person so that parents are able to help with practice if necessary. Registers of attendance are also taken.

Parmiter’s School is a highly sought after secondary academy with a music specialism. Perhaps as a result of this specialism, the music department is extremely strong and vibrant. I enjoy discussing aspects of pedagogy with other members of the faculty and feel enriched to be part of a superb team. There is a great rapport amongst the staff, and in turn a splendid platform for people of different musical backgrounds to share their respective expertise. Consequently, I feel that the students benefit greatly from this positive atmosphere. Indeed, one may feel that the amount learnt in a lesson and the level of enjoyment in it should not be mutually exclusive, but rather interlinked; the one augmenting the other. I feel that being an effective member of the department and being sympathetic towards the needs and aspirations of each student is the starting point to quality learning.

In addition to teaching in schools, I teach privately in both Bushey and Edgware. In these contexts I teach one to one and in small groups. I enjoy managing Peter Elliot Music; preparing invoices and newsletters, filing accounts and invoices and, most of all, delivering high quality lessons which enable the students' to attain their goals. This position has required exceptional planning and organisation which I feel is reflected in the professionalism shown in my current teaching posts.

As well as teaching, one may feel that it is equally important for an educator to inspire the students.

Relevant demonstrations and/or accompaniments are always prepared and well executed. I am able to draw upon a great amount of eclectic professional experience, having performed in venues including:

Royal Albert Hall / Trafalgar Square - West End Live / Royal Festival Hall / Isle of Wight Festival / Twinwood Festival / Normandy D-Day Celebrations / Private Yacht, Monaco Grand Prix / FMA, Westminster Hall with guest speaker Cherie Blair / BAFTA for Tatler Magazine / Somerset House / Lords / Upton Jazz Festival / Specsavers Corporate Event, Guernsey / The Saatchi Gallery for Bremont Watches/ Kings Place, Kings Cross / Savoy Hotel / Gibraltar Jazz Festival / Jubilee pageant on a Dutch sail boat moored opposite HMS Belfast/ V & A museum / The Vortex/ Ronnie Scott’s / Pizza Express, Soho.

In all, I feel my hardworking nature and infectious passion for music well serves the students, whom I feel fortunate to watch progress.