

Music

Curriculum Principles

By the end of their secondary education, a student of Music at Dixons Kings will:

- Know sufficient music theory to underpin successful and satisfying experiences of performing and composing music, and to explain how different styles and genres of music work.
- Understand how Music works practically and experientially; eg. the component parts of melody, harmony / accompaniment, bass line and rhythm, and how they fit together to make a whole.

In order to truly appreciate the subject and create deep schema, topics within Music have been intelligently sequenced with the following rationale:

- KS3 - the opening unit initially aims to assess students' starting points in the three key areas of listening / appraising, performing and composing, and introduce them to these areas in an enjoyable, non-threatening way which demystifies music-making and inspires continued engagement with the subject. Then, on the basis that the ability to play in time with a beat / pulse is the fundamental skill underpinning all ensemble performance work, and that the inability to play in time is the greatest single inhibitor to progress, we focus on recognizing, internalizing and applying a range of knowledge and skills connected to pulse and rhythm. We return to this throughout the KS3 Music course. A variety of instruments are introduced, including untuned percussion (drums, claves, tambourines etc), tuned percussion (xylophones, glockenspiels and metallophones) and keyboards (although the focus is initially on accuracy of pulse and rhythm, not on instrumental technique). Rhythm notation is introduced as a means of communicating and conceptualizing the rhythms being played.
- Having focused mainly on pulse and rhythm for a cycle, students should then be ready to work on melody and harmony, where pitch and rhythm work together to create an integrated musical experience. We now develop specific keyboard skills, such as 5-finger technique and hand movement transition skills. Students are taught how to find the various notes on a keyboard, and how to read music using standard staff notation (treble clef). After working on reading and performing various melodies, we broaden out to consider accompaniment options, including harmony (chords / triads), drone and bass lines. Ukuleles and bass guitar are introduced at this point, as they tend to function in an accompaniment role. At every opportunity we return to the basic skill of playing a part in time with the pulse, but the variety and complexity of the ensemble skills required is constantly increasing.
- In Cycle 3 we apply the ensemble skills mastered so far to two extended vocal projects. Although some singing is done in both Cycle 1 and 2, the rationale behind leaving focussed work on vocal skills to this point in the year is as follows: students who are more confident in general performing skills (presenting work in front of others, staying in time with a pulse, maintaining a part in an ensemble etc) become more confident singers; singing is elevated to a higher status than if it is used at the start of the course then rarely returned to; boys in particular are more likely to engage with singing if they have already had positive musical experiences on other instruments. Students are required not only to perform vocally, but also to make creative decisions, arranging or remixing songs, which helps to prepare them for the more creative requirements of composition and songwriting which they will engage in during the Year 8 curriculum.
- In Cycle 4 (Year 8 Cycle 1) students combine the rhythmic, vocal and keyboard skills they developed in Year 7 to create performances in Blues and pop genres. The role of chords / harmony / accompaniment, introduced towards the end of Year 7, becomes increasingly important here. In particular, the recurrence of certain key chord progressions is taught. A new skill, improvisation, is also introduced.
- In Cycle 5 (Year 8 Cycle 2), students continue to compose and experiment with music in various forms, from the ancient (Ground Bass variations in the style of Pachelbel's 'Kanon') to the contemporary (learning to use Garageband on ipads to arrange and compose music).
- In Cycle 6 (Year 8 Cycle 3), students bring all of their musical experience together to attempt a songwriting project. Drawing on the study of various pieces and genres in earlier cycles, students apply both creative / compositional skills and ensemble performance skills to realise their creations. The intention is that this final cycle will be both an inspiration to further musical development for those who wish, and a celebration of KS3 music-making.
- KS4 - We are currently (September 2024) in transition between the Pearson BTEC Tech Level 1/2 Award in Music Practice (current Year 11 cohort working towards this) and the WJEC/Eduqas Music GCSE (years 9 and 10 working on this).
- Year 9 Cycle 1 is, of necessity, a flexible preparation period, with materials and approaches constantly being adapted to suit the needs of a usually smaller cohort, often including a higher than average percentage of SEN students. However, sessions will usually come under the heading of (a) music theory or (b) practical music-making:



- The music theory sessions build on students' basic knowledge of rhythm notation, staff notation and chordal harmony from Year 7/8, introducing more complex concepts in a practical way. For example, the concept of tonality is explored by means of playing and composing using specific scales or modes; triplet rhythms are introduced via a bhangra project, etc. A skeleton Year 9 curriculum is in the process of being built, focussing on the musical elements (DR T SMITH: Dynamics, Rhythm, Structure, Melody (and Metre), Instrumentation, Texture (and Tonality, Timbre and Tempo) and Harmony) with special emphasis on those areas likely to be less familiar to students from their KS3 experience (eg. tonality, texture and metre)
- The music practice sessions will vary considerably depending on the number, interests and abilities of the students in the class, but will start with developing keyboard skills. Students will also be given the opportunity to learn the rudiments of several other instruments - guitar, bass guitar and drumkit, and then to specialise in one or more instruments as the course progresses. A bank of differentiated resources is used as needed, as is peripatetic tutor time whenever possible within timetabling constraints, to allow students a genuinely personalised pathway to musical development. Solo projects are used to develop technical facility, while ensemble projects are also introduced to further develop aural skills and the ability to recognise pulse and rhythm. Regular composition exercises are also undertaken, to develop skills needed later in the course, and to provide a practical outlet for the theory knowledge being developed. Some of the work done will be linked to AoS 2: Music for Ensemble and AoS4: Popular Music.
- In Year 9 Cycle 2 we begin the GCSE course proper, focussing on AoS1: Musical Forms and Devices, and the first set work (J. S. Bach - Badinerie). Work on ensemble performances for assessment begins, along with more extended composition exercises in response to a variety of briefs.
- In Year 9 Cycle 3 we focus on AoS4: Popular Music, along with necessary vocabulary and concepts. Students do an in-depth study of the second set work, 'Africa' by Toto. Throughout Year 9, theoretical concepts will be taught in a holistic way, through performing, composing, listening and appraising exercises. Students will be working on solo performance pieces, which will build skills, and may start developing a repertoire for their eventual coursework performance pieces.
- In Year 10 Cycle 1 students are introduced to AoS2: Music for ensemble. This naturally provides a focus for students' own ensemble performances (as opposed to the primarily solo performance focus in Year 9), and the distinctive skills required when performing with others. They will also learn about other types of ensemble, such as chamber music, jazz trio, musical theatre ensembles etc.
- In Year 10 Cycle 2 the focus is on the final Area of Study, 'Film Music'. Although work on performances will continue, this unit lends itself to a deeper focus on compositional skills, looking at concepts such as leitmotif, motivic development, dynamic contrast and composing to a given brief.
- In Year 10 Cycle 3, students begin working towards their first coursework assignment, the free composition, using knowledge and skills developed during the first 5 cycles. Ongoing work on the four Areas of Study will increasingly focus on exam-style listening questions.
- In Year 11 Cycles 1 and 2, students prepare and perform / record their coursework performance pieces and complete their second composition in response to a brief provided by the exam board. Ongoing preparation for the listening exam will include exam technique studies and mock exams. All four Areas of Study will be revisited, along with the two set works, and additional content may be covered in these areas, as appropriate to the level of the class.
- In Year 11 Cycle 3, all coursework will have been completed, and any remaining time will be devoted to focussed listening exam revision and preparation.

The Music curriculum at Kings has been influenced by:

- * the expertise and powerful knowledge of individual staff members (including instrumental tutors)
- * the principles underlying the 'Musical Futures' curriculum
- * 'Rockschool' materials and approaches
- * the pioneering approach to practical music at South Craven school
- * Trinity Rock and Pop / Rockscool performance materials
- * the requirements of the Music GCSE WJEC / Eduqas specification
- * Ofsted Research Review Series: Music (July 2021)
- * Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction - modelling and guided practice ('I do, we do, you do')

Our Music curriculum ensures that social disadvantage is addressed through:

- The majority of our students have not had the musical opportunities through their home lives which many from other cultures / social classes sometimes take for granted. Furthermore, the majority have had limited access to music at KS2, as primary schools in more disadvantaged areas have historically tended to prioritise the core subjects at the expense

of the arts and other areas perceived to be at the fringe of the curriculum. Music can also be an expensive hobby, requiring as it does specialised equipment and instruments, which can place it beyond the reach of the economically disadvantaged. We provide both a general music curriculum and additional instrumental tuition entirely free of charge, making musical equipment and instruments available to many who could not afford to own them.

- Knowledge and appreciation of certain types of music forms part of an unofficial canon of 'high culture' which belongs to the cultural capital enjoyed by those who tend to sit at the top table. By giving students an entry point to this knowledge we promote their social mobility. On the other hand, there have always been musical forms which were the expression of the marginalised sectors of society (eg. The Blues, rap, hip hop, reggae), and this course recognises the role of these forms too, in fighting for justice. Such genres have often given a voice to the disenfranchised (cf. Stormzy and his impromptu Grenfell rap) and can also provide a sense of community and belonging for those who engage with them, and even on occasions offer a route out of poverty for those who succeed in mastering them.
- All music tasks undertaken in lessons are differentiated to provide challenge at a realistic level for all students, including those who have no previous experience of music-making, as well as stretching those with existing levels of skill in the subject. Tasks are tailored to allow students to apply any previous knowledge creatively, placing their experiences within a broader picture.
- The opportunity provided by music lessons to learn practical skills which enable creative forms of communication and expression, and also often require high levels of focus, attention to detail and effective working with others, can be a lifeline to some of those students who struggle with the more academic curriculum, allowing them to appreciate a different side of their humanity, and perhaps to experience a degree of personal efficacy not found elsewhere on the curriculum.
- We have chosen to switch from the Pearson BTEC Tech Level 1/2 Award in Music Practice to WJEC/Eduqas GCSE for several reasons. Although BTEC courses have historically offered a more accessible music qualification for the majority of our students, in which they might be expected to achieve higher grades than in the more traditionally academic GCSE course, recent changes in courses mean this is no longer the case. As the WJEC/Eduqas course seems to us to strike a good balance between academic rigour and the natural process of ongoing development of practical skills, we feel it will offer the right combination of challenge and enjoyment for our cohort of students.
- Music is a popular choice with SEND students at KS4. Whilst SEND students may sometimes need additional support to access Music as much as any other subject, sometimes this can prove to be an area of special ability for them, with fewer of the usual barriers to learning they experience elsewhere in the curriculum. Each student therefore needs to be treated as an individual, and guided as appropriate, to allow them to achieve to their best ability, and enjoy the subject. Instrumental tutors are often timetabled on KS4 teaching days, and where possible SEND students are prioritised for their individual or small group support and tuition.
- Our extra-curricular provision (including choir, clubs, individual and group practice facilities, concerts and talent shows) is available to all students, allowing students who may be musically under-resourced at home to access the full range of opportunities available within a small but well-resources department

We fully believe Music can contribute to the personal development of students at Dixons Kings through:

- Promoting an awareness of, and an appreciation for, culture, in the widest sense of the word.
- Fostering an appreciation for beauty, creativity and more elevated forms of expression than the merely propositional, functional or academic forms of communication required in some other disciplines.
- Requiring students to focus on, and align themselves with, an objective reality outside of themselves - ie. the pulse, or beat, which is foundational to successful music-making. This submission to the external other is an important discipline, as it promotes humility, and an awareness of the needs / requirements of others.
- The essentially social and collaborative nature of most music-making, requiring as it does a heightened sensitivity to, and awareness of, the actions of others.
- Developing confidence in front of an audience - learning how to present one's ideas effectively and appropriately to others.
- All of the above encompasses the extra-curricular opportunities provided by the Music department, as well as the timetabled curricular provision.

Our belief is that homework is used for deliberate practice of what has been taught in lessons. We also use retrieval practice and spaced revision to support all students with committing knowledge to long term memory.



- At KS3 - In Music, the practical components (which form the bulk of the curriculum) have to be done in the classroom, so homework is used primarily to support the acquisition and memorisation of the key knowledge which underpins successful practical music-making, for example:
 - * shared language - musical vocabulary for communicating the technical and expressive qualities of a piece of music
 - * musical signs and symbols - rhythm and pitch notation, performance markings etc.
 - * scales / note combinations / chord progressions used in certain genres (eg. Blues scale, Major scale, 4-chord trick etc)
- At KS4 - Whilst it is recognised that many students do not have the resources, equipment or space to practice music at home, a significant number do, and personal practice at home is encouraged. Those students who cannot do so at home are encouraged to use the academy's facilities to engage in independent music practice after school. Students are unlikely to make significant progress in developing music skills without the self-motivation and initiative to practice on their own as well as in timetabled lessons, and this is emphasised to students considering taking this course.
- Other homework tasks will include the learning and memorisation of relevant musical theory knowledge, and the compositional and sonic features of the various genres studied.
- More practical units are likely to require the keeping of a logbook recording progress made, and this will often be set as homework, to allow as much of the curriculum time as possible to be devoted to the practical ensemble work which cannot realistically happen outside the classroom context.

Opportunities to build an understanding of social, moral and ethical issues are developed alongside links to the wider world, including careers:

What topical issues are addressed in this subject? How does this subject link to everyday experiences? What additional activities are offered by the subject area? What enrichment activities can the students engage in? How do students find out about career opportunities? How does the history of the subject influence the students / curriculum?

- the link between music and the spiritual aspect of humanity is long established, if somewhat difficult to define
- most effective music-making depends on effective ensemble work, communication, listening – essentially a group learning to function as a unit, with the whole becoming greater than the sum of the parts. Thus music-making has the potential to be of great benefit both socially and morally.
- Music is a part of every culture, and in this sense any musical expression or knowledge is implicitly cultural. This course offers the opportunity to taste a little of different cultures (most notably Balinese / Javanese via the introduction to gamelan music, and African vocal music). A Hindi film song ('Soldier Soldier'), Classical music ('Pavane for Jack Point') and one of the early pop classics ('Stand by me') are also studied in Year 7, while rap music, Blues and Ground Bass Variations (an ancient pre-classical music structure) are experienced in Year 8. This variety helps foster a healthy respect for different cultures and historical eras.
- the ensemble work required of students becomes progressively more demanding, requiring a greater degree of resilience and perseverance from students, and even closer listening to, and co-operation with, each other
- more able musicians will be expected to assist and help along those who are finding the learning more difficult, and there are many opportunities for teamwork, collaboration, negotiation and taking on a variety of roles while working with others
- The role of music in popular culture is considered: eg. early musical films ('Singing in the Rain') compared / contrasted with contemporary American culture ('Glee' and the mash-up phenomenon); rap music as social commentary; songwriting as a vehicle for protest / cries for justice (eg. Bob Dylan); Garageband, and the influence of technology on modern music-making.
- Careers in the Music Industry, and an understanding of the Music Industry as part of the highly profitable entertainment sector, are built into the curriculum throughout, with a careers-focussed activity in KS3 lessons at least once per term. Music sequencing software packages, such as Garageband and Reason, and the influence of technology on modern music-making, are also explored in depth.

Further Information can be found in:

- Long term plans
- Knowledge Organisers
- Schemes of work
- Padlet



- Exam specification / support materials

