

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 rap, 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 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.
- In Cycle 6 (Year 8 Cycle 3), 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). 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 - There are two overlapping strands throughout the first two cycles - music theory and music practice. One lesson per week is devoted to each, but each informs the other.



- 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, ledger lines are introduced first in theory, after which students learn to read and play a keyboard piece which uses a lot of ledger lines; the theory of chord inversions is introduced by actually playing music with chord inversions, then learning why certain chords are inverted at certain times; etc. Music theory is a potentially endless ocean of knowledge, so those areas likely to directly impact on practical music-making are prioritised, as are those concepts which are foundational to many other aspects of music theory (eg. Major / minor tonality)
- 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.
- In Cycle 3 we begin the formal BTEC course with Unit 5: Introducing Music Performance, applying the practical skills learned and developed so far. Students engage in a skills audit using recent performance evidence, then use this to help them devise appropriate short-term targets for developing their performing skills further. They keep evidence of their progress in the form of a weekly log, tutor statements and video clips of their practice. The first milestone performance(s) within this unit will occur at the end of the cycle, either within the classroom, or in a school concert, or both.
- In Years 10 and 11 students work towards the BTEC Level 1/2 First Award in Music following an assessment plan which may vary from year to year depending on the needs of the cohort, but is likely to be similar to the following:
- Year 10 Cycle 1 - students complete Assignment for Learning Aim A of Unit 5: Introducing Music Performance, whilst further developing performing skills on one or more instruments / voice. The requirement to set and review short-term targets at regular intervals and to keep a weekly log of progress should help students develop greater independence and greater ownership of their musical growth. Students are also introduced to knowledge relating to Unit 3: Introducing Live Sound. It is anticipated that some students who struggle with playing music may complete this unit as an alternative to Unit 5, but a basic grasp of how sound systems work is valuable to all musicians whether or not they pursue a more detailed knowledge of this field. Likewise, we see it as important that all students at least attempt the Unit 5 first assignment, even if it seems likely that the more technical route offered by Unit 3 will give them a better grade, as a Music course which didn't actually involve learning to play any music would seem to be missing the point!
- Year 10 Cycle 2 - students begin learning the required content for Unit 1: The Music Industry (for which they will take an external examination in May). Where possible, this content will be made more vocationally relevant by means of one or more of the following: involvement in public music performances and events (both in and out of school); a visit to a music venue; interviews with people working in the Music Industry. Students will learn about organisations within the Music Industry and how they function and work together - eg. venues, publishing companies and record labels, royalty collection agencies, trade bodies and unions etc. They will also learn about the many individual job roles within these organisations, including many 'behind-the-scenes' roles - eg. live sound technician, recording studio engineer, roadie, promoter, music journalist, music director, music producer etc. Students are also taught important aspects of exam technique, and coached to use key subject-specific vocabulary in their answers. Small group instrumental lessons will continue for BTEC Music students throughout this cycle, allowing students to continue developing their practical music skills, even if those are not the primary focus at this time.
- Year 10 Cycle 3 - the first 3 or 4 weeks will be focussed on final preparations for the external exam in May, with revision exercises, further exam technique coaching, past papers and mock exams. Once the exam is completed, students will begin work on Unit 7: Introducing Music Sequencing. This unit is delivered using Garageband software on iPad minis, and builds on their experience with Garageband in Year 8. We begin by revising their understanding of various functions covered in Year 8, before moving on to more advanced operations. Students are then given a creative assignment, to compose or arrange music suitable for a specific purpose - an industry-style commission, or brief. Again, instrumental lessons continue through this cycle, and students will increasingly be supported to start selecting suitable repertoire for their final performances in Year 11. Some will be encouraged to perform in the end of Year concert, and log the experience for their Unit 5 portfolio.



- Year 11 Cycle 1 - students work on Unit 2: Managing a Music Product. This requires students to work in groups to create a Music product - either a live concert / music event, or a CD / recording project. The knowledge of Music industry practice which they developed in Year 10 (especially through Unit 1) will help them work effectively here, and the links will be made explicit as students take on specific roles within their groups - eg. marketing director, stage manager, live sound technician, performer etc. There are also potential links with other units which can and should be exploited during this project. Some students may use this opportunity to further their sequencing skills (for Unit 7) by, for example, creating original material using Garageband for a CD product. Others may work towards Unit 5 by working on specific performances for a concert they organise. Still others may work towards Unit 3 by working as live sound technicians or roadies for events they put on. Students will be encouraged both to work to their strengths, and explore new frontiers during this unit.
- Year 11 Cycle 2 - Students will work on their final presentations for Unit 7 (demonstrating their mastery of Garageband skills) and their final performances for Unit 5 (or in some cases, their live sound assignments for Unit 3). There is unlikely to be new content taught at this time, as students should now know all they need to know - the emphasis at this point is on them applying all the musical knowledge and skills they have gained so far as creatively and professionally as possible to produce effective musical outcomes.
- Year 11 Cycle 3 will be kept free for tying up loose ends, resubmission opportunities where required, and revising Unit 1 for any students requiring retakes.

The Music curriculum at Kings has been influenced by:

- * the principles underlying the 'Musical Futures' curriculum
- * 'Rockschool' materials and approaches
- * the pioneering approach to practical music at South Craven school
- * ABRSM music theory content
- * Trinity Rock and Pop / Rockscool performance materials
- * the requirements of the BTEC Level 2 Music award specification

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 choose to offer a BTEC Level 1/2 Award in Music rather than GCSE for several reasons. Firstly, for the majority of our students, their only meaningful experience of Music education has taken place here at Dixons Kings Academy within the KS3 curriculum, meaning that only a minority will have the musical background and home support which are, in practice, prerequisites for accessing the top grades in GCSE Music. The BTEC Music course's practical, skills-based, portfolio-evidenced approach allows students to focus only on that theoretical and academic knowledge which is required for the successful development and application of practical music-making skills. This is still a demanding course, but the practical relevance of the knowledge is much more apparent to students.
- Moreover, the vocational approach underpinning BTEC courses is beneficial in our particular context, as it challenges some ingrained negative attitudes towards Music and the Arts in general by presenting them as a major part of the creative and cultural industries in the UK. "The music industry is a vibrant, exciting and highly competitive industry that contributed £4.1 billion to the UK economy in 2015, outpacing the overall growth of the economy by 2.5 per cent. In 2016, live music alone created £3.7 billion in direct and indirect income for the UK. The music industry is constantly evolving and offers many different and exciting new work opportunities. In 2015, the music industry supported more than 117,000 full-time jobs in the UK, 69,300 of which were professional musician roles." (BTEC Tech Award in Music Practice Level 1/ Level 2 specification 2020)
- Music is a popular choice with SEND students at KS4, some of whom may have studied less music at KS3 than their peers, depending on their teaching group. 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 ones 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 knowledge and exam technique required for the core Music Industry unit.
- 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 KS4 BTEC course, with an entire unit (25% of the course grade) devoted to this area. This knowledge also informs work in some of the other units, especially Unit 2: Managing a Music Product. Music sequencing software packages, such as Garageband and Reason, and the influence of technology on modern music-making, are also explored in greater depth.

Remote working in our subject supports students to access the full curriculum in the following ways:

- Weekly provision of home learning tasks for students in Years 9, 10 and 11, for use by students who are self-isolating. Where possible these will cover the same material as students in school will cover that week, but in a practical subject this is not always possible - in such cases, the work provided will either:
 - a) support / underpin the practical work, so that students can acquire the requisite background knowledge and understanding to catch up quickly with missed practical tasks when they return to the classroom, or
 - b) revise, reinforce, extend or pre-teach other material directly relevant to the course and required for the external exam or coursework portfolio units



- The use of revision videos for Unit 1: The Music Industry - links emailed to all KS4 Music students studying this unit
- Provision of relevant revision materials on Padlet
- Where appropriate, the loan of school equipment / instruments, so students can continue to access practical work
- Videos and other support materials for instrumental students, created by our peripatetic music tutors

Further Information can be found in:

- Long term plans
- Knowledge Navigators
- Schemes of work
- Exam specification / support materials