



KS3 Curriculum Overview

Year 7

Rhythm & Note Values

Pupils will learn about and explore one of the most basic musical elements: Rhythm. In doing this they will also be learning and utilising the basic musical note values, as well a variety of musical performance techniques including imitation, call and response, unison and solo. The assessment serves as an introduction to group work in music and developing good teamwork skills, as well as a basic introduction to musical notes to prepare them for the following topic where they use this knowledge to begin to read music.

Pitch, Notation & Melody

In this topic pupils will learn the notes of the treble and bass clef and will practice reading from them using keyboards. They will use their knowledge from the first topic to independently decipher a basic nursery rhyme, and then move on to more advanced tasks involving popular music they may be familiar with. An extension of this topic is to introduce sharps and flats, where pupils must read and perform notation of popular music involving some of the black keys on the keyboard.

Performance Skills (Groups)

This is where pupils learn about and practice the various disciplines involved in professional music performance. Using keyboards, ukuleles and percussion pupils will take part in a class performance of a popular song making use of proper rehearsal methods and applying their individual skills. The topic aims to not only boost confidence, but to also encourage professionalism, agency, and motivation for performing music.

Performance Skills (Whole class)

In the run up to the Easter Concert, Year 7 will be applying everything they learnt in the group performances to whole class singing settings, with the goal of each Year 7 class performing a different song in the concert. This is an amazing opportunity for our pupils to experience getting up on stage and performing in their first year with us.

The Orchestra

Pupils will learn about the orchestra and all its traditional instruments and sections. They will engage in listening and composing activities to help them identify the appearance and sound of all the instruments, including knowledge of how they work and their pitch ranges. They will explore leadership, and the role and importance of the conductor in the orchestra. Pupils will also have a go at using music technology to re-create a well-known song using orchestral instruments.

Programme Music (Story-telling)

Using the Expedition Everest ride at Disney's Animal Kingdom as the platform, pupils must use their knowledge of the orchestra to compose music which tells a story, making use of major and minor tonalities, ascending and descending melodies, appropriate instrumentation, and changes in dynamics and tempo. The goal is to create music that directly narrates the events in the POV of the rollercoaster, including going up and down, encountering broken track, going backwards, plunging into darkness, and the appearance of a Yeti.



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Year 8

Intro to Music Tech

Pupils are introduced to the basic functions of DAW software (Digital Audio Workstation), which is used professionally in the music industry to compose, record, and manipulate music.

With hundreds of sound effects at their disposal, pupils will create a soundscape as the underscore for a pre-selected video clip. Pupils may choose footage of the Titanic wreck, a fly-through of an abandoned building, or drone footage of Chernobyl. Pupils will learn to manipulate the sounds using tools such as fading in and out, cutting and pasting, panning, automation, pitch-shifting, and applying effects like reverb and distortion.

Musical Futures – Just Play

Pupils are given opportunities to play more instruments including the bass guitar, drum kit, and electric guitar; as well as continuing to enjoy playing the keyboards and ukuleles.

Four different chords are learnt on each instrument which pupils can use to play along to a variety of popular songs with their class. The aim is to allow pupils at this stage to explore more instruments and spark interests in new areas.

Songwriting (Whole Term)

This topic encourages pupils to think more deeply about the lyrics in the songs they listen to, to understand the sophistication involved in writing a good song, and to write their own songs.

They will begin looking at the role of the songwriter in the Music Industry, moving onto analysing and listening to examples of current songs, resulting in a song of their own using devices such as word-setting, melisma, chord patterns, rhyming schemes, alliteration, and metaphorical language.

Pupils will be encouraged to base their songs on one of the school's core values.

Music in Film

Beginning with the role of the film composer in the Music Industry and looking at a case study of John Williams, pupils will go on to learning and utilising various techniques used in film music. They will engage in listening and micro-composing tasks to explore aspects such as diegetic/non-diegetic music, sound effects, mood setting, and mickey-mousing. They will then combine this with knowledge and skills learnt in Year 7 to effectively orchestrate their own music for a movie trailer (Joker 2019) using music technology.

Music in Video Games

Video game music includes many aspects of prior learning such as music technology, the orchestra, song writing, and programme music and is a nice round-up topic at the end of the year.

Pupils will study the history of video game music, engage in listening and composing tasks, as well as take part in performances of some classic video game tunes. Modern video game music will also be included where the music of games like Minecraft and Halo will be analysed, along with the massively multiplayer platforms Roblox and Fortnite.



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Year 9

Blues Music (Whole term)

Pupils learn about the origins of the Blues and its relevance to our present-day music. Famous Blues musicians are learnt about via listening and research-based activities. The 12-Bar-Blues is taught on the keyboards, ukuleles, bass guitar, and guitar to allow pupils opportunities to play along on various instruments. 'Swing' rhythms are taught on not only the drum kit, but also using the 'Cup Song' where pupils learn to play it in swing instead of straight; this is a great addition to classroom-based performances. Using the minor blues scale, pupils are also encouraged to improvise a solo and be confident in themselves doing so. On top of all this, they also have a go at writing their own Blues song lyrics as a class called 'The Marshland Blues' which they all perform together with the other instrumental sections.

World Music & Fusions

Starting off with the origins and basic elements of Reggae music, pupils will explore the contemporary music of the Caribbean. Lots of listening will be involved to identify the different genres of music in various fusions, along with some micro-composing tasks to help embed understanding. Pupils will then create their own fusion using Reggae and Dubstep as their two genres.

Production & Remixing

Using their prior knowledge and experiences using music technology, pupils will have a go at making their own remix of a popular song. With many vocal stem recordings at their disposal, along with hundreds of samples in different genres, they can select a song of their choice and create an effective remix. They will be using snipping, cutting and pasting, automation, effects, panning, pitch-shifting, and time-stretching to ensure the remix is of good quality.

Advanced Music Technology

In this topic we really pick apart the DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) software and learn about its more advanced functions and features. Pupils will be introduced to inputting MIDI data using several different methods, as well as how to edit the data using the piano view or event list.

They will study and analyse a pre-made project of a popular song, which uses both audio and MIDI data, and eventually will sequence their own MIDI data for 3 or more instruments over the top of the already existing audio data. This introduces the pupils to the concept of recorded music including both audio recorded in the studio, and also some instruments / sounds added synthetically.

Consolidation Project

For the last half term in KS3, pupils are given a choice of assignment briefs with clear aims, evidence checklists, and achievement criteria. They are to independently work on their specific assignment, continually checking their progress against the criteria.

The assignment briefs ask pupils to produce one of three different music 'products':

- A 30-minute radio show / podcast (Groups of 4 Max)
- A live performance of 2 contrasting pieces (Groups of 4 or Individual)
- An original composition (Individual, using music tech or an instrument)

Pupils will be required to consistently narrate their thoughts and ideas and collect evidence in their e-portfolios as they progress with the project as part of the assessment criteria. Independence and learner agency are key to succeeding in this final project.