

Music development plan summary: The Bishop's Stortford High School

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2025-26
Date this summary was published	01/09/2025
Date this summary will be reviewed	01/07/2026
Name of the school music lead	Joseph Emery
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Jonathan Griffiths
Name of local music hub	Hertfordshire Music Service
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	

This is a summary of how our school delivers music education to all our pupils across three areas – curriculum music, co-curricular provision and musical experiences – and what changes we are planning in future years. This information is to help pupils and parents or carers understand what our school offers and who we work with to support our pupils' music education.

Part A: Curriculum music

Music Curriculum Summary

Our music curriculum, spanning Key Stages 3–5, is underpinned by the National Model Music Curriculum and is designed to foster a lifelong engagement with music through high-quality, practical experiences in performance, composition and listening. For an overview of the curriculum map please follow this link: [TBSHS Curriculum Maps](#)

At **Key Stage 3**, all students receive weekly 1-hour music lessons, with a strong emphasis on active music-making. Singing and ukulele playing are central to the curriculum, alongside the development of musical literacy and knowledge across a broad range of genres. Lessons are built around inclusive, practical work that is regularly assessed through embedded formative strategies and low-stakes quizzes on key terminology. Pupils are encouraged to bring their own instrumental expertise into class, enriching the learning environment for all. Opportunities for authentic performance are integral to the curriculum, including year-group concerts and showcase events that promote resilience, commitment and excellence. Students can opt to carry on with curriculum music in Year 9, where they will receive two 1-hour lessons per week.

In **KS4**, students follow the Edexcel GCSE specification, engaging with a diverse selection of set works from different times and cultures. The curriculum is designed to build on practical musical experience while developing analytical listening skills. Live performance remains a key feature, with events such as the Year 11 recital evening and annual House Music Festival offering platforms for coursework performance and developing confidence and performance craft.

In **KS5**, the AQA A Level music course enables students to deepen their understanding of music through rigorous academic study and advanced performance and composition. Students explore set works through detailed score analysis, aural training, and creative application, with the option to specialise according to their individual strengths and interests. We also offer the Edexcel A Level in music technology, for students who have not followed the more traditional routes through practical music making.

Across all key stages, the department aims to develop not only high-quality musicians but also confident, reflective learners with a strong sense of cultural awareness and personal expression. Enrichment, digital integration and purposeful feedback all contribute to a dynamic and ambitious curriculum offer.

Further to curriculum-based qualifications, students also have the opportunity to complete ABRSM or Trinity graded instrumental examinations during their time at the school. We host multiple exam visits per academic year and have had success with many students progressing through to grade 8 completion before leaving the school.

Part B: Co-curricular music

Extra-curricular opportunities

The department has a strong tradition of high-quality extra-curricular provision. Extra-curricular music is a hugely significant and important factor in developing not just skilful and impressive musicians, but also confident, resilient and aspirational young people. The department strives to provide opportunities for all musical interests, abilities and ages, challenging the students with a range of repertoire designed to broaden their musical understanding and ability.

Student leadership opportunities have significantly increased in the past few years, with senior students supporting ensembles through the arranging of music and rehearsing and conducting of bands. The department continues to support the RS department in the planning and delivery of the school church services at Christmas and Easter and also runs three sets of ABRSM exams in school per year, ensuring that students have the opportunity to make tangible progress on their instrument/voice.

The following groups are run by music department staff:

Chamber Choir
Swing Band
Concert Band
Barbershop Quartet
Big Noise
Saxophone Ensemble
String Ensemble
Lower School Choir
Ukulele Group
Music Tech Club
Senior Jazz (Currently run by student music leader)

The department also utilises the team of Visiting Music Teachers (VMTs) in order to run a number of other ensembles:

Classical Guitar Ensemble
Brass Group
Rock Band

A number of student-run groups are facilitated and encouraged to participate in school performances. The programme of concerts ensures that students regularly get the opportunity to perform in front of large audiences, both as soloists and in their ensembles. The annual House Music Festival continues to see upwards of 150 students performing to and receiving feedback from professional musicians across a series of competitions, with finals day attracting esteemed and even world-renowned musicians as adjudicators. The department aims to present productions where both the musical and presentational aspects are of the highest achievable quality. The department has successfully applied to be part of the Hertfordshire Schools Gala Concert for its past two events, with strong uptake from the Chamber Choir. The department has continued to innovate with the Spring Concert, with a series of 'A Night At The...' concerts, including this year's celebration of computer game music, which was inspired by the study of gaming music at A Level.

Instrumental Lessons

We have a strong team of 9 self-employed visiting music teachers (VMT's) who come in to school to teach 1-1 and small group instrument lessons across the full range of band and orchestral instruments. Students can opt in to this provision, which costs £209 per term for 11 30-minute lessons. We have a collection of school owned instruments which we loan out to those wishing to learn a new instrument. The school provides financial support to subsidise or provide in full for those students in need, for example those who are eligible for the Pupil Premium funding.

Facilities

In the music department we have two large teaching spaces, a recording studio with control room and a suite of six spacious practice rooms which are used both for 1-1 teaching and for students to practise in at break, lunch or after school. The main hall is our main concert venue, featuring an enclosed control room, a fantastic array of sound and light functionality, green rooms and a large stage area.

Part C: Musical experiences

The music department provides a vast array of performance opportunities through the school year for students to take part in.

A list of extra-curricular musical experiences in music over the past two years includes:

Year 11 Recital Evening
Year 13 Recital Evening
Year 7 Concert
Christmas Concert
Christmas Services
Easter Services
ABRSM Exams
A Night at the Musicals / Movies / Arcade
Music Festival
Summer Sounds
TBSHS On The Move
Oliver! (2023)
Hertfordshire Schools Gala Concert (2023, 2025)
Song-writing workshop with local feeder schools
Theatre Trips
Percussion Group assembly delivered in feeder primary
Music for Final Assemblies

The Year 7 concert – which takes place at the end of the students' first half-term in the school – is always a particular highlight, with a year-group choir of upwards of 170 voices performing to a sold-out hall of family, friends and staff. Further to this, all students in the school engage in weekly singing during SLT assemblies, and they are also required to take part in singing at both the Christmas and Easter Church Services. All students in the school experience live music at least three times a year during the end of term Final Assembly, and they are also offered free tickets for all school performances throughout the year.

In the future

Current development goals around school music making are as follows:

- Continuous development of the KS3 curriculum to ensure that students are experiencing a broad and balanced music curriculum which provides stretch and challenge for all.
- Continuing to raise the visibility of the music department within the school and to further enhance the student perception of studying music at GCSE and A Level.
- Seeking to be awarded the Music Mark for excellence in music provision.
- To take part in a larger range of performance experiences, including both locally and nationally.

Further information (optional)

We work closely with the Hertfordshire Music Hub for performance opportunities and also staff CPD. For more information on hub-based musical opportunities outside of school, please visit the website here: [Hertfordshire Music Service](#)

If you wish to have music lessons outside of school time or to hire an instrument which the school cannot loan out, we do recommend speaking with the [De Rosa Music Academy](#) in Bishop's Stortford

For further information, please see this government [guide for parents and young people](#) on how they can get involved in music in and out of school, and where they can go to for support beyond the school.