

Performing Arts

Staff members: Ms J. Vercoe, Miss P. Bostock, Mrs F. Collins-Walsh, Miss E. Dickinson

Curriculum Rationale

The Performing Arts faculty are constantly looking for opportunities to be innovative in our practice and pride ourselves in offering an inspiring curriculum, alongside exciting enrichment opportunities. We strive to offer an inclusive and welcoming environment where pupils from all backgrounds can develop both technical and personal skills. We want pupils to foster a love of the performing arts, which leads to achievement in music and drama that can be celebrated across all year groups.

Our state-of-the-art facilities are the perfect place to allow pupils to explore their creativity, whilst benefiting from the transferable skills that the Performing Arts provide, such as confidence, resilience and effective communication skills. At KS3, Performing Arts is taught once a week throughout the school year with pupils being encouraged to achieve academic and vocational excellence.

The threshold concepts against which pupils are assessed in Performing Arts have been created and developed by both music and drama specialists from across the trust. This allows us to ensure that all Dean Trust pupils are receiving the same high-quality curriculum offer and being assessed against the same criteria.

The threshold concepts for Drama at KS3 are based on four fundamental strands of the subject:

- Performance – Pupil's ability to apply physical and vocal techniques in performance
- Creating/devising – Pupil's ability to create their own performance work using a range of devices.
- Reflection – Pupil's ability to recognise strengths and areas to improve in their work and the work of others.
- Personal skills – Pupil's ability to work as a group, manage their time and demonstrate skills such as confidence and resilience.

Similarly, the threshold concepts in music are centred around the fundamental areas of the subject:

- Performance – A pupil's ability to perform music and understand the theory which underpins it.
- Creating/Composing – A pupil's ability to create their own musical ideas and pieces.
- Appraising – A pupil's ability to recognise musical elements and comment on their use.

These are the key areas which allow pupils to develop a strong understanding of the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in drama and music.

In drama at KS3, each year group works to develop their understanding of a specific genre of theatre whilst developing the knowledge and skills outlined in the threshold concepts. All the units are designed to allow them to firstly, learn about the specific genre, then to experience it in a practical manner and then use their knowledge and skills to create their own work. Similarly, in Music, the knowledge of the elements of music are revisited, built upon and applied to practical work throughout KS3 and pupils are asked to apply this to

their practical work throughout KS3.

Our curriculum at KS3 is ambitious and inspiring, and exposes pupils to knowledge about influential practitioners, including Stanislavski and Brecht and the great influence their respective styles have had on the development of theatre. We have chosen to teach these practitioners as early as KS3, as they are considered pioneers of two most influential genres in theatre history and we believe pupils need to understand how their influence has shaped theatre, throughout history. Similarly, in the KS3 Music curriculum, the knowledge of the fundamental elements of music (pitch, duration, texture, tempo & dynamics) permeates throughout the units of work. We believe that it is essential for all pupils to be able to understand, recognise and manipulate the elements of music and gives them a deeper understanding of what music is made of. This exposure enables pupils to gain a wider understanding of the performing arts world, beyond just practical skills, which in turn develops pupils' cultural capital. Our curriculum is purposely designed to provide pupils with the opportunity to consider how the skills and understanding gained in performing arts can navigate and contribute to a wider understanding of the world.

Curriculum Overview

Pupils often arrive with vastly different knowledge and experience in Music and Drama. At the start of year seven, we aim to consolidate any previous knowledge they may have brought from primary school, through the inclusion of introductory units, where concepts such as basic characterisation skills and knowledge of the elements of music are covered and delivered in a way that, all pupils gain the same knowledge from the outset.

Pupils in KS3 take part in Music and Drama lessons once a week, on a half termly rotation. The KS3 curriculum is purposefully designed so over the three units of work, pupils in each year group have the opportunity to gain new knowledge, develop practical skills and create their own work. An importance is also placed on the linking of new concepts to prior knowledge which gives new learning a context and leads to it being learnt in a more secure manner. Retrieval practice is consistently included in lessons at KS3, where pupils constantly revisit prior knowledge which has a positive effect their ability to remember what they have been taught. Prior knowledge is also applied to new contexts and so, ensures the incremental accrual of knowledge as they progress through the year groups.

Drama

The drama curriculum at KS3 is structured in the same manner across the three years, but the complexity of the concepts and skills increase as pupils progress. The three drama units in each year follow this structure:

- Unit 1 - Primarily knowledge based. Pupils learn about and gain practical skills in relation to a specific style/genre. This will take the form of teacher-led practical workshops with some group tasks.
- Unit 2 - Gives the pupils the opportunity to develop and apply the knowledge they gained in the previous unit. Takes the form of a performance piece, usually scripted. Opportunities to Reflect on their work and the work of others will be given during this unit.
- Unit 3 - Furthers their understanding as they are required to apply the skills and knowledge acquired over the year to their own creative/devising work.

This structure is mirrored across each year in KS3 but the concepts and the skills become more challenging. In year seven, pupils focus on fundamental skills such as characterisation

and the naturalistic style. In year 8 there is a focus on the non-naturalistic, more abstract style. Whereas in Year nine we focus on developing their understanding of practitioners within these styles to further strengthen their understanding, in preparation for KS4.

Music

The Music curriculum at KS3 is structured in a similar way to Drama, with pupils gaining new knowledge and making links to prior knowledge in the first unit, applying to performance pieces in the second, and finally creating/rehearsing their own pieces in the final unit of each year.

In Year 7, pupils focus on embedding and using strong knowledge of the basic elements of music. This is done through a variety of ways including experience of instruments such as keyboard and drums. In Year 8, pupils deepen their understanding of the elements that underpin practical music skills, through a band work unit, which allows them to apply their understanding of the elements to instruments such as the guitar, drums, keyboards and voice. Year nine is an opportunity to focus on consolidation their learning from the previous two years and developing it further in preparation for KS4. Year nine also introduces pupils to the concept of music technology and creating music using sequencing techniques. Again, this provides a solid foundation for the knowledge which is required at KS4.

In both Music and Drama, knowledge and understanding are assessed throughout the units of work and verbal feedback is a key part of lessons. Pupils take part in practical workshops, rehearsals and performances to demonstrate understanding but many opportunities are taken where pupils discuss and verbally articulate understanding. More formal assessments mostly take the form of practical assessments at the end of each unit of work.

We offer two options at KS4, as outlined below:

BTEC Level ½ Tech Award in Performing Arts

This vocational course exposes pupils to the Performing Arts industry, giving contextual knowledge and practical skills in a range of performance styles. The learning that they have previously done in relation to practitioners/genres allows pupils to achieve well at KS4.

BTEC Level 2 First Award in Music

There is a strong focus on the use of Music Technology within this course. The music industry is introduced to the pupils in a mandatory unit which allows them to gain an understanding of the wider music world and the opportunities it can present. Other units include composition and performance units, where pupils will rely heavily on the solid foundation of understanding they have established during their KS3 learning.

In both these courses, assessment takes place through a combination of coursework and externally assessed exams. Each unit/component requires pupils to apply new and previous learning to wide variety of practical tasks. Although they are stand-alone units, there are many opportunities to transfer skills and understanding across each one.