

Subject overview for: Dance

1. Subject overview

The Dance curriculum at John Masefield has been designed to give students a breadth of experience in a range of styles, covering different cultures and exploring a variety of skills, therefore meeting the National Curriculum requirements. Beyond the National Curriculum, are the important opportunities to experience the creative process of choreography. Through creating their own dances, students are able to develop the key life skills relevant in all other subjects including teamwork, problem solving and creativity. Developing their cultural understanding and appreciation for the arts also forms as a significant part of our Dance curriculum, enabling students to develop their empathy and aesthetic understanding.

2. Key Stage Three summary (Year 7 and Year 8)

The range of topics and dance styles explored throughout Years 7 and 8 have been chosen to engage students' interest, develop their problem solving and communication skills as well as their appreciation of dance as an art form. The units that they will study are designed to encourage students to explore a range of physical exercise and techniques that they can go on to utilise if they choose to explore dance further in their lives. The curriculum also broadens their knowledge of professional dance and the range of careers available within the Performing Arts sector.

The topics explored in Year 7 begin with an introduction to basic performance skills in a jazz style using the theme of cartoon characters. In this first unit, students learn coordination and timing skills in movement and characterisation to communicate a dance idea. The second topic in Year 7 explores basic choreography skills in hip hop dance and uses the theme of secret agents. Through this work, we also develop problem solving skills in exploring simple dance structures, developing motifs and exploring relationships using formations, unison and canon. The final dance unit of Year 7 introduces students to African Dance through exploring the Lion King musical. We look at the various techniques, movement origins and dynamics that make up the stylistic features of some cultural dance styles.

In Y8 we recap all skills in performing and choreographing. To develop this further, students study Hip hop dance in more depth to engage the students in an accessible style as well as giving them a more challenging style to master. The second topic in Year 8 requires students to analyse a professional work from a company that features in the GCSE curriculum, studying in a light touch way to explore the key elements of dance appreciation. This unit is designed to prepare students for the RSL vocational qualifications as well as develop their arts appreciation. The Showcase at the end of Year 8 requires that students pull together all of the key skills learned across Key Stage 3 into a final performance of their own creation to a brief set by the Performing Arts team.

3. Key Stage Four summary

a. Year 9: Transition year

Year 9 recaps key skills learned in Year 8 with an opportunity to learn and perform full length dances in a Contemporary style and a Jazz style. In their first term they will explore the challenges of more complex and demanding choreography to perform as part of an ensemble. They will develop their communication and problem-solving skills with small choreography tasks. This leads into their first performance in a live dance showcase. In addition to their practical work they will develop their written analysis of dances and will revisit and apply subject specific vocabulary introduced in Year 7 and 8. In the Spring term, students will be taught further, in depth skills in choreographing and responding to stimuli. They will be expected to create their own dance piece of approximately 3 minutes in small groups and complete detailed research influenced by their stimulus material. In the Summer term, students will focus more on specific dance technique and learn more ensemble group dances in a range of styles. A theatre trip will also take place towards the end of the year to further develop their reviewing and analytical skills from Year 8; this time in a live environment.

b. Year 10 and Year 11: RSL Course

The RSL Level 2 Certificate in Creative and Performing Arts: Dance is a vocational qualification equivalent to a GCSE or BTEC. Throughout Year 10, there will be a focus on undertaking practise briefs to prepare them for assessment in Year 11. There are two units that are explored which are Ensemble Dance and Live Performance. Students will undertake practical workshops exploring a range of styles and performance skills. They will also begin to write structured evaluations in response to the practise briefs, using their subject specific vocabulary to support their responses. As in Year 9, students will also be taken to the theatre to deepen and strengthen their reviewing and analytical skills and they will begin to practice the essay writing skills needed for the controlled assessment in Year 11. Students will be set a more challenging task of creating their own choreography pieces of approximately 2-6 minutes and completing a programme note outlining their research into their chosen stimulus. In the summer term, the students will also perform in a live dance showcase.

Year 11 begins with the first official practical assessment for the Ensemble Dance Unit. This will be assessed in the second half term in Autumn to enable students to spend sufficient time to learn and perfect two contrasting dance pieces for a live performance. Once completed, students will move on to complete their controlled assessment for the Live Performance unit in which they need their analytical and evaluative skills to reflect on the given brief. They are required to choose either a solo or group choreography task to complete in response to a brief set out by the exam board. Once the practical examinations are all completed, we will then be focussed on revising and developing exam techniques in terms of understanding the basic principles of choreography, evaluating physical, technical and expressive skills, as well as reviewing professional dance works.

4. Sixth Form courses

The RSL Level 3 Diploma course is also a vocational qualification equivalent to an A level. In this course, students continue to develop key skills in a more professional context. At the beginning of Year 12, we learn about the work of key practitioners in a greater depth of study including the background and objectives of the practitioners and their social, cultural, political and historical influences. For the first unit (Repertory Dance Performance) the students learn sections of the repertoire practically and learn to perform as an ensemble as well as a soloist. Again, going into a deeper exploration and a more informed approach than in the lower years. All units for this course brings together all of the skills that they have been developing since Year 7 and expects them to be using the same key terminology. The second unit they will complete is Applying safe dance practice, in which they will learn about anatomy and physiology. This builds on to their first core unit (Planning for a career in Performing Arts) in which they will undertake a range of work experience placements. Following this unit in the final term of Year 12, students will complete the Leading Dance unit, working with younger students to develop their skills acquired in the Careers unit.

In Year 13 the students will complete their final three units starting with Dance Technique and Performance. They will utilise all training and skills developed from Year 7 and upwards to perform more challenging dance choreography. This will then be followed by the Ensemble Dance Performance unit in which they use their knowledge and understanding of Dance relationships. The final unit they complete as part of their Diploma course is their controlled assessment (Performance Preparation unit).

5. Contribution to preparing for life in modern Britain/equalities

Students develop an appreciation of performing arts and different cultures in modern Britain through the exploration of different styles of dance and professional theatre and dance throughout the curriculum at John Masfield.

6. Contribution to careers provision

In Year 8 through the dance appreciation unit, students learn about a range of roles in the performing arts sector and analyse the importance of the different roles in the success of the final performances. In Years 9-11 students have opportunities to go on trips to experience live professional theatre and dance to give them a deeper understanding of the profession. In the sixth form, students have the opportunity to interview different professionals and are also required to undertake work experience in a range of roles, giving them further in-depth understanding of employment in the performing arts sector.