

Subject overview for: Drama

1. Subject overview

‘Logic will take you from A to B. Imagination will take you anywhere’ - Albert Einstein

Drama is a vibrant, dynamic, and necessary part of the curriculum. It is a place for creative, imaginative and collaborative work where the development of self-esteem and self-confidence is as important as the knowledge and skills content. Drama students are explorers, communicators and leaders in equal measure as we explore the world they live in through the medium of theatre. The events that have shaped the world and its development are integral to theatre which not only holds up a mirror to our society but also examines and questions our humanity.

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

The purpose of the KS3 curriculum is to broaden students’ knowledge and experience of Drama both as a tool to develop themselves as rounded individuals and as part of the fabric of society. By the end of Year 8, students will have undertaken a practical approach to the study of Shakespeare and experienced several of his major works increasing their awareness of the literary canon. They experience the work of the National Theatre and interpreted, analysed and evaluated a full play. Through various practical approaches, they apply performance skills including exploring the use of voice and movement to interpret character; understanding stagecraft; character research and development and individual creativity. Alongside their creative skills in the subject, students also grow in self-confidence and learn team-building and problem-solving techniques.

Students use a variety of vehicles to explore physical and vocal expression including silent movies, Shakespeare, Kneehigh’s Hansel and Gretel and Frantic Assembly throughout their two years of study. They build their skills incrementally and revisit regularly throughout. Students are assessed through half-termly performance and self-reflection exercises to check their recall of knowledge and development of key skills.

3. Key Stage Four summary

a. Year 9: Transition year

Year 9 begins with a recap of key skills learned in Year 8 with an audit of their strengths and areas for development so far. This leads into the study of a slightly higher-level text of *The 39 Steps*. This exciting text teaches students about further concepts such as multi-roling and world-building through physical theatre. Building on the skills learned in Year 8, students direct themselves in the piece organising rehearsals, lighting, set, sound, props and the acting (casting for themselves). They constantly utilise the subject specific vocabulary introduced in Year 7 and 8 whilst they are working. At this point we explore the range of careers involved in the performing arts as they have to have a good understanding of all roles in the theatre and how they function. Students learn further, in depth skills in devising and responding to stimuli. They create a piece of 10 – 15 minutes in small groups and complete detailed research influenced by their stimulus material. 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: AQA GCSE Drama

At the beginning of Year 10, we focus on the exam set text which is *Things I Know to be True* by Andrew Bovell. Students undertake practical workshops exploring all aspects of the text and be expected to use skills in research from Year 9 to develop their understanding of the social, cultural, historical and political context of the piece. They also begin to write exam style questions in response to the play again, using their subject specific vocabulary to support their responses. Following this, they discover a broader selection of practitioners in preparation for their final assessed Devising piece. Building on the knowledge and skills taught in YEAR 8 through the work of Frantic Assembly, students study the work of Brecht, Kneehigh, Punchdrunk, Complicité etc. Students apply the techniques of a key practitioner to their work building on the starting blocks of Year 9’s attempt at devising. Once completed, students need their analytical and evaluative skills to reflect on the work that they have created in their written portfolio. We spend a term on their final devising assessment which includes creating an original piece of drama

along with an accompanying portfolio. 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 examination.

At the beginning of Year 11 we prepare for the performance examination. This is a synoptic element of the key skills of performance drama that they have been developing since Year 7 and will be assessed by an external examiner. Once completed, we focus on revising and developing exam techniques in terms of understanding the various role and responsibilities of theatre makers; directing key scenes from the set text and evaluating live theatre's impact on an audience.

4. Sixth Form courses

Students at John Masefield study Edexcel's A Level Drama and Theatre.

In the VI Form, the professional experience is launched in depth with students making theatre at a radical and, sometimes, unconventional level. This is the time when they produce work which is shaped by their emerging world view; where they get to make a statement and define themselves as performers. At the beginning of Year 12, we review the work of key practitioners from Year 10 and go into a greater depth of study including the background and objectives of the practitioners and their social, cultural, political and historical influences. Together we explore a breadth of dramatic styles which challenges students and develops their resilience. From there, the students create the devised piece. This element takes several weeks to complete. The accompanying portfolio builds on previous skills through reflective, analytical and evaluative approaches to the work. This is followed by the set text work which comprises of acting and design questions on *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* and the synoptic questions on *Woyzeck*. The examination brings together all of the skills that they have been developing since Y7 and expects them to be using the same key terminology. Year 13 also perform a monologue and an extended sequence from a published play to a visiting examiner. This is a professional level piece and extremely demanding. For those planning careers in the industry this is invaluable experience. From this point on we prepare for the examination, returning to live theatre for review and analysis and consideration of theatre's role in contemporary society before focussing on the set texts. Students in A Level Drama have gone on to achieve places at RADA, LIPA, Italia Conti, East 15 and Royal Central – some of the most prestigious schools of drama because they rise to the challenge and are prepared to take risks to secure their dream.

"Studying drama opened doors for me that I didn't know existed. It's not just about performing or studying a text, it's about channelling creativity and using it..." Alice Jenkins (JMHS) currently Assistant Stage Manager on Come from Away in the West End

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

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Cultural capital is built through appreciation of drama in terms of analysing and evaluating live dramatic work and all students are given an opportunity to experience live theatre during their school experience. Drama is a subject in which students are encouraged to explore, to challenge and to take risks beyond the subject matter of the lesson in a safe, practical environment. It is a space where students can develop and strengthen their emotional intelligence through observation, discussion and analysis of characterisation and thematic exploration. Students will explore and develop knowledge of the dramatic literary canon - building their cultural capital for later life. Drama also gives space to develop understanding of and empathy towards a range of human experiences. Through immersion in social, cultural, historical and political contexts, the subject connects with nearly all aspects of the curriculum. We also seek to employ a wide range of diverse texts from a broad drama canon incorporating major practitioners and playwrights from around the world. Some of this diversity includes texts like *Noughts and Crosses* which explores the issues of race with *Romeo and Juliet* as a background. We also study *Things I Know to be True* which covers the issue of being Transgender and specifically dealing with coming out to your family and the wide

range of responses you might receive. In addition to this we also explore a wide range of live theatre including *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* which conveys what it is like to be autistic and the work of Emma Rice who removes both gender and race from casting her work.

6. Contribution to careers provision

Through all of the curriculum strands students will explore the diverse careers available to them through Drama including performance and design-based careers. The curriculum also goes wider than this to demonstrate the use of Drama qualifications in a wide variety of employment routes including law, medicine, therapy and sales. The regular access to live theatre opportunities allows students inspirational and aspirational opportunities and the ability to have discussions with professionals within the industry. The department also plans workshops with professional companies such as *Splendid* and *Frantic Assembly* to expose students to the reality of life in the industry and the hard work, dedication and commitment required. Drama is also one of the few subjects which teaches all the softer skills required in employment such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving.