

Subject submission for: Music

1. Subject overview

“Ah, music,” Dumbledore said, wiping his eyes. “A magic beyond all we do here.”

Music is one of the oldest, most natural activities humans can do. Our species has been making music since we lived in caves and used drumming and voice for survival. Playing music is one of the only activities that engages both sides of the brain, and allows for cognitive and emotional development throughout childhood and adolescence. Engagement with music is beneficial for both mental and physical health, reducing stress and improving coordination and dexterity. Learning music is proven to increase attainment across other areas of the curriculum, including Maths and Languages. Everyone has a memory of using singing or rhyme to remember a physics or maths equation, and that’s just the tip of the iceberg!

Through the Music curriculum at JMHS, students develop highly-sought employability skills such as cooperation and teamwork, active listening skills, concentration, creativity and self-confidence. Students learn the importance of perseverance and discipline in the development of specialist skills such as instrumental and vocal technique. All students have the opportunity to access both the in-class music curriculum, and the extra-curricular provision, which includes choir, orchestra, jazz band and a variety of smaller ensembles tailored to the students.

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

When students join us in Year 7, their experience of Music is varied. We aim to level the playing field straight away with an Elements of Music topic, which introduces key musical vocabulary and skills that students use throughout their study of Music. Students use vocals, percussion, keyboard and ukulele to develop their instrumental skills in Year 7. In Year 8, we build on the skills developed in Year 7 and introduce more challenging topics and concepts. We continue to engage students with singing activities right from the start of y8 and throughout the year, to support both girls who are beginning to struggle with self-consciousness and to build boys’ confidence with breaking voices. We continue to develop instrumental skills, using keyboards, percussion and guitars in Year 8. There are also opportunities for students to develop their skills with music technology throughout Key Stage 3, using a range of programmes and websites.

3. Key Stage Four summary

a. Year 9: Transition year

Students can opt to take Music at the end of Year 8. In Year 9 we study a range of more advanced topics to prepare students for more in depth study at GCSE. Throughout Year 9, theory activities relevant to individual topics are used to build student’s confidence with reading and writing notation. In Year 9 we expose students to some more complex styles of music that they may not have discovered before, including minimalism, programme music and jazz. Students also continue to build their performance, composition and listening skills in preparation for GCSE study in Year 10.

b. Year 10 and Year 11: GCSE Music

In Year 10 we formally start the study of the Key Stage 4 specification, Eduqas GCSE Music. This specification covers a wide range of genres, so there really is something for everyone. Students learn to perform and compose in different genres, and how to identify the key features of a genre aurally. 60% of the GCSE is assessed through coursework – this takes the form of two performance tasks and two composing tasks. The other 40% is a listening exam sat at the end of Year 11.

4. Sixth Form courses

In the Sixth Form, students can opt to take Eduqas A Level Music. This course can be tailored to suit individual student and class preferences. Students can choose to specialise in performing or composing, so can weight their coursework in their favour. Students may also as a class choose which of the three optional popular genres they study: Rock and Pop, Musical Theatre or Jazz. Students also study the Development of the Symphony and music in the twentieth century, exploring how western classical music has progressed over time. Like at GCSE, the exam is worth 40%, but students can decide whether to weight their performance or composition to be 35% - the other coursework would be 25% to make up the remainder of the qualification. Eduqas A Level Music is a 2 year course. Students complete their performance coursework in a live recital to a visiting examiner in the spring of Year 13, and sit the final exam in the summer of Year 13.

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

The Music curriculum at Key Stage 3 has been designed to both engage students with music in a context familiar to them (films, popular songs, video games), and also to expose them to musical cultures from around the world.

Cultural capital is built into the curriculum through the exploration of a variety of genres and traditions of music. At Key Stage 3 these include the Samba of Brazil, West African drumming, Blues and Reggae. Many of these styles of music are now an important part of British culture today, for example we link Blues with Rock and Roll and contemporary pop music. At Key Stage 4 and A level we are able to study music that tests our emotions, for example the Billie Holiday song Strange Fruit, Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique and the Serialism of the twentieth century.

6. Contribution to careers provision

Students gain awareness of the variety of careers available in Music and the arts, including performance, composition, teaching and journalism. Students also gain understanding of how their skills in Music are transferable into other career paths such as law, medicine and accounting. Access to extra-curricular provision such as concerts and events allow students to explore careers behind the scenes in the Music Industry, such as in stage management, music directing and event planning. In addition to this, students will also have the opportunity to engage with music in the professional context by attending live musical performances and also working with professional musicians coming in to school for workshops. This creates an inspirational and aspirational environment for all students.