

Music development plan: George Abbot School

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2024-25
Date this summary was published	October 2024
Date this summary will be reviewed	August 2025
Name of the school music lead	Michael Hartley
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Judith Daniels
Name of local music hub	Surrey Arts
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	Guildford Cathedral St Catherine's School, Bramley Yehudi Menuhin School

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

This is about what we teach in lesson time, how much time is spent teaching music and any music qualifications or awards that pupils can achieve.

Students at George Abbot receive one timetabled lesson of Music a week (75 minutes) during Year 7 and 8, and one lesson per fortnight in Year 9.

Students who choose to learn an instrument with Surrey Arts have opportunities throughout the year to take graded music exams.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum shares the same principles as those set out in the [model music curriculum](#), with distinct threads running through the three-year programme of study. By the end of Year 9, students will have:

- gained an aural knowledge of some of the great musical output of human civilisation
- engaged with creative processes through improvisation and composition
- built an understanding of how musical elements work and discussed how these interact with subjective and objective models of musical meaning
- developed knowledge of a wider range of notes and improved their fluency in music notation.

Singing is an intrinsic part of the curriculum, especially in Year 7. All students are taught the piano during Year 7 and given the chance to extend and develop their skills in Years 8 and 9. There are distinct threads running through the KS3 curriculum, with students revisiting core concepts throughout the three years. For example, to achieve fluency in notation, students will:

In Year 7:

Learn the fundamentals regarding pitch and rhythm, and work regularly with both of these, composing and performing their own rhythms in the first term of Year 7, before developing an understanding of pitch in the second term.

In Year 8:

Re-visit notation as part of the unit in the Spring term on film music. Having studied the work of notable film composers, students work with music technology (*Musescore*) to compose their own ostinato figures and original chord sequences.

In Year 9:

Study the work of notable late 19th and 20th century composers, including Tchaikovsky, Penderecki, Adams and Glass. Students will then use Musescore to compose and notate minimalist compositions, building on the ideas of composers such as Glass and Adams.

Further detail regarding the KS3 curriculum can be found here:

At KS4 (Years 10 - 11) and KS5 (Years 12-13) students study for GCSE and A Level, following the Eduqas (WJEC) specification. There are currently 10 students studying Music at KS5, and 45 studying Music at KS4.

Our outcomes at A Level are exceptionally strong, with at least one student achieving an A* every year for the past three years. In August 2023, three out of our four students achieved either A or A* grades. We have an excellent record of accomplishment of sending students to study Music at some of the top universities and conservatoires in the country. In the past five years, George Abbot students have gone on to study Music at the University of Oxford, York University, Trinity Guildhall, The Royal Academy of Music, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham University and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Part B: Extra-Curricular music

Outside of timetabled lesson time, students can learn a musical instrument with Surrey Arts. These are charged at a sliding scale, depending on length of lesson, and whether they are individual or group lessons. Surrey Arts handles all the administration for these lessons, which are offered on both an individual and group basis. George Abbot students are currently learning the following instruments:

Piano, Violin, Cello, Guitar, Clarinet, Oboe, Flute, Bassoon, Saxophone, Trumpet, French Horn, Trombone, Bass Trombone, Tuba, Voice, Drum Kit.

The Music department works exceptionally hard to ensure that students in receipt of Pupil Premium (Scholars) have the same opportunity to learn an instrument as all other students. When students begin in Year 7, all Scholars are invited to attend a workshop where they are introduced to the instruments on offer. Information is sent home, and any student who wishes to start learning an instrument is invited to apply for a place on the Surrey Arts programme. George Abbot covers the cost of instrumental lessons for all scholars who choose to take up this opportunity. There are currently two students in Year 11 studying GCSE Music who would have been able to do so without the additional support the school provided for instrumental lessons in KS3.

Outside of timetabled lesson time, there are numerous ensembles for students to join, and clear progression pathways within both vocal and instrumental ensembles.

Choirs

Over 150 students a week regularly attend one of our six choirs. At Key Stage 3, students either attend **Young Voices** (Girls) or **KS3 Boys' choir**. Both of these ensembles rehearse weekly, with approximately 50 students attending over both choirs.

Senior Choir (mixed voices, Years 10 - 13) is compulsory for all those studying Music at GCSE and A Level, but also attracts many students who have not chosen to study Music but wish to keep singing. This choir rehearses during form time once a week, with approximately 60 students attending every week. This choir focusses on SATB repertoire drawn primarily from musicals and popular music of the past forty years.

Senior students who wish to develop and progress are then invited to join one of our three senior vocal ensembles:

GAFC (George Abbot female chorus)

This is a student run choir, focusing on close harmony, acapella repertoire, with currently 25 members.

GAMC (George Abbot male chorus)

This choir specialises in songs from musicals, as well as traditional folk music, and currently has 20 members.

Chamber Choir (SATB)

This choir sings music from a variety of genres, with a particular focus on jazz standards and sacred choral repertoire. This choir also currently has 20 members.

In the past two years, our choirs have worked with numerous musicians and ensembles outside of school, including Alexander L'Estrange, Voces 8 (through our partnership with St Catherine's, Bramley) and Guildford Cathedral. Through a series of workshops, rehearsals and shared services and concerts, our students who sing have benefitted enormously from the guidance and expertise provided by these professional partnerships. Over the past 12 months, our Chamber choir has sung Evensong at Guildford cathedral with the cathedral choir on two occasions, and sung Matins at the local Guildford church of St Martha-on-the-Hill.

Instrumental Ensembles

In a similar way to our choirs, our instrumental ensembles are designed and structured in such a way as to ensure they are accessible to all students, regardless of ability. There are also clear progression pathways within these ensembles.

Entry-level ensembles

Concert Orchestra

This orchestra is open to all players and targeted specifically to those players at the start of their instrumental journey. This orchestra has over 40 regular members, and rehearses after school.

Boomwhackers!

This is the most accessible of our instrumental groups, requiring no prior experience or after-school commitment, as the group rehearses during break times. In addition to catering for those who wish to play boomwhackers, this ensemble also features tuned and untuned percussion and provides an excellent opportunity for students to explore playing in an ensemble.

Senior ensembles

Concert Band

This group rehearses on a Friday afternoon after school and is one of our longest running instrumental groups. This group is open to all wind, brass and percussion players, from approximately Grade 3 upwards.

Senior Orchestra

Our Senior Orchestra is targeted at students who are approximately Grade 5 and above, rehearsing on a Tuesday after school.

Both our Senior Orchestra and Concert Band have benefitted in the past two years from our partnership with St Catherine's, Bramley, with the Concert Band taking part in a shared series of workshops and concerts with the band of the Welsh Guards in November 2023. In November 2024, our Senior Orchestra joined the orchestra of St Catherine's in a day of tutorials and workshops led by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, culminating in an evening concert.

In addition to our main instrumental ensembles, there are smaller chamber groups, including **Senior Strings, Brass Band and Wind Consort**. These groups rehearse weekly and are occasionally student led.

Access and Inclusion

It is a source of pride for George Abbot that our extensive extra-curricular offer is entirely free, and that none of our groups require an audition. The use of form times and break times for rehearsals enables all students to attend if they wish, without after-school transport providing a barrier to access.

Part C: Musical experiences

This is about all the other musical events and opportunities that we organise, such as singing in assembly, concerts and shows, and trips to professional concerts.

Concerts and Shows

The performance calendar of George Abbot is busy, to say the least! Every choir and instrumental group will perform publicly at least once a year, at both school concerts as well as concerts in other venues. Tickets for concerts are generally priced at between £4 and £6 a ticket. The income from concerts is used in a variety of ways, including subsidising trips to concerts and shows outside of school, buying and maintaining audio visual equipment and purchasing instruments and equipment for curriculum music that otherwise wouldn't be possible.

Concerts are open to the whole school community, and are generally standing room only, with an average audience of 250 people at each Raynham Hall concert. Wherever possible and according to capacity within the concert venue, students attend rehearsals for all concerts and show, either in place of their regular performing arts lessons, or on a targeted basis. The end of term concerts (Christmas and Spring) feature at least 150 students in a performing capacity. The school year concludes with our whole school musical, one of the highlights of the school calendar for the whole community.

In addition to putting *on Phantom of the Opera* in July 2024, the academic year 2023-24 saw some notable high points in terms of public performances. Our students performed in a morning coffee concert at Guildford cathedral in November 2023, and our chamber choir sang morning services at St Martha's, in addition to singing Evensong on two occasions in the cathedral with the cathedral choir. A particular highlight was our Christmas celebration in the cathedral. This featured over 150 student singers, performing Alexander L'Estrange's folk-inspired Christmas suite: *Wassail!* In addition to congregational carols with organ and brass band, our students were accompanied by a professional folk band, led by Alexander L'Estrange, who had also visited George Abbot on two occasions to lead the students in workshops. This will be a performance that lives long in the memory for all who were in the cathedral for it, both performers and congregation.

2024/25 Performance Calendar

AUTUMN TERM

11th October | Chamber Choir | Guildford Cathedral

For the second time this calendar year, the Chamber choir will be singing Evensong with the Cathedral Choir. The choir will have received additional rehearsals by staff from the cathedral music department, before joining the cathedral choir for the service.

22nd and 23rd October | Year 7 Mini-musicals | Raynham Hall

All 300 Year 7 students are invited to participate, and in 2023 over 95% of the year group took part in this event. Performing in their house groups (60 at a time), students perform a musical in 15 minutes, performing a dance, singing a song, and acting a short scene from their given musical. The songs and dances are accompanied live by our student band and musical theatre choir (formed primarily of the senior students) and put together for this event.

7th November | Senior Orchestra | St Catherine's School, Bramley

The George Abbot Senior Orchestra will join the orchestra of St Catherine's, Bramley in a day of workshops and tutorials given by members of *Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment*. The day will culminate in an evening concert performed jointly by all three orchestras

20th November | Dance Show | Raynham Hall

The dance show will feature performances from all our dance ensembles (of which there are over ten), many of which will be accompanied live by student instrumentalists and singers.

5th December | Choir showcase | Raynham Hall

This will be a concert dedicated to our choral groups and give a chance for our choirs to perform a selection of pieces from their vast repertoire. This will also develop performer confidence.

19th December | Christmas concert | Raynham Hall

This concert will provide a chance for our ensembles to perform to each other, as well as to family and friends, and provide a festive conclusion to the term.

SPRING TERM

22nd & 23rd January | A Level Music & Dance Recitals | PA1

These two evenings will provide our Year 13 Music and Dance students to perform their recitals in full, to an audience of family and friends. These evenings provide valuable experience and training for the real recitals (March), as well as an opportunity for family and friends to share and celebrate the achievements of our older students. The George Abbot music students will share this evening with students from Tormead school

13th February | Musical Cabaret Evening | Raynham Hall

An evening dedicated to Musical theatre, and to providing as many students as possible an opportunity to perform musical theatre numbers with a live orchestra. We have many more students audition for the whole school musical than we have space to accommodate, and this evening will provide an opportunity for these students.

19th March | Voice in a Million | Wembley Stadium

Members of our KS3 choirs (Young Voices & KS3 Boys') will join thousands of other young people in a huge concert at Wembley Stadium, revelling in the power of singing.

2nd & 3rd April | Spring Concerts | Raynham Hall

Providing a rousing conclusion to our Spring term, these concerts will feature all the departmental ensembles, as well as showcasing the fabulous work of the Dance and Drama departments. The evenings will also feature a variety of soloists, focussing particularly on those students who will be leaving George Abbot at the end of the academic year.

SUMMER TERM

14th June | Big Band | Shamley Green

For the fourth successive year, George Abbot Big Band have been invited to form the centrepiece of the musical entertainment at the Shamley Green Summer Fete. The band provide one of the highlights of the fete, and this also provides the band with an excellent opportunity to perform in public, outside of the school concert series.

14th June | Choirblast! | Godalming

In what will be a busy summer Saturday for the music department, our two KS3 choirs will join choirs from all over the local area to perform at one of the three Godalming venues that together make up *Choirblast – a celebration of contemporary choirs*. In a similar way to Big Band performing at Shamley Green, this will provide our students with the opportunity of performing in public outside of the school hall, as well as showing our support for local music initiatives.

1st – 4th July | Whole School Musical | Raynham Hall

Whilst the musical to be performed has yet to be announced, previous musicals have included *Phantom of the Opera* (2024), *Oliver!* (2023), *Little Shop of Horrors* (2021) & *Beauty and the Beast* (2019). The standards achieved in our whole school productions are a source of pride to the entire performing arts faculty and provide a superb showcase for

the talents and abilities of our students. Students are involved with every aspect of our school productions, including the technical, backstage, hair, make up, costumes & props teams.

Trips to external concerts and shows

The Music department organises a wide variety of trips throughout the year. GCSE and A Level students are typically invited to at least two classical concerts a year, for example, *The Barber of Seville* at the London Coliseum. There are frequent trips to see musicals, with recent highlights including *Choir of Man & Guys and Dolls*, *The Magic Flute* at The Royal Opera House and concerts at the Royal Festival Hall.

In addition to evening concerts, there are afternoon trips to see matinee performances, with two Year 8 trips to see *Hamilton* being the most recent examples. These matinee trips are targeted primarily at disadvantaged students, with financial assistance made available for any student who would otherwise be unable to go on the trip.

In the future

As this development plan shows clearly, music plays a central role in the fabric of the George Abbot community. The music department staff are exceptionally proud of both the curriculum outcomes, as well as the standards achieved by all our ensemble in public performances. The huge increase in pupils singing regularly over the past three years has played a key part in ensuring that massive shows such as *Phantom* were even possible.

However, as a team, the music staff have noticed that the percentage of students arriving from primary school who have had the opportunity to sing regularly, or to play an instrument is diminishing every year. Within the first term of Year 7, students are introduced to every instrument of the orchestra, and at least 50% of each class know little about many orchestral instruments. It is also notable that the number of new Year 7 students who already play an instrument is also diminishing every year.

George Abbot music department will be working with Surrey Arts, as well as liaising with other schools, to formulate a plan to ensure that learning an orchestral instrument does not become a privilege afforded to a small percentage of society.

Additionally, we will continue to ensure as many students as possible attend one of our numerous choirs, and for George Abbot to continue to be a singing community. To this end, we will also be looking at the ways in which Year 8 and Year 9 students can continue to sing more regularly and build on the success of and enthusiasm generated by the mini-musicals project.

In December 2023 we had a hugely successful Christmas celebration in Guildford cathedral, working with Alexander L'Estrange and his *Call Me A Quintet* to perform *Wassail! (Carols of comfort and joy)*. Over 150 students took part in the service, with 400 members of the school community (teachers, parents and friends and family) attending. We look forward to returning to the cathedral in December 2025 and working with local composer Will Todd and his jazz trio to prepare a jazz-inspired Christmas celebration.

Thanks to the unwavering support provided by the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team, as well as the expertise and commitment of the teaching staff, music at George Abbot is flourishing. We look forward to continuing to explore how it may continue to do so many years into the future, and to provide musical opportunities to students that will shape their lives for years to come.