

## Music development plan: George Abbot School

### Overview

| Detail   | Information  |
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| Academic year that this summary covers   | 2025-26  |
| Date this summary was published  | October 2025   |
| Date this summary will be reviewed   | August 2026  |
| 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<br>St Catherine's School, Bramley<br>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. 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.

We became a Lead School for Music within Surrey in March 2025, and this plan also outlines the opportunities this role affords, and the developments we are planning in future years.

## 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 the entirety of Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 & 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, 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 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

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 43 students studying Music at KS4, and 10 studying Music A Level at KS5. Additionally, we have one student at Y13 studying for an A Level in Music Technology, and the course will be offered to selected year 12 students in September 2026.

Our outcomes at A Level are exceptionally strong, with at least one student achieving an A or 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. During 2025-26, this opportunity has been extended to all scholars in years 7 and 8. 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 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. In November 2025, our Senior choir and male voice choir will be taking part in a vocal workshop day at St Catherine's with members of Tenebrae, culminating in an evening concert. 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 Tuesday 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 Strings**

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

### **Big Band**

Our big band was awarded a gold award in the National Concert and Big Band Festival in November 2024 and is looking forward to at least equalling this achievement this year. The band rehearses on a Friday after school, and membership is by audition.

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 **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, apart from our big band. 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 would not be possible.

Concerts are open to the whole school community, and are 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 *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in July 2025, the academic year 2024-25 saw some notable high points in terms of public performances. Our chamber choir sang Evensong with Guildford cathedral choir in October, and all our senior choirs took part in our first senior choir showcase, in December. A particular highlight was our Spring concert in Raynham Hall, which featured over 150 student performers, with exceptional levels of performance and close collaboration between the Music and Dance departments. The year concluded with our whole school musical, where the standards of music, acting and choreography were (in the words of several of our parents) West end standard.

## **2025/26 Performance Calendar**

### **AUTUMN TERM**

#### **10<sup>th</sup> 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.

#### **21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 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.

#### **13<sup>th</sup> November | Senior Choir & GAMC | St Catherine's School, Bramley**

The George Abbot Senior Choir and Male Voice Choir will join the massed choirs of St Catherine's, Bramley in a day of workshops and tutorials given by members of *Tenebrae*. The day will culminate in a joint evening concert.

#### **18<sup>th</sup> November | Scots Guards concert & GCSE workshop | Elmslie Hall**

This concert and workshop are the first events hosted and organised by George Abbot as part of our Lead School role. The band of the Scots Guards will perform a workshop and concert in the morning to 200 local secondary students, focussed on GCSE set works. The concert will introduce the band and analyse and break down key composition techniques used in the pieces performed. In the afternoon, members of George Abbot concert band will join the Scots Guards to perform a joint concert to 200 local primary students.

### **20<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **12<sup>th</sup> December | Christmas Celebration | Guildford Cathedral**

This will be a celebration of the season, featuring traditional carols, as well as several jazz carols, composed by Will Todd, a local composer of international renown. The concert will be accompanied by a professional jazz trio, and students will take part in workshops with both the trio and Will Todd as part of preparations for this event. All the George Abbot choirs will take part in this event.

## **SPRING TERM**

### **21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> 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

### **24<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **12<sup>th</sup> March | Spring Concert | Raynham Hall**

Providing a rousing conclusion to our Spring term, this concert 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**

### **13<sup>th</sup> June | Big Band | Shamley Green**

For the fifth 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.

### **13<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **30<sup>th</sup> June – 3<sup>rd</sup> 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). 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

During the Autumn term 2024, George Abbot applied to become one of the first lead schools for Music in Surrey. This was a competitive process, organised and overseen by Surrey Arts. We were delighted to be awarded Lead School status in Marh 2025 and look forward to working with our fellow lead schools, and Surrey Arts, to ensure that all students in Surrey have access to the highest possible standards of musical education and opportunities.

As this development plan shows clearly, music plays a significant role in the fabric of the George Abbot community. The music department now comprises five permanent members of staff and the team are exceptionally proud of both the curriculum outcomes, and the standards achieved by all our ensembles 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 *Charlie* were even possible.

During 2025 – 26, the George Abbot music team will be working with Surrey Arts, as well as with our local schools, to formulate a plan to ensure that learning an orchestral instrument does not become a privilege afforded to only a small percentage of society. This is one of the central goals of Surrey Arts, a goal shared by George Abbot music staff, informed by our research and observations which show that the percentage of students arriving from primary school who have had the opportunity to play an orchestral instrument is diminishing every year.

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.

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 working closely with Surrey Arts and together continuing to explore how it may continue to do so many years into the future, and to providing musical opportunities to our students (both locally and country-wide) that will shape their lives for years to come.