Clevedon School Curriculum Statement of Intent
Music

"Inspiring a life-long love of music through connection, communication and creativity"

Purpose of study:

Our curriculum gift for learners at Clevedon School is that they think and believe of themselves as musicians. Our expectation is that all students will have the opportunity to explore and experiment with a wide range of music from different times and genres. They will be challenged in all lessons to be active learners in playing, composing, singing, rehearsing, improvising and listening. Through doing so they will learn the 'language' of music, recognise their own innate musicality and be able to demonstrate their understanding in creative ways. Students will be consistently encouraged to work with their peers and teachers whether collaboratively or as part of the ongoing reflection and evaluation of their own and others' work.

The music classroom culture at Clevedon School is one of positivity and experience – we want all students to leave every single lesson with the sense they have had a musical experience, one that will consequently support the retention of essential music knowledge alongside the less tangible, but equally important skills and qualities of confidence, teamwork, ambition and self-expression. In order that they might understand the musical element of rhythm, for example, we provide year 7 with the chance to play bucket drums and create small group compositions demonstrating their understanding of both rhythm and pulse. Along the way, they will have had to navigate the complexities of working and rehearsing in the group. Explicit reference will be made to these challenges and students will be actively encouraged to become both tolerant musicians and empathetic classroom citizens.

We expand and develop out students' cultural capital by exposing them to a wide range of music from great composers and musicians, from different eras, styles and socio-political backgrounds. It is critically important that students understand not just what or how the music was made but also why. Where appropriate we will draw links to current affairs and will not shy away from challenging topics. For example, year 8 students will study the Blues and its origins, and the slave trade will be a focal point of discussion. This links unapologetically to the recent BLM protests and perhaps with most relevance to the destabilising of the Colston name across Bristol, with the taking down of his statue and the renaming of both the Colston Hall and Colston School. Students will be encouraged to recognise the impact and relevance of music as part of the culture and society in which we live and will be challenged to constantly draw links between social movements, political events, geographical locations and the organic development of music over time.

Music offers a unique opportunity to expose students to live performances and events and we strive to ensure students have the opportunity to engage with the wider community through these activities. Not only does this promote ambition and drive in our students but it also shines a light on the pathway of possible future careers in music. The options at KS4 and 5 now include vocational options, and we place a strong emphasis on using outside practitioners, past students and workshop leaders to come and share their knowledge and insights into working within the music industry.

The Clevedon way promotes character, ambition and community in our curriculum:

Without doubt, one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching and delivering a music curriculum is the opportunity for students to develop their musical identity and creativity both as an individual and as part of a group. There are countless examples of students finding it much easier to express themselves more freely when using an instrument or voice and we hope to nurture this as much as possible; ensuring the students feel both safe and happy in the music classroom. We listen carefully to the student voice, responding to their preferences and influences, ensuring a relevant and ever-changing curriculum, whilst also providing opportunities to expose them to new and varied music from around the world and from different genres. From Year 7, the students are taught to be part of a supportive and productive creative space where they are able to perform and share ideas, without risk of ridicule or embarrassment and where everyone's voice can be heard.

It is crucially important that we recognise that everyone's musical ambitions are not the same and whilst some students thrive on the prospect of a live stage performance others find this nerve-wrecking and anxiety-inducing. By tailoring the curriculum to provide equal opportunities for all students, we ensure that all can succeed in their own musical ambition whether that is performing Nirvana on stage or composing a Minuet and Trio using music software. All means and methods of musical output are valid and we build a culture of respect between the students, conditioning them to recognise the skills and qualities of others without judgement. Kindness and respect are at the heart of the music classroom as without it, creativity and musicality cannot flourish.

In the music department, our aim is that there is a seamless transition from classroom music to extra-curricular activities – indeed that one feeds the other. We encourage as many students as possible to take part in our extensive extra-curricular programme. From Rock Club to Events Band, from Pop Choir to Music Tech Club, there is something for everyone and we hope to see as many students as possible extending and developing their musical experience during lunchtimes and after school. The most valuable aspect of these clubs and activities is the fact that students are making music with students from different year groups. Younger students will look to the older ones as role models and the older students will learn much from encouraging and supporting the younger ones. Musical individuality is celebrated at Clevedon and students of all abilities are welcomed into the music community.

Our curriculum is ambitious for all learners:

The music curriculum can also provide endless opportunities for leadership, coaching and the sharing of knowledge from peer-to-peer. In the classroom, the huge range of musical experience, knowledge and skill-level can be challenging for the teacher, but can also provide extensive opportunities for students to lead and support others. Where possible we aim to tap into students' prior knowledge using those students with instrumental experience as 'experts'; leading and coaching others within the classroom setting. These students can be stretched to extend their understanding by passing on and teaching their knowledge to others and we regularly see how well the students respond to both imparting and receiving this style of learning.

Any student from any secondary school across the country and from any demographic or vulnerable group will have an opinion about music. They will know what they like, what they don't like. They will know what their parents, siblings and friends listen to. They will have musical reference points that may be the same or entirely different from other students in their class, depending on their biggest influences. They will listen to music in different ways – through streaming services, downloading it to their smart phones or devices, playing it themselves, listening to the radio and so on. The key to igniting all students' engagement and enthusiasm for classroom music is by forging and drawing links between what they listen to and play and the curriculum that is delivered in school. For example, a student in year 7 who listened mainly to Bhangra music, talked to the class about his favourite Bhangra artists and we were able to draw out the similarities and differences in how and why the music was made.

Music must be a subject that can be accessed by all students and not seen as a subject that is elitist or indeed 'only for instrumentalists'. All students must feel they have valuable contributions to make, regardless of ability and we ensure SEND students have differentiated access to the activities in order that they feel able to 'succeed' in the same way as other students. Tasks will be broken down into manageable chunks and where appropriate groupings will be considered as a way to support those students.

We aim to ensure that students try lots of different instruments throughout KS3 and give them the opportunity to take up peripatetic music lessons should they wish. We ensure that PP students have ready access to peripatetic instrumental lessons with heavily subsidised fees and will actively seek out those vulnerable students whom we know will benefit from the experience of extra-curricular activities. The alternative curriculum for some of our most highly vulnerable students is already providing a musical sanctuary for some who have the opportunity to come to the music block for one-to-one music sessions, focusing on whatever type of music they like to play or create and this alone shows the power of music in terms of communication and expression.

Our curriculum is sequenced to enable our students to progress to brilliance:

Alongside the development and exploration of skills-based learning, there are tacit and declarative threshold concepts which underpin the framework of the music curriculum. The declarative knowledge (fact-based) is sequentially planned in order that students build upon prior learning and there is opportunity to revisit throughout KS3 (Italian terms for different tempos for example). This knowledge is often checked during the 'starter' or 'do now' activities at the beginning of a lesson and will also form part of homework tasks set throughout the unit.

The less tangible, tacit knowledge such as musical expression, the ability to perform with confidence, following different notations, our emotional responses to music, are again explicitly referred to in curriculum planning and build up gradually over time. Students at Clevedon learn about how to become an empathetic musician – one who is able to listen to, work and make music with other students, taking creative risks and overcoming any hurdles which may be in their way

We ensure that students have a fundamental understanding of the main elements of music: pitch, rhythm, tempo, timbre, texture, harmony, melody by exploring how these are used when listening, playing, composing and improvising. These elements thread through every unit of every year with a deeper understanding of each as the student progresses through KS3 into KS4 and 5. A student in year 7 for example, may be able to explain or show what a chord is, whereas in year 8 they may be able to make a major or minor chord, and when in year 9 they may be able to create a chord sequence and describe why or how it is effective. The use of the word Tempo in year 7 is enough in terms of understanding the speed of music but by the time the student is in year 9 they may be able differentiate between whether the tempo is 'Allegro' (fast) or 'Lento' (slow) and describe the impact that this may have on the listener.