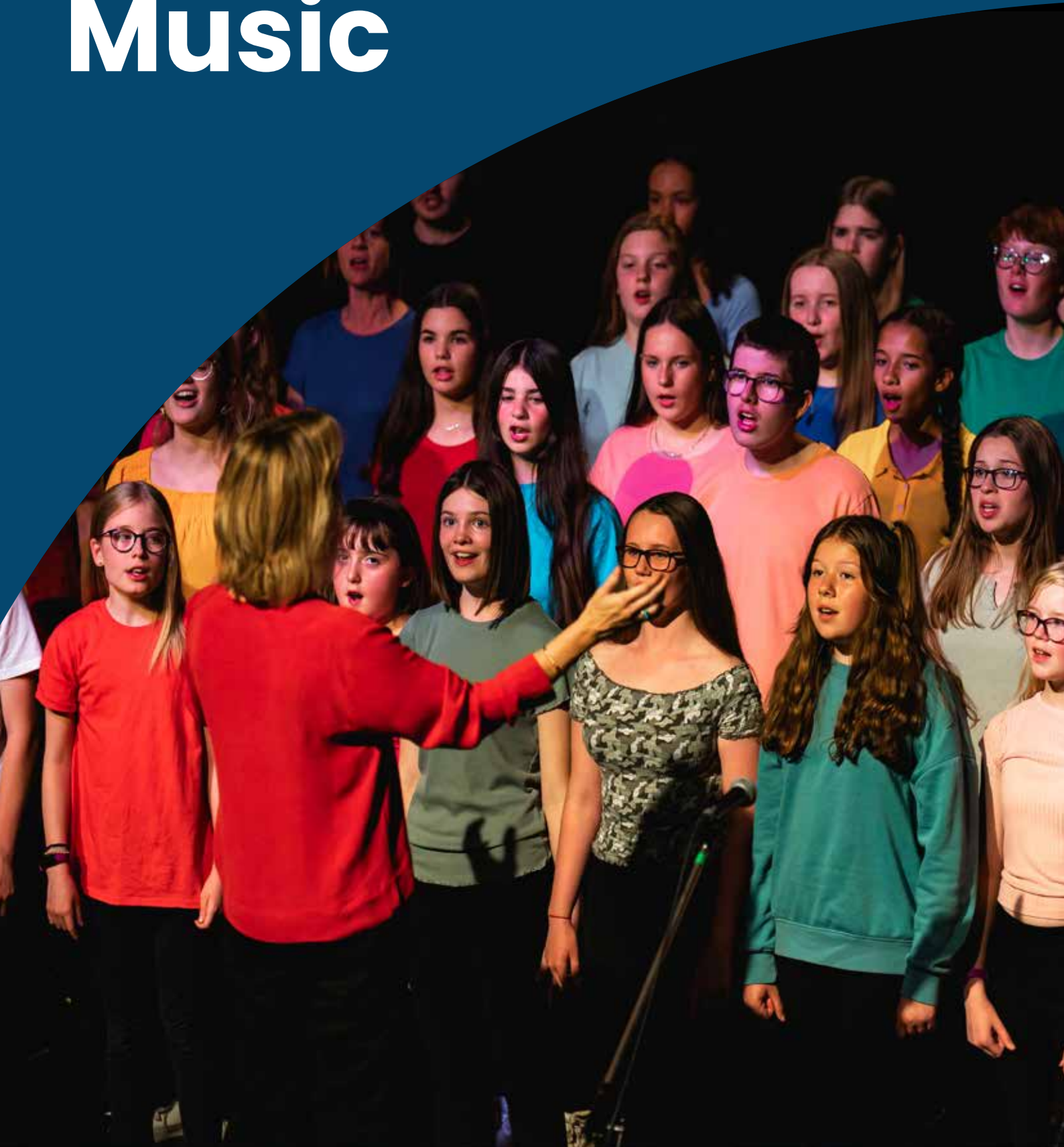




Meridian  
Trust

# Curriculum Overview

# Music



# Curriculum Overview

## Key Stage 3

### Curriculum Aims

All students study music in KS3 as part of their curriculum and many engage in other musical activities outside the classroom. Music is valued within the trust and seen as an integral part of the whole school curriculum. The subject content for music is defined in two ways:

- Skills-based, via performing, composing, improvising;
- Knowledge-based, focusing on musical genres, styles and composers.



At KS3 we aim to strike a balance between developing students' skills (performing, composing, listening, evaluating, reading notation) and providing them with a broad range of different musical experiences.

Topics vary according to instruments and technology available, but all Meridian Trust music departments track a route that builds up skills acquisition. Singing is key in enabling students to quickly engage with making music and all students have the opportunity to learn an instrument in a whole-class setting (keyboard, ukulele, guitar, percussion). Students are taught the inter-related dimensions of music including appropriate musical notations; topic-based schemes of work (context, listening, performing, composing, appraising) focus on developing students' competence across the key stage.

The KS3 overview follows a progression pathway starting with basic musical elements that will be consolidated via performance skills and developed via composition projects and tasks that span a term. Composing is the most involved and challenging aspect of the music curriculum for the majority of students and the KS3 overview's trajectory supports the sequence of skills and knowledge taught.

## Key Curriculum Content

In both Year 7 and Year 8, students complete 6 units of work that draw on the core skills of listening, evaluating, performing, singing and composing. Each unit focuses on key areas of musical development and aims to provide students with a grounding in musical terminology, notation, practical work and listening

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to familiar and unfamiliar music. The National Curriculum in music is met and exceeded with strong emphasis on progress via skills acquisition through sequential learning.

Year 7 Autumn term focuses on Elements of Music, specifically rhythm and pitch. Students perform, compose and notate rhythmic patterns using a variety of percussion instruments leading to melodic notation and improvisation. Singing is integral to consolidating pitch and students are encouraged to learn songs by ear and via notation. Spring term



has Performing Skills as prominent. Students work in class and group ensembles using a range of instruments (keyboards, ukuleles, guitars, percussion, steel pans). Other core skills (composing, listening, singing, etc) are still evident and integrated but during this term, students are encouraged to perform with increasing accuracy and expression. The main focus for Summer Term is Composing, Creating and Developing. Following on from earlier listening extracts, students are tasked with developing a final composition based on song, film score, variations or programme music. Students will have the opportunity to use technology as appropriate and, most frequently, in conjunction with composition tasks.

Year 8 Autumn Term focuses on Scales and Chords – improvisation, the Blues and Popular Music are used throughout the core skills and students are enabled to perform chords and read keyboard notation. Performing Skills in Spring Term build upon Year 7 performing skills to include bass clef, more complex time signatures, articulation and harmonic understanding. Units can focus on specific pieces or themes – musicals, protest songs, Musical Futures, etc. Singing works towards an extended repertoire of songs in 2 or 3 parts observing accuracy of pitch, dynamics, phrasing and expression. Composition in term 3 has a specific focus on Songwriting, linked to KS4 pathways. Throughout KS3, students are encouraged to identify key features in order to improve listening skills and their own practical output.

Music is in many instances differentiated by outcome but all tasks are accessible to all students wherever they are on their musical journey. As music is primarily practical, the differentiated dialogue and support in lessons is key to progress. All students can find a way to describe their thoughts and emotions in music and can actively become a part of a lesson.

Music hits a number of cross-curricular links with other subjects via direct links with other subjects in the creative arts to more discrete links across the curriculum. Maths is strongly linked to music notation in the numbers, fractions and symbols used; aspects of Science are discussed through instrumental design and sound waves; English and literacy is linked when writing and analysing lyrics and text and evaluating own compositions and the works of composers and songwriters. Music shares a close link to history, geography and RE via contextual learning about composers and compositions.



## How are students taught and assessed?

All students are taught in the same way: through performing, composing, singing, evaluating and listening to live and recorded music. Music classrooms are set out in a way that is conducive to practical music making – keyboards, percussion and other classroom instruments are easily accessible and students quickly learn routines to support group work and performing opportunities. Our music departments offer a range of equipment, including technology and are often housed in stand-alone spaces or buildings.

Some students arrive in KS3 with prior musical knowledge and abilities. The aim is to ensure all students, regardless of ability, are equally challenged and engaged by the topics and material. Students are taught 'musically' as teachers model practical work and singing is part of the culture of KS3 music. Exploring musical traditions and styles beyond Western Classical culture encourages students to experience a variety of sounds and expressions.

Each KS3 unit comprises of around 4 -6 weeks of teaching culminating in a practical assessment, listening exercises and a written summative assessment. Students receive oral and written feedback and targets with an emphasis on progress and 'how to improve'. Each written evaluation emphasises accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar alongside the correct use of subject-specific

terminology. Autumn Term of Year 7 has a baseline test incorporating listening, basic notation and practical response to gauge student ability from the outset. Staff use a shared baseline and, later in KS3, a Musical Contexts example to assess progress.

Each unit is linked and has the intention of supporting the next. Through this the aim is to ensure students are ready to move on to the next unit and have the required skill set to be able to succeed. Consolidation takes place at the end of every unit when students complete a written evaluation. Both Year 7 and Year 8 have end-of-year skills trackers with expected levels of progress in: Singing and Performing, Composing, Listening.

Typical Curriculum Allocation:  
2 hours per fortnight





# Curriculum Overview

## Key Stage 4

### Curriculum Aims

Students who opt to take music at KS4 have several options available:

GCSE music (OCR specification); Rock School London (level 2 performance); BTEC Music (technology or performance); NCFE Technical Award in Music Technology (level 2).

Year 9 builds upon KS3 skills and knowledge by beginning to integrate the skills required to succeed in one of the KS4 pathways. Students are introduced to higher-level listening and practical approaches and revisit concepts and elements explored in the previous two years. Students also have opportunities to sample more complex composition tasks and listening exercises; they are also encouraged to respond to music in a more sensitive and analytical way, constantly appraising their own work as well as music by other composers and from different cultures. Often, pathways are not decided until the end of Year 9.

Years 10 and 11 develop skills of practical musicianship alongside the ability to read and write music. Students learn how to perform with accuracy, fluency and expression and to compose using appropriate structures and devices. Technology is used in all courses as a means to develop set tasks and compositions.



### Key Curriculum Content

The majority of students study GCSE music when opting for a KS4 music course. The OCR specification is used across all our schools, focusing on Performance, Composition (both non-examined assessment) and Listening (via an exam). From the outset, students are encouraged to develop their instrumental or vocal skills via own goals and objectives. Structured planning, practice and reflection is needed to facilitate personal development and this in turn facilitates the capacity

for a student to use their instrument for composing and performing. Close relationships with peripatetic instrumental staff support this. RSL is recognised as being closely related to aspects of OCR GCSE. The RSL performance course is assessed via 3 projects related to developing performing skills towards a planned performance and is more suited to those students who enjoy playing and singing popular music.

The GCSE curriculum covers music from 1600 to present day via 5 Areas of Study:

My Music; The Concerto Through Time, Rhythms of the World, Film Music, Conventions of Pop.

The Areas of Study are introduced via practical and listening tasks from the beginning of Year 9. Students gain an insight into each in tandem with increased focus on developing keyboard skills, awareness of chord patterns and ensemble skills. The course proper begins in Year 10 with ensemble skills and studying the Concerto and Popular music. Composition tasks are integrated throughout with Film and most aspects of Rhythms of the World covered before the end of the year. Year 11 starts with further Rhythms



and revisiting earlier areas; students demonstrate increasing knowledge through the ability to identify and analyse the key stylistic and musical elements present within each of the course's Areas of Study. Preparation for the external assessment is a key focus of Year 11 with topic revision and improvement plans identified for each student.

High value is placed on the impact of strong compositions and performances and time is allocated throughout Year 10 and the first half of Year 11 on practical work. Students study exemplar performances and compositions in conjunction with assessment criteria in order to inform their own output. For RSL and BTEC performance, this takes the form of a full live performance project, including planning, rehearsal, performance and evaluation. The rehearsal elements of the unit are designed to develop the student's ability to rehearse effectively. The skills learned within this unit can be directly applied to any future pursuits in the live music industry.

In schools where there is strong technical music provision and equipment, opportunities for studying music technology are increasing. BTEC Level 2 First

Typical Curriculum Allocation:  
5 hours per fortnight

Award in Music covers the key knowledge and practical skills required to work in the music industry. Topics cover studio recording techniques and media production and, via a series of units, prepare students for the many and varied areas of the music industry.

## How are students taught and assessed?

Teaching the Areas of Study relies on strong delivery of context and key musical features. Our teaching is designed to support students to retain and recall information, improving their long-term memory and remembering the content they have been taught. This includes interleaving and spaced practice where students' knowledge is continuously checked through low-stakes formative assessment. This enables each department to track student progress and to target individuals for appropriate intervention. We aim not just to assess formatively at the end of a unit but to provide opportunities for performing and composing. Assessment is continuous with constant reference to the marking criteria in each course and unit within, to ensure that students are aware of where they are working at any point in the course. Peer and self-assessment and the recording of work enable students to be self-reflective.

Lessons across the fortnight are divided into practical and listening/theory. A certain degree of student responsibility is involved with practical lessons as students work independently to complete practical work. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their performance practice and to put time in at home. Good learning and practice habits are shared so students learn to develop their instrumental or vocal capabilities. Disadvantaged students are supported through the funding of instrumental lessons.

Non-GCSE courses are assessed by way of assignments set regularly throughout KS4. Students follow a detailed assessment plan and are given one further opportunity to improve the level they receive for their work.

The GCSE course stipulates the completion of one piece of coursework by the end of Year 10 with the remaining three due during Year 11. The integrated composition is completed and recorded by the end of Year 10 with appropriate time given to work on one of the performances. In Year 11, the remaining pieces of coursework (individual and ensemble performances, composition to the given brief) should be completed by the Spring half-term break. Mock exams occur in November and March of Y11 with all schools sharing the same exam paper. Moderation occurs regularly via meetings and one-to-one sessions.



# Curriculum Overview

## Key Stage 5

### Curriculum Aims

Music at KS5 is available in trust schools with a sixth form. Currently, Bishop Laney Sixth Form in Ely, Nene Park Academy, Sharnbrook Academy and The Ferrers School provide KS5 pathways via the following courses:

A Level Music (AQA), A Level Music Technology (Edexcel), BTEC Diploma in Performing Arts (TFS offer this course through The East Northamptonshire College).

KS5 music gives students the chance to study a wide variety of musical genres in greater depth. The courses are suitable for those who love performing, creating new music, listening to a range of music and who may consider pursuing a career in music. Students are encouraged to be analytical in their approach to music as well as creative. There is flexibility within each course enabling students to focus on areas of personal interest and providing opportunities for students to play to their own and the department's strengths. Although there is no requirement for students to have sat instrumental exams, it is useful for potential A Level students to play an instrument/sing to grade 5 level. As A Level music builds upon the knowledge and skills learned at KS4, students opting for this course should have at least grade 4 at GCSE music



### Key Curriculum Content

The AQA A Level music course covers a broad range of musical genres via three components: Appraising Music, Performing, Composing.

Appraising Music comprises of seven areas of study:

- Western classical tradition
- Pop Music
- Music for Media
- Music for Theatre
- Jazz
- Contemporary traditional music,
- Art music since 1910.



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Western classical tradition is a compulsory area of study; students must choose two from the remaining areas. Specific set works are allocated to each genre but students must be able to listen to unfamiliar music from each of the three strands in order to identify and accurately describe musical elements using musical language including staff notation. A minimum of 10mins of performance is required so students practise and prepare solo and/or ensemble performances. A minimum of 4.5mins is required in terms of composition - one to a brief and one as a 'free composition'.



**A Level music technology** consists of four components:

- Recording
- Tech-based Composing
- Listening and Analysis
- Producing and Analysing

Recording and composing are non-examined, externally-assessed coursework requiring students to complete a song and a composition, minimum of 3mins each. The Listening and Producing components are written exams, testing knowledge and understanding of recording, editing, mixing and production techniques.

**The BTEC Diploma in Performing Arts, level 3**, and the **BTEC Extended Diploma in Performing Arts, level 3**, are both practical-based courses intended for those students who enjoy performing. Students are assessed on core units that cover skills and techniques for live performance, group performance, investigating practitioners work, Improvisation and Musical Theatre. Students can select units that play to specific strengths and combine with additional performing arts courses.

## How are students taught and assessed?

The flexibility within all of the courses enables students to make musical choices that demonstrate their strengths and capabilities. Students are also entrusted to work independently as practical musicians and to complete research to support the choices they make. Lessons for A level are taught with a strong emphasis on exam technique with students given past papers for homework once topics have been covered.

**Year 12**, A Level music focuses on an element of the compulsory Area of Study 1, the Baroque Concerto. Students work on listening skills, musical features and contextual knowledge with an initial exploration of all bulleted composers. The performance diary is introduced and establishment of key compositional skills.

**Autumn 2** focuses on the operas of Mozart and a performance of 2 contrasting pieces. Spring 1 continues with Mozart operas, ensemble performances, approaching the composition briefs using different stimuli as starting points and developing ideas; further exploration of first optional AoS.

**Spring 2:** Mozart operas, performance of min. 6mins of music, practice composition based on a brief. Summer 1: Mozart operas, Baroque concerti; internal assessment of 6min performance; start exploring ideas of composition 2. Summer 2: Explore the piano music of Chopin, Brahms, Grieg; deeper analysis related to optional AoS; consideration of performance repertoire; continue working on free composition.

**Year 13**, Autumn 1: Continue exploring piano music and 2nd optional AoS, performance of recital repertoire, completion of free composition. Autumn 2: Continue analysis of set works and practice exam technique; focus on performance expression; introduction of composition briefs. Spring 1: Complete analysis of set works and practice exam technique of contextual analysis style questions; mock recital assessment; continue working on composition to a brief.

**Spring 2:** Practise listening skills, revision of Mozart; recording of final performances; completion of composition to a brief. Summer 1: Revision of piano works and practice questions; recording of final performances; final submissions of both compositions with attention to score/written account/leadsheet.

**Summer 2:** final individual revision.



Homework will take a variety of forms including homework booklets, specific exam style questions, independent practice, independent research and tasks in revision books. Student work is consistently assessed against exam criteria.

A Level music technology is taught by specialist staff who have experience of working in the music industry. The main focus is on learning to write and manipulate music using audio and MIDI sequencing software. The majority of timetabled lessons focus on this alongside the opportunity to investigate the impact of music production on the development of popular music. Students produce one song from a list of 10 and one technology-based composition from one of three briefs set the exam board. Log books for both components are kept

**Typical Curriculum Allocation:  
8-10 lessons per fortnight**

to demonstrate process and progress. The written examinations involve extended written responses as well as written and practical responses.

The BTEC courses consist of either 8 units or 13 units (the extended diploma). Assessment is via practical work and set tasks culminating in a final live performance to audience. Written coursework takes the form of actors logs.





# Curriculum Overview

## Enrichment

### Beyond the classroom

Music enrichment across the trust aims to be broad, inclusive and aspirational. Most groups are non-auditioned and repertoire is selected and arranged to suit the needs and experience of the group or individual player. The extra-curricular music programme within a school is recognised as integral to ensuring students receive an all-round musical education and extends the boundaries of learning.

Every school meets the trust minimum requirement of a choir and an instrumental ensemble. Beyond this, music departments make good use of staff specialisms and classroom instruments to provide additional groups such as: rock schools, production companies, brass, string and wind groups, steel pan and samba bands, folk groups, orchestras, boys' barbershop, music tech and theory clubs, keyboard and ukulele groups, voice-specific choirs, songwriting clubs.

The majority of groups rehearse weekly in order to work towards end-of-term performances and productions. Students are also encouraged to attend by links to the trust's PLEDGES system, particularly in terms of participation and excellence.

Our trust show calendar demonstrates a significant number and variety of events planned for the year, including 6 whole-school productions, Christmas, spring and summer concerts. Music departments often have strong links with their community resulting in local festival and event involvement.

Instrumental tuition is a key part of supporting student needs and we offer a wide variety of instruments/voice which are taught by visiting professional tutors. Lessons are taught before, during and after school hours with timetables on a rota system to ensure the same lesson is not missed every week. In order to provide access for all students, funding is provided for disadvantaged students



## Cross-Trust Activities

The main focus for cross-trust music is the Arts Festival in June and July. This consists of a series of events showcasing the performing arts from all our schools. Previous years have included one whole-trust live event featuring performances from primary and secondary schools; online showcases and competitions; online and live-streamed events. As we move forward, live events are key to providing opportunities for students to perform in different locations to different audiences. The festival features dance, drama, music and art exhibitions and further cements connections, collaboration and communication across departments. Three hub performances based on geographical location will occur and be live streamed; Meridian Trust's Got Virtual Talent, online and in its third year; and the final event, the Meridian Trust Showcase in a professional venue showcasing talent from across the trust.

Meridian Trust's Virtual Choir consists of singers from all our secondary schools. The choir rehearses online every week and shared repertoire is learned and taught live throughout the week in a number of the schools. Choral workshops in all the primary schools and some of the secondary schools were introduced late 2021 to encourage students to sing en masse following covid restrictions. Once again, primary students and staff learn shared repertoire and vocal techniques.

All schools use the Artsmark framework as part of their school improvement plan in order to embed arts and culture across the curriculum. With strong links and support from Festival Bridge, most of our schools have a named CALSA (Culture and Arts Leader in Schools and Academies) who takes the lead within their school. Arts Award is used in some schools to encourage students to engage with the arts to develop creative and leadership skills.



Meridian  
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