

Departmental Curriculum Statement 2022-23 Performing Arts (Music, Drama and Dance)

Curriculum Intent Statement

The Performing Arts department is a fully inclusive and thriving department, which provides opportunities for all students to develop a love of learning in a collaborative, autonomous, exciting and supportive environment. Through high levels of tutor commitment coupled with state-of-the-art facilities, the department prides itself on the core ethos of high standards of performance opportunities of which are regularly delivered within school, the local community and on foreign concert tours.

Cowley Performing Arts curriculum is designed specifically build confidence, to develop self-esteem, to enable young people to express themselves in dynamic and creative ways. It has the power to transform and enrich young people's lives: from picking up an instrument at school, to developing a character, to learning how to choreograph with a range of dance styles, problem solving a range of stimuli, to composing popular music, from jamming with friends in a homemade band to devising a piece of innovative theatre. The opportunities are vast to create performing arts, from the conventional to the unconventional, can open up a world of expression and creativity, leading to a huge variety of different employment opportunities.

A key part of our curriculum is to participate and collaborate with others to build on their social and communication skills which enables them to reflect, evaluate and improve their talent. Students gain a deeper understanding of music from other traditional cultures or traditions and experience different styles of drama and dance during lessons. The performing arts develop a student's ability to be creative, gain confidence and also provides the opportunity to build on prior skills as an individual or in a group by developing accuracy, expression and communication. Students gain a deeper understanding of the work they perform and create through studying a variety of styles, genres and practitioners.

Curriculum Implementation Statement

The curriculum model and topics, at all key stages, adopts and promotes equality and independent learning as the epicenter to all teaching and learning pedagogy. This key emphasis on autonomous learning prepares the learner to not only excel academically but to ensure the necessary skills are embedded for future employment. This also provides the necessary stretch and challenge for learners at all abilities.

Key stage 3 – Year 7, 8, 9

At the start of the Cowley's key stage 3 expedition, we build on the knowledge and skills gained in KS1 and KS2, learning to further appreciate a wide variety of styles and genres of music whilst continually developing as performers, composers and producers through an innovative and skills-based curriculum. In KS3, our curriculum is designed in line with the statutory National Curriculum for Music. Pupils sequentially develop their key skills and application of subject knowledge through exposure to a variety of topics. These are revisited and extended in Year 8 and 9* to ensure that students know more and remember more thus improving fluency of skills and understanding. Topics include – The Basics, Group Singing, Blues, Class Bands (Next to Me), Indian, Songwriting, Pop Project, Music tech, Samba, film music and Keyboard Skills. *The 'Musical Futures' model used in year 9 core includes - Use your ears, song writing and set song performance.

Cowley values the importance of the core skills that Drama and Dance enriches upon our learners. Although the music curriculum holds president throughout key stage 3, we aim to keep InTouch with the core skills and techniques in drama and dance will allow students to thrive in all three disciplines of the performing arts. Pupils will explore fundamental building blocks of Drama and Dance, which will allow for complex and highly creative stories to be told. Essential elements such as Performance Skills, Devising/Choreographing Skills, Characterization and Reflection and Analysis will be applied to a wide variety of contexts.

In all disciplines students are taught through various stimuli and are assessed individually against the mastery skills criteria within the strands of performing, composing/devising/choreographing and understanding.

Years 10 & 11

At KS4, vocational courses are offered as option choices for students who have a passion and enjoyment whatever their experience. The courses allow students to explore and develop theories, knowledge, skills and techniques through vocational, workshop and practical application. The advantages of technical learning allow for a wider choice of units, which support the individual skills more appropriately. In Music, year 11 students follow the Level 2 RSL Music Practitioners (performing approach) course. It allows students to develop an interest and skills in the area of music performance. It is broken down as follows - Unit 1 - Instrumental Study (internal assessment 40%), Unit 2 – Musical Knowledge (internal assessment 20%), Unit 3 – Live Music Performance (external assessment 40%). In year 10 students follow the Level 1/2 Vocational Award in Performing Arts (music approach) course. It is broken down as follows - Unit 1 – Performing (internal assessment 30%), Unit 2 – Creating (internal assessment 30%), Unit 3 – Performing Arts in practice (external assessment 40%).

In Dance, students follow the BTEC Tech Award in Performing Arts (dance approach). This allows students to develop an interest and skills in a range of Dance styles. This is broken down as follows - Component 1 – Exploring the Performing Arts (internal assessment 30%), Component 2 – Developing skills and techniques in Performing Arts (internally assessed 30%), Component 3 – Responding to a brief (external assessment 40%).

In Drama, students follow the Level 2 RSL Creative Practitioners course. The course allows students to develop an interest and skills as an actor/singer. It is broken down as follows - Unit 1 – Performing Text (internal assessment 50%), Unit 2 – Final Performance (external assessment 50%).

Years 12 and 13

At KS5, students can opt to continue their vocational learning through the BTEC Level 3 national suite of qualifications. Although experience from a level 2 course is desirable, it is not essential as the department lead a calendar of open auditions.

Students continue to develop and refine a range of skills/techniques to enable them to continue their flight path towards achieving entry to universities, drama schools, and conservatoires or gain employment in the performing arts/music industry. Units of work chosen for both the music performance course and performing arts (musical theatre) are bespoke to the cohort's strengths and areas, to develop them into a versatile/employable performer.

In Music, students follow the BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Music (performance) covering six units over two years including; Music Performance Techniques* (core), Working as a Musical Ensemble, Solo Performance, Pop music in practice, Marketing and Promotion and Organizing a Music Event.

In Performing Arts (Dance and Drama), students follow the new and innovative BTEC Level 3 National Foundation Diploma in Performing Arts Practice. Units consist of Skills Development (450 GLH) and the Performing Arts Industry (90 GLH).

Curriculum Beyond the Classroom

The Performing Arts Department provides a wealth of opportunities for students to perform inside and outside of the school community. Centre to the curriculum offer is the extracurricular provisions. At Cowley, we believe in equality and we pride ourselves on SEND and DA student participation. An example of this is the Junior Choir, which there are over 50% of a 65 strong cohort. The current extracurricular programme is extensive and includes the following: Choirs (Senior, Junior, Boys, Girls), 6thForm Ensemble, Rock School, Whole School production, KS3 and KS4 Drama groups, Devising Club, KS3 and 4 Dance Club, Voice Lab, and Dance Company.

Peripatetic teachers also provide 1:1 music tuition which takes place during the school day free of charge to students.

Cowley International College regularly participates in local community events such as the St Helens Rotary club, Age UK, Tunza Pride, Young Carers Holocaust Memorial Services, Remembrance Day events, faith groups, and St Helens Council Christmas light service. We collaborate regularly with local primary and high schools at external events.

Students also have opportunities to audition for the annual large-scale musical theatre production at Cowley. Recent previous productions include Into the Woods, Grease, Billy Elliot, Sister Act, Miss Saigon, The Phantom of the Opera, Fame with the most recent performance being Les Misérables. Other performance opportunities include Cowley's Got Talent, the Greatest Dancer, Battle of the Bands, Curriculum celebration, KS3 musical and the annual Summer and Christmas reviews.

We also offer invitations on the International and European Concert Tours, where we perform to large audiences in exquisite locations. These include Paris, Italy, New York, Belgium and most recently many of the senior choir have received personal invitations to return to Stuttgart, where we had the privilege to perform at the 70th anniversary of the twinning of the towns.

The feedback from the mayor of Stuttgart in 2019 is below:

“Watching your school made us feel proud to be twinned with St Helens. It is amazing to see a high standard of talent for such young people, who clearly have a passion for performing. Thank you Cowley International College and the wonderful performing arts team”.

Subject Expertise

Performing Arts staff at Cowley are highly experienced and committed, to ensure that the standards of teaching and learning are at the forefront of the student’s education. Both teaching staff and support staff working with the department are encouraged to develop subject knowledge and continue their professional development through a range of avenues such as examination board training sessions on new and existing specification, attending the St Helens performing arts network meeting to share best practice and becoming EQA/standards verifiers for our KS4/5 examining boards. We encourage our staff to continue to partake as practitioners in their spare time, e.g. choreographing, casting directing, artistic directing, vocal coaching, performing lead vocalists, lounge pianist and musical theatre performers, to ensure tutors are up to date with the latest industry developments.

Staff are highly proficient with their performing disciplines, offering subject support and guidance to other schools within the local authority, demonstrating best practice and sharing resources across all 3 disciplines.

Destinations

Due to the curriculum on offer at KS4 and the nature of the courses chosen which is bespoke to a Cowleian, students have the necessary skills, techniques and knowledge to access Performing Arts based courses at Cowley 6thForm and other further education establishments. Following on from this, Cowley 6thform students are fully equipped to progress onto the highest standards at Level 4, achieving places at the most established drama schools and music conservatoires, including The Royal Northern College of Music, London College of Music, Leeds College of music, Guildhall, LAMDA, LABAN and Urdang, Mountview and Arts Ed. As well as proceeding to successful performance roles, the courses in Performing Arts at Cowley allow students to develop transferable skills opening doors to many other career opportunities such as the teaching profession, a range of off-stage employment (such as set/lighting/sound/costume design, directing, producing), and roles in marketing and promotion. As well as this, feedback from past alumni demonstrates clear evidence that soft skills, such as presentational skills, teamwork, confidence, problem solving and communication, to name a few, are honed throughout all Cowley experiences within Performing Arts, allowing them to progress in any chosen field.