

Departmental Curriculum Statement 2024-2025 Performing Arts (Music, Dance and Drama)

Curriculum Intent Statement

The Performing Arts department at Cowley is a fully inclusive and dynamic entity, dedicated to providing all students with opportunities to develop a passion for learning within a collaborative, autonomous, and supportive environment. With the addition of drama in Year 7 and 8 this year, we are expanding our performing arts offerings, aiming to further enrich and inspire our students.

Our department prides itself on the combination of highly committed tutors and state-of-the-art facilities, maintaining an ethos of high standards. Performance opportunities are frequently provided within the school, the local community, and even on international concert tours. The Cowley Performing Arts curriculum is meticulously crafted to build confidence, enhance self-esteem, and empower young people to express themselves in dynamic and creative ways. Utilising a mastery model, the curriculum progressively increases in complexity, ensuring continuous development and growth for each student.

We believe in the transformative power of the performing arts. Whether it is picking up an instrument, developing a character, choreographing various dance styles, solving problems through creative stimuli, composing popular music, jamming with friends in a homemade band, or devising innovative theatre, our curriculum offers a wide array of opportunities. These experiences not only foster creativity and expression but also open up diverse career pathways.

A fundamental component of our curriculum is encouraging participation and collaboration, which helps students enhance their social and communication skills, reflect on their work, and continually improve their talents. Students gain a deeper understanding of music from various cultural traditions and are exposed to different styles of drama and dance during lessons. The performing arts nurture a student's creativity, confidence, and provide opportunities to build on prior skills both individually and in groups, developing accuracy, expression, and communication.

Through studying a variety of styles, genres, and practitioners, students gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the work they perform and create. At Cowley, we are committed to using the performing arts to transform and enrich the lives of young people, fostering a lifelong love of learning and creativity.

Curriculum Implementation Statement

The curriculum model and topics at all key stages prioritise equality and independent learning as the core of our teaching and learning pedagogy. This focus on autonomous learning not only enables students to excel academically but also equips them with essential skills for future employment. Furthermore, it ensures that learners of all abilities are adequately challenged and stretched to reach their full potential.

Key Stage 3 (Year 7, 8 and 9)

At Cowley, our Key Stage 3 Performing Arts curriculum builds upon the foundational knowledge and skills acquired in KS1 and KS2. We aim to cultivate an appreciation for a wide variety of music styles and genres while fostering development as performers, composers, and producers through an innovative, skills-based curriculum.

Our curriculum aligns with the statutory National Curriculum for Music and the Model Music Curriculum. We have established end points and component knowledge that serve as the backbone for all schemes of work, ensuring a mastery model approach. This enables students to understand their current progress and identify areas for improvement. Pupils sequentially develop key skills and apply subject knowledge through exposure to diverse topics, which are revisited and extended in Years 8 and 9 to enhance fluency and understanding. Key topics include Singing, The Basics, Class Bands, Classical Remix, Samba, Film Music, Keyboard Skills, Use Your Ears, Songwriting, and Set Song Performance.

Recognising the importance of a holistic approach, Cowley integrates core skills from Drama and Dance into our curriculum to enrich our learners' experience. While music remains central throughout Key Stage 3, we have added a dedicated lesson for drama, covering improvisation, devising, and text work, which form the backbone of all creative learning. Additionally, Year 9 students have the opportunity to explore dance through a seven-week taster session carousel, ensuring they experience this discipline before making their option choices at the end of the year.

In all disciplines, students are engaged through various stimuli and assessed individually against key strands including singing, performing, music technology, listening, composing/creating, and evaluating. This holistic approach ensures that students develop a comprehensive skill set, preparing them not only for academic success but also for future employment and personal growth.

Key Stage 4 (year 10 and 11)

At Key Stage 4, Cowley offers vocational courses as option choices for students who have a passion and enjoyment for the performing arts, regardless of their previous experience. These courses enable students to explore and develop theories, knowledge, skills, and techniques through vocational, workshop, and practical applications. The advantages of technical learning allow for a broader selection of units, which better support individual skill development.

Music

Students follow the Level 1/2 WJEC Eduqas Performing Arts Course (Music approach). This course allows students to cultivate an interest and skills in music performance. It is structured as follows:

Year 10

- **Unit 1: Performing** (Internal assessment, 30%)
- **Unit 2: Creating** (Internal assessment, 30%)

Year 11

- **Unit 1: Performing** (Internal assessment, 30%)
- **Unit 3: Performing Arts in Practice** (External assessment, 40%)

Dance

Students follow the Level 2 BTEC Tech Award in Performing Arts (Dance approach). This course allows students to develop interest and skills in a variety of dance styles. It is broken down as follows:

Year 10

- **Component 1: Exploring the Performing Arts** (Internal assessment, 30%)

Year 11

- **Component 2: Developing Skills and Techniques in Performing Arts** (Internal assessment, 30%)
- **Component 3: Responding to a Brief** (External assessment, 40%)

Musical Theatre

Students follow the Level 2 BTEC Tech Award in Performing Arts (Musical Theatre approach). This course enables students to develop their interests and skills in acting, dancing and singing. It is structured as follows:

Year 10

- **Component 1: Exploring the Performing Arts** (Internal assessment, 30%)

Year 11

- **Component 2: Developing Skills and Techniques in Performing Arts** (Internal assessment, 30%)
- **Component 3: Responding to a Brief** (External assessment, 40%)

Through these vocational courses, students at Cowley can deeply engage with their passions in the performing arts, gaining both practical experience and theoretical knowledge that prepare them for future academic and professional endeavours.

Key Stage 5 (Year 12 and 13)

At Key Stage 5, students have the opportunity to continue their vocational learning through the BTEC Level 3 national suite of qualifications. While prior experience from a Level 2 course is beneficial, it is not mandatory, as the department conducts open auditions throughout the year. This approach ensures that all interested students have the chance to pursue advanced studies in the performing arts.

Students will further develop and refine a range of skills and techniques, preparing them for entry into universities, drama schools, conservatoires, or employment in the performing arts and music industries. The units of work selected for both the music performance course and the performing arts (musical theatre) are tailored to the cohort's strengths and areas for growth, aiming to develop them into versatile and employable performers.

Music

Students follow the **BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Music (Performance)**. This course spans two years and covers six comprehensive units:

- **Music Performance Techniques (Core)**
- **Working as a Musical Ensemble**
- **Solo Performance**
- **Pop Music in Practice**
- **Marketing and Promotion**
- **Organising a Music Event**

These units provide students with a solid foundation in both performance and the business aspects of the music industry, ensuring they are well-prepared for various career paths.

Performing Arts (Musical Theatre)

Students enrol in the **BTEC Level 3 National Foundation Diploma in Performing Arts Practice**, a new and innovative program. The course includes:

Module D: Musical Theatre Skills Development (450 Guided Learning Hours)

- **Unit D10: Exploring Performance styles**

This unit focuses on honing students' technical and interpretative skills. Students engage in regular practice and performances, exploring various performance styles to refine their abilities and versatility.

- **Unit D11: Creating Performance Material**

In this unit, students collaborate in ensemble settings, learning the dynamics of group performances and enhancing their teamwork and communication skills through practical workshops and productions.

Unit D12: Performing Musical Theatre for an audience

This unit allows students to undertake a commissioned performance project (whole school musical), demonstrating their ability to meet specific performance requirements and creative briefs, from conception to execution.

The Performing Arts Industry (90 Guided Learning Hours)

- **Unit F16.1: Employment Opportunities in the Performing Arts**

Students explore various career paths within the performing arts sector, gaining insights into different roles and the skills required for each.

- **Unit F16.2: Planning for a Career in the Performing Arts**

This unit helps students develop career plans, including preparing for auditions, interviews, and creating a professional portfolio.

- **Unit F16.3: Performing Arts Enterprise**

Students learn about the business aspects of the performing arts, including marketing, finance, and project management, equipping them with the knowledge to manage their careers effectively.

This diploma emphasises practical skills development and a comprehensive understanding of the performing arts industry, equipping students with the knowledge and expertise required to excel in their chosen fields. Through these rigorous and diverse courses, Cowley's performing arts students are well-equipped to advance their academic and professional careers, becoming well-rounded and highly skilled individuals in the performing arts domain.

Curriculum Beyond the Classroom

The Performing Arts Department at Cowley International College offers extensive opportunities for students to perform both within the school and in the wider community. Central to our curriculum are the extracurricular provisions that reflect our commitment to equality and inclusivity.

Our extensive extracurricular program includes:

- Choirs: Senior and Junior
- 6th Form Ensemble
- Rock School
- Drama Club
- Dance Club
- Dance Company
- Keyboard Club
- Music Production Club
- Concert Band
- Music Theory Club

Peripatetic teachers provide one-on-one music tuition during the school day, free of charge to students.

Cowley International College actively participates in local community events such as the St Helens Rotary Club, Young Carers Services, Remembrance Day events, faith groups, and the St Helens Council Christmas light service. We collaborate regularly with the local music service for external events.

Students also have the opportunity to audition for our annual large-scale musical theatre production. Recent productions include *Into the Woods*, *Grease*, *Billy Elliot*, *Sister Act*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Fame*, *Les Misérables* and most recently, *Evita*. Other performance opportunities include Cowley's Got Talent, Year 6 Transition 'Welcome performance' and the annual Summer and Christmas concert.

Subject Expertise

Our Performing Arts staff are highly experienced and dedicated, ensuring the highest standards of teaching and learning. Both teaching and support staff are encouraged to develop their subject knowledge and continue professional development through various avenues, including:

- Examination board training sessions on new and existing specifications
- Attending St Helens Performing Arts network meetings to share best practices
- Serving as Examiners, EQAs and standards verifiers for KS4/5 examining boards

Staff also engage in professional practice outside of school, such as choreographing, directing, vocal coaching, performing as lead vocalists, lounge pianists, professional musical theatre tour, cruise ship performers, audition pianist and musical theatre performers, to stay current with industry developments. They offer subject support and guidance to other schools within the local authority, sharing best practices and resources across all three disciplines.

Destinations

The curriculum at KS4 equips students with the necessary skills, techniques, and knowledge to pursue Performing Arts courses at Cowley 6th Form and other further education institutions. Our students have progressed to prestigious drama schools and music conservatoires, including:

- Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts
- Birmingham Institute of Music
- The Royal Northern College of Music
- London College of Music
- Leeds College of Music

- Guildhall
- LAMDA
- LABAN
- Urdang
- Mountview
- Arts Ed

In addition to successful performance careers, our Performing Arts courses develop transferable skills that open doors to various career opportunities, such as teaching, off-stage roles (set/lighting/sound/costume design, directing, producing), and roles in marketing and promotion. Alumni feedback demonstrates that the soft skills honed through our Performing Arts program—such as presentation, teamwork, confidence, problem-solving, and communication—prepare students for success in any chosen field.