

Music development plan summary: Cowley International College

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2025-2026
Date this summary was published	September 2025
Date this summary will be reviewed	July 2026
Name of the school music lead	Corey Gerrard
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Daniel Watkins
Name of local music hub	St Helens Music Service
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	Sound! Music Hub

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 – and what changes we are planning in future years. 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.

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.

At Cowley International College, Music is taught through one hour per week at KS3 (Years 7–9), five hours per fortnight at KS4, and nine hours over two weeks at KS5.

The curriculum overview for Music and Performing Arts can be found on the school website: [Performing Arts - Cowley International College - St Helens](#)

The Music curriculum at Cowley International College is broad and balanced and aims to inspire all students through the interrelated dimensions of music, including performance, composition, listening & appraising, along with music technology opportunities.

Our curriculum is informed by both the statutory National Curriculum for Music and the Model Music Curriculum, providing a structured framework that promotes mastery of essential music skills and knowledge. This is based on the endpoints which we have created from the Model Music Curriculum. These endpoints inform our assessment

practices and guide the redevelopment of new topics and schemes of work at Key Stage 3, and ensure that students flourish as musicians.

Our curriculum is based upon practical learning. Concepts are not taught in standalone silos; instead, key knowledge is interweaved throughout schemes of work to deepen students' musical understanding.

Creating sound is a key focus within every music lesson at KS3, with a focus on music-making in every lesson—whether this is through singing, playing, or using a Digital Audio Workstation—with the key focus on creating sound before seeing the symbol. This helps students not only to understand and define musical terms and definitions but also to demonstrate them in sound. Music theory, listening, and appraising go alongside practical elements in each topic to ensure students progress into KS4 with a well-rounded musical understanding and developed knowledge and skills.

A key focus in the music curriculum is ensuring that music remains an inclusive subject and barriers are removed, with the aim of music education in the classroom enriching students and enhancing their musical life outside of lessons. The curriculum aims to support students in continuing to sing, play, or create music using a DAW.

Barriers are removed through free instrumental tuition available in school, free access to Cubase, and free Cubase licences available for home use, as well as free access to a cloud-based DAW. Pupils also have free access to instrument loans for instrumental lessons in partnership with St Helens Music Service. Students also have designated time to access practice rooms and use instruments freely, on their own or in bands.

Within each scheme of work, performance activities are built into the curriculum with opportunities for students to sing, play, listen, and share compositions and DAW projects with the teacher, peers, and class.

Key Stage 3 Music Provision:

As time is limited at KS3, the curriculum has been carefully considered to reflect what students can realistically learn in that timeframe, with the aim of students mastering key skills as they move from Year 7 into Year 8 and Year 9.

Students will develop their musical performance skills through a range of ensemble opportunities using voice, keyboard, ukulele, and guitar. Class and small group band work is embedded throughout all years to build instrumental confidence, accuracy, and ensemble awareness. Topics such as Uku' Can Play, Hooks and Riffs, Set Song, and Band on the Wall, Reggae enable students to rehearse and perform on instruments including voice, keyboard, ukulele, guitar, bass, and drums.

Composition skills and confidence will be developed through creative DAW projects across KS3. Students begin developing their composition skills from stimuli in Year 7, building confidence in creating original music with clear end-points that guide progression. In Year 7, students explore programme music and learn how to use

musical elements to represent ideas. In Year 8, students develop their understanding of song writing using a DAW, focusing on contemporary genres such as grime music. By Year 9, students apply their knowledge to song writing for pop and rock bands using Cubase, allowing them to produce more complex, structured, and stylistically accurate compositions.

Listening and appraising is embedded through a range of activities in lessons including 'Do Now Activities', which frequently include listening tasks as a technical experience and opportunity for students to explore and discuss the intent, meaning and purpose of the piece of music. Each topic aims to explore styles and genres of music to include a wide range of composers from classical music, programme music, film music, and pop, rock, and jazz music. Guided listening supports their development of musical vocabulary and critical response skills.

Theory will be taught incrementally at KS3 with regular opportunities to retrieve key theoretical knowledge. Pupils will learn and apply musical elements, rhythmic notation, and stave reading (including treble and bass clefs) from Year 7 onwards. These are reinforced through practical application across all topics.

Music technology plays a central role in the KS3 curriculum, particularly through the use of Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs). Students explore how music is composed, produced, arranged, and manipulated using technology. Topics include Programme Music, Film Music, and EDM, which allow pupils to compose and remix music using Cubase, developing both creative and technical understanding of music production.

Singing is embedded as a core strand throughout KS3, with students developing vocal technique, ensemble singing, and harmony work. Beginning with Find Your Voice in Year 7, students progress through more performance-based projects which include singing opportunities as a class ensemble, in a pop/rock band, or as a soloist.

Cowley International College is proud to be the Lead School for St Helens as part of the Sound! Music Hub, funded by the Department for Education through Arts Council England.

Key Stage 4 Music Provision:

In Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11), students are allocated 2 hours of music per week, subject to change. Cowley International College offers vocational courses through the Level 1/2 WJEC Eduqas Performing Arts Course (Music Route). This course allows students to deepen their understanding and skills in music performance through units focused on performing and creating music.

Students engage in:

- **Unit 1: Performing** - Students showcase their performance skills through solo and ensemble performances, developing technical proficiency and stage presence.
- **Unit 2: Creating** - This unit focuses on composition and musical creativity, where students respond to a brief to create original pieces of music.
- **Unit 3: Performing Arts in Practice** - Students explore the planning and execution of a live music event. Learning about all aspects of the event, including set design, lighting, marketing and promotion, and budgeting and pitching to a commissioning panel, preparing students for real-world scenarios both in and outside of the music and performing arts industries.

Key Stage 5 Music Provision:

At Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13), students have the opportunity to pursue advanced studies through the RSL Level 3 Vocational Extended Certificate in Creative Music Industry. This course spans two years and covers various comprehensive units designed to prepare students for higher education and careers in the music industry.

Students work on assignments which include real-world vocational scenarios, allowing them performance opportunities as both soloists and as members of an ensemble. Students also gain experience in planning and organising live music events, which includes handling set design, lighting, marketing and promotion, budgeting, and collaboratively planning events. The year concludes with students organising a live music event at an external venue.

These vocational scenarios ensure that pupils are well-prepared for various career paths by providing a solid foundation in both performance and the business aspects of the music industry and in roles outside of performing arts..

For more detailed information about our music curriculum, including time allocations per week and specific opportunities for disabled pupils and those with SEND, please refer to our published school curriculum available [SEND - Cowley International College - St Helens](#)

Part B: Co-curricular music

This is about opportunities for pupils to sing and play music, outside of lesson time, including choirs, ensembles and bands, and how pupils can make progress in music beyond the core curriculum.

Instrumental Tuition

Peripatetic music lessons are provided free of charge to students during the school day. Lessons are provided on a one-to-one basis and also as part of small group lessons. Instrument loans are also available to support students in their musical development, providing access to pop band instruments as well as orchestral instruments. Current tuition includes Brass, Woodwind, Piano/Keyboard, Guitar, Bass, Drums and Voice.

Cowley International College maintains close links with St Helens Music Service, which provides instrumental tuition and performance opportunities outside of school. Cowley International College also hires private instrumental tutors specialising in singing and drums, bringing valuable expertise to support our extracurricular programmes.

Pupils sign up for instrumental lessons at the start of the academic year. Students who wish to sign up for instrumental lessons throughout the year are added to a waiting list. Pupils from all year groups are eligible to join.

Students have the opportunity to work towards music qualifications such as ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) and Rock School certifications, providing recognised benchmarks for their musical progress. Alternatively, students can simply learn an instrument for fun, without the pressure of working towards an examination. This comprehensive music education programme not only fosters technical proficiency but also cultivates a lifelong appreciation for music and performance.

Extra-curricular Music

Cowley International College runs an extensive extra-curricular programme. Students have access to a range of music ensembles and clubs that extend beyond regular class time.

All extra-curricular clubs are provided free of charge, ensuring accessibility for all students regardless of their financial circumstances.

Additionally, students have numerous opportunities to showcase their talents through performances at both internal performances and external performances.

Pupils are invited to join extra-curricular activities at the start of the year and are welcome to join each club throughout the year. This enrichment programme is subject to change throughout the year.

Junior Choir: Students can participate in the Junior Choir, tailored for pupils in KS3.

Senior Choir: The Senior Choir at Cowley is a prestigious vocal ensemble comprising students from Year 7 through to Year 13.

Rock School: Rock School at Cowley International College is an extra-curricular group that meets every Wednesday after school. Dedicated to contemporary music skills and fostering collaboration among aspiring rock and pop musicians, this is supported and run by one of our peripatetic instrumental tutors.

Concert Band: Concert Band at Cowley International College welcomes instrumentalists of all ages and abilities, providing a vibrant platform for musical collaboration and growth.

Keyboard Club: Keyboard Club at Cowley International College offers students a dedicated opportunity to enhance their keyboard skills and theoretical understanding of music.

Whole School Musical: At Cowley International College can engage in the Whole School Musical production, an inclusive event that showcases their talents through five performances. This enriching experience includes the opportunity to collaborate with a live band composed of professional musicians, offering students first-hand exposure to industry standards. They also benefit from learning from practitioners and teachers with extensive experience in the performing arts professionally. Previous productions, such as, *Evita*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Parade*, and *Les Misérables*, have captivated audiences and showcased the students' dedication and skill. Most recently, the 2024 production of *Little Shop of Horrors*.

These extracurricular activities not only enhance students' musical abilities but also foster teamwork, creativity, and personal growth, contributing to a vibrant and inclusive musical community at our school.

Individual Practice Opportunities:

Students at Cowley International College have access to practice rooms and musical equipment free of charge during lunchtime and after school. This opportunity allows them to work collaboratively as a band or individually, honing their musical skills and preparing for performances. The availability of practice rooms and equipment supports students in developing their musical proficiency, whether rehearsing as a group or practicing solo, students benefit from dedicated spaces equipped with instruments, computers, and specialist music software such as Cubase and Band Lab.

External Opportunities:

In addition to the vibrant performing arts programs offered at Cowley International College, pupils also have access to a wide range of opportunities outside of school through partnerships with St Helens Music Service. These include participation in the brass band, concert band, Music Theory Club, Music Service Choir, and masterclass sessions with leading composers organised by the music service. These experiences enrich students' musical education beyond the classroom, offering valuable insights and performance opportunities in various musical disciplines.

Part C: Musical Events

This is about all the other musical events and opportunities that we organise, such as concerts and shows, and trips to professional concerts.

Throughout the academic year, Cowley International College offers a diverse range of musical experiences designed to enrich students' musical education and foster a love for music and performing arts.

These experiences include regular events such as singing in assemblies, musical performances, concerts, and shows both within and outside the school premises. Additionally, our scheduled musical performances, concerts, and shows promise to be highlights of the year, offering platforms for students to shine in various capacities.

Our Large-Scale events include the annual Summer Concert and the Christmas Concert, students from all year groups will have the chance to participate either as performers or members of the audience, ensuring that everyone can engage with and appreciate the musical achievements of their peers.

Additionally, events like the Y6 Transition Event, St. Helen's Parish Church Christmas Concert, St. Helen's Rotary Club Christmas Dinner Concert, Cowley International College Pensioners' Lunch, Young Carers Fundraising Concert, Christmas Light Switch on, and Cowley's Got Talent showcase highlight the school's commitment to inclusivity and community engagement through music. These events are not only enriching but also accessible, as all activities are free for students to participate in, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment where every student can explore and develop their musical abilities.

In the future

This is about what the school is planning for subsequent years.

As part of the ongoing development plan for Music at Cowley International College, the following initiatives are being prioritised to enhance musical opportunities and provision for students:

The expansion of performance opportunities in contemporary and popular music, including the development of partnerships with local organisations offering events such as jam nights and Battle of the Bands.

The strengthening of links with feeder primary schools to facilitate collaborative performance opportunities and support transition.

The formulation of a strategic development plan in collaboration with the Sound Music Hub.

The organisation of a residential trip for members of the Senior Choir to support enrichment and performance experience.

Further Information

Links to partner organisation:

<https://sthelens.gov.uk/article/1812/Music-Service>

<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/sound-music-hub>

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk>

<https://www.bandlab.com/>

<https://www.steinberg.net/cubase/>

[PQA St Helens Website.](#)