

Music development plan summary: Thirsk School and Sixth Form College

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2025-2026
Date this summary was published	January 2026
Date this summary will be reviewed	January 2027
Name of the school music lead	Louise Dickson
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	George Hollis
Name of local music hub	North Yorkshire

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.

KS3

In Year 7 students have 3 lessons per fortnight.

In year 8 and 9 students have 2 music lessons per fortnight.

The Year 7 Music curriculum is designed to develop and introduce key musical skills including solo and ensemble opportunities in the classroom. The curriculum has a number of short half-term units exploring aspects of performance, composition and appraising music. We do this through a variety of media and instruments including vocal, keyboard work and percussion. Lessons are updated year-on-year to match current trends in contemporary musicians and their music. Each unit has a specific focus although all aspects of the National Curriculum are developed spirally giving students experience and mastery of skills in music.

Over the course of Year 7, the students cover 6 topics (1 topic per half term) and per topic they are assessed on a Listening and Appraising activity and either a Composition or Performance activity.

The Year 8 Music curriculum is designed to develop and improve key skills. The curriculum has six short half-term units exploring aspects of performance, composition and appraising music. This is done through a variety of media and instruments including vocal, keyboard, guitar/ukulele and drum-based work. Lessons are updated year-on-year to match current trends in contemporary musicians and their music. Each unit has a specific focus although all aspects of the National Curriculum are developed spirally giving students experience and mastery of skills in music.

Over the course of Year 8, the students cover 6 topics (1 topic per half term) and per topic they are assessed on a Listening and Appraising activity and either a Composition or Performance activity.

The Year 9 Music curriculum is designed to develop and improve key skills taking students to a higher level of musical understanding. Each unit has a specific focus while all aspects of the National Curriculum are developed spirally giving students experience and mastery of skills in music. The curriculum has a number of short half-term units exploring aspects of performance, composition and appraising music. We do this through a variety of media and instruments, students are also now encouraged to fully focus on their specialist instrument both as a soloist and in an ensemble.

Over the course of Year 9, they cover 3 topics (1 topic per term) and per topic they are assessed on a Listening and Appraising activity and either a Composition or Performance activity.

KS4

In Year 10 and 11, students have 5 lessons of music per fortnight.

Key Stage 4 music focuses on learning the information needed to complete the Music GCSE. The examination board we follow is EDUQAS. The students are assessed in the following ways by the end of the course:

- Component 1: Performance
- Candidates must complete 2 performances
- Performances must be at Grade 3 difficulty (Rock School syllabus) to avoid being penalized.
- One of these performances must be an ensemble.
- The second performance can either be an ensemble or solo performance.
- Both performances must total 4 minutes minimum to avoid being penalized.
- Submission documents required: MP3 of each performance, alongside a score and a Performance Log.
- Component 2: Composition

- Candidates must complete 2 compositions.
- One of these compositions must be to a brief issued by EDUQAS in the Year 11.
- One of these compositions must be to a brief set by the candidate.
- Both compositions must total 4 minutes minimum to avoid being penalized.
- Submission documents required: MP3 of each composition, alongside a score and a Composition Log.
- Component 3: Listening and Appraising
- Candidates will be examined on 4 Areas of Study (AOS):
- Forms and Devices
- Music for Ensemble
- Film Music
- Popular music
- There are 2 set works provided by EDUQAS which the students must study:
- Badinerie, Bach
- Africa, Toto.
- This is a written exam composed of 8 questions.
- There will be 1 question in the exam will be on Badinerie, Bach and 1 question in the exam will be on Africa, Toto.
- 6 questions will be on pieces unknown to the candidate.
- Extracts provided in the exam are up to Grade 5 difficulty.
- There will be 1 essay question worth 10 marks.
- There will be a melodic and/or rhythmic dictation question.

Students taking the GCSE will be offered free instrumental lessons on the instrument they will be assessed on (financial support provided by the school). They must be Grade 3 or above by the time of submission to avoid being penalized.

The Year 10 Music curriculum is designed to develop and improve key skills taking students to a higher level of musical understanding. Following the Eduqas Spec, each unit has a specific focus while all knowledge is developed spirally giving students experience and mastery of skills in Music. The curriculum has a number of units, exploring aspects of performance, composition and appraising music. We do this through a variety of media and instruments. Students are encouraged to fully focus on their specialist instrument both as a soloist and in an ensemble. The students are expected to extend their computer-based music software composition work (Note Flight or Soundtrap) giving them a taste of professional music making. Appraising is extended to include the Areas of Study in the specification, Musical Form, Music for Ensemble, Film Music and Popular Music. Ongoing independent learning helps students to develop their skills instrumentally and vocally, keeping a diary with their instrumental teacher charting their practice (independent learning) and progress.

The Year 11 Music curriculum is designed to develop and improve key skills taking students to a higher level of musical understanding. Following the Eduqas Spec, each unit

has a specific focus while all knowledge is developed spirally giving students experience and mastery of skills in Music. The curriculum has a number of units, exploring aspects of performance, composition and appraising music. We do this through a variety of media and instruments. Students are encouraged to fully focus on their specialist instrument both as a soloist and in an ensemble. The students are expected to extend their computer-based music software composition work (Note Flight or Soundtrap) which gives students a taste of professional music making. Appraising is also extended to include the Areas of Study in the specification, Musical Form, Music for Ensemble, Film Music and Popular Music. Students in Year 11 Music have an ongoing independent learning to develop their skills instrumentally and vocally. Students keep a diary with their instrumental teacher charting their practice (independent learning) and progress.

The document below provides an overview of the Music Curriculum for KS4.

All coursework is moderated at , with department colleague and Northallerton School) and finally by EDUQAS. Feedback will be provided after the first two stages of moderation and students will have the opportunity to respond to this feedback before the final submission date. Students will not receive feedback from EDUQAS and any grades issued by EDUQAS will be final in the summer of submission. All coursework is uploaded to the exam board before the deadline of 5th May of the academic year.

KS5

In year 12 and 13 students have 8 lessons of music per fortnight

Key Stage 5 music focuses on learning the information needed to complete the Music A level/AS. The examination board we follow is EDUQAS. The students are assessed in the following ways by the end of the course:

- Performing if a candidate chooses option A :Total duration of performance 10-12minutes. Option B: Total duration of performance 6-8 minutes
- Visiting examiner during year 13
- Composition option A: total duration of compositions 4-6minutes. Option B: duration of compositions 8-10 minute.
- Option A two compositions, one of which must reflect the musical techniques and conventions associated with the Classical Western Tradition.
- Option B three compositions one of which must reflect the musical techniques and conventions associated with the Classical Western Tradition.
- Briefs set by the exam board EDQAS September 1st in the exam year of 13
- Submission documents required: MP3 of each composition, alongside a score and a Composition Log.
- Component 3: Appraising Candidates explore three areas of study
- Western Classical Tradition (The development of the symphony 1750-1900)
- Set Work Haydn Symphony 104 in D major
- Area of study C Musical Theatre
- Area of study E Into the Twentieth Century including two set works

- Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, Movement 2- Poulenc
- Three Nocturnes Number 1, Nuages – Debussy
- A written exam which features questions of the set work analysis with a score, extended responses on a wider context, unprepared extracts of music with or without a score, comparison questions and essay style questions.

Students taking the A level will be offered free instrumental lessons on the instrument they will be assessed on (financial support provided by the school). They must be Grade 6 or above by the time of submission to avoid being penalized.

- The course is designed like KS4 – continuing to develop musical skills.
- Department has an excellent record of students securing places at top institutions to continue their musical development this includes composition and performance.

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.

Extra-Curricular Offer

There are several extra-curricular activities that all students (Year 7-13) can get involved with. These take place at lunchtime and after school activities. Students can purchase lunch in the canteen or bring their own packed lunch, which can be eaten in the rehearsal room prior to the activity starting.

- Concert Band is based in FS1 with Mrs Dickson (Thursday 3.15-4.15)
- Jazz Group is based in FS1 with Mrs Dickson (Monday 3.15-4.15)
- Saxophone choir in F2 with Mrs Dickson (Monday 12.20 – 12.50)
- Lower School Choir in FS1 with Miss Beecroft (established January 2025 Wednesday 12.20-12.50)
- Senior Choir in F3 with Mr Pierce Williams (Wednesday 12.30-1pm)
- Theory Club in F2 with Mrs Dickson (Friday week 1 12.20.1pm)
- Annual show - in FS2 with Mr Pierce Williams, Mrs Stimson, Miss Beecroft (Tuesday and Thursday lunch and Wednesday 3.15-4.15)
- Rock Band – to be established this year with Mr Norris
- Annual foreign Music Tour lead by Mrs Dickson (February half-term)

GCSE Revision

Revision and Coursework catch up sessions are available for GCSR students. There is one after school.

Instrumental Lessons

The school has North Yorkshire Music Service instrumental teachers visiting the school. We also have Kaffessamusic offering guitar tuition and Woodrow Music tuition offering brass lessons. We offer single and group lessons. Students who are entitled to Free School Meals (Pupil Premium) are also entitled to free group lessons with 1 instrument. Music fundraising and donations also supports gifted and talented musicians having lessons.

The lessons we offer are:

Since lockdown Mrs Dickson teaches clarinet and saxophone to chosen students free of charge during non-contact lesson time this has proven very successful in maintaining ensembles in the department.

- Voice
- Guitar electric/acoustic/bass
- Piano/Keyboard
- Woodwind (clarinet, flute, saxophone, oboe, etc.)
- Drum kit
- Strings

Instrumental Hire

We also offer hire of instruments for all students. Enquiries can be made to Mrs Dickson. This is a free service, although students are expected to pay for the upkeep of these instruments.

Part C: Musical experiences

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

School trips

School trips in music are available to GCSE and A level students.

- A trip which will be organized annually is to Manchester to the Bridgewater Hall, where we will be watching the Orchestra Through the Ages. This features the Halle Orchestra who will perform set work pieces from EDUQAS, EDEXCEL and AQA.

- Other trips will be organized where possible.

Students will be expected to pay for the cost of the tickets and the hire of transportation.

Concerts and Shows

There are several performance opportunities throughout the year which all students can be involved in.

- Christmas Concert- In December, we perform the Christmas Words and Music a concert which features large ensemble performances, sixth form soloists, readings including from Head Boy Head Girl and congregational carols.
- Spring Concert usually in March. A concert to celebrate our year 13 musicians – soloists and music from our larger ensembles.
- Summer Concert- In July, we perform the Summer Concert which features pieces students have been working on in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular clubs.

Concerts are free to view and to participate in, however we do invite audience members to donate to the department. All donations go towards the upkeep and purchase of instruments.

There is usually refreshments served by Friends of Thirsk. The Christmas Concert was financial supported by Barclays Bank who ran a raffle and all proceeds made were then doubled by Barclays – this connection has been made by Mrs Dickson.

- Visiting experts – offering workshops and masterclasses, offered to all. These are to include this academic year Rory Mann leading a guitar workshop and Ben Hollingsworth leading a drum workshop.
- Links with De Mowbray Music – who offer performance opportunities with a working orchestra for our more experienced players
- Links with Trinity Church Ripon offering performance opportunities for our more experienced players.
- Red Kite Alliance

The music department also works in tandem with the drama department to annually perform a musical. Students are invited to either join the cast, where they will sing, dance and act, or the band, where they will play their instrument of choice alongside ex-students.

Shows are ticketed with a small cost associated for the hire of lighting, costumes, scores and scripts. Refreshments are provided by Friends of Thirsk for a small donation

In the future

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

In the future of the department, we are aiming to achieve the following action points

- Increase the GCSE capacity

- Keep A level
- Increase technology for KS3
- Increase the capability of the Extra-curricular offers to include Rock Band opportunities and to host 'The Battle of the Bands'

Further information (optional)

And a link to the school's website:

[Thirsk School Home](#)