

Birches Head Academy



Music Development Plan

Policy Information:

Policy Lead	Head of Music
Date prepared	Autumn 2025
Frequency of Review	Annual
Review Date	Autumn 2026

Approved by Principal:

Paul Masher



Frank Field
Education Trust

Music development plan summary: Birches Head Academy

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2025-26
Date this summary was published	September 2025
Date this summary will be reviewed	September 2026
Name of the school music lead	Miss E Mooney
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Miss J Roberts
Name of local music hub	Stoke on Trent City Music Service
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	

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 KS3, pupils receive 2 hours a fortnight of curriculum time in Music with a specialist teacher. At KS4, those who opt to take part in BTEC Music receive 6 hours a fortnight of timetabled teaching with a specialist teacher.

Our music curriculum is informed by but not necessarily written based on the Model Music Curriculum. This helps us to inform progression and what students may have learnt at KS2 level, however, we use our links with the local music service and our feeder primary schools to inform this.

In Year 7, pupils begin with a transition project that helps to develop some fundamental skills in music as we are aware that despite there being a Model Music Curriculum in place that there is not always access to a specialist music teacher in a primary setting so therefore almost all students arrive to us in Year 7 at different levels of musical skill. In this learning programme, all pupils develop the ability to read treble clef staff

notation or recap this if this was learnt at primary or in private music tuition, develop some competence on a keyboard and learn to sing as a whole class. They also work on their listening skills and will develop confidence in using tier 3 vocabulary to describe the music they are listening to. Following on from this, Year 7 go on to the focus areas of Rhythm, Keyboard Skills, Composition and Performance linked to the areas of African Music, Classical Music/Orchestra, Programme Music and Musicals. (aimed at developing fundamental skills prior to beginning the Y8 curriculum and mastering knowledge learnt earlier in the year).

In Year 8, as mentioned previously, pupils will study areas focused on the 5 key skill areas identified in our curriculum map (Notation, Rhythm, Keyboard Skills, Composition and Performance – sequenced so that one will always feed into the next), beginning with Variation and the study of how music can be varied and changed. This topic focusses on developing both the notation-based skills of the pupil and also their artistic ability with regards to how they trial out different ideas to change the music. Pupils then explore music from other cultures in Learning Programme 2 with a focus on Folk Music. For Learning Programme 3, pupils will start to explore another type of music from another culture as they explore Latin Music and its cultural links to other types of music. They will also continue to develop their ability to competently play a piece of music on a keyboard instrument. In LP4, linking to our school's ethos of Social Justice, pupils will begin their performance unit on the topic of 'Protest Songs' in which they will explore how music can be used to challenge injustice. For this they will learn to play a song about Nelson Mandela and perform this in small groups. Finally, in Learning Programme 5, pupils will complete a unit of learning around songwriting. They will explore how songs are written in the popular music industry and what makes a good song. They will also take part in an ignition activity that is an inter-class competition based on the Eurovision Song Contest.

In Year 9, pupils begin to follow a curriculum titled 'How Music Works' which is intended to not only introduce new knowledge and experiences in the final year of KS3 but also intends to strengthen and deepen knowledge and skills from other parts of KS3 to give pupils taking music forwards into KS4 the best possible preparation for the BTEC. Pupils begin in Learning Programme 1 by revisiting Blues Music, deepening their knowledge about its cultural history and then linking it forward to Jazz Music recognizing the significance of both genres and their influence on modern music. In Learning Programme 2, in line with their Y7 and 8 peers, Year 9 will be exploring a type of music from another culture as they learn about Reggae Music. They will explore the cultural factors and influence of reggae and its importance in music's history, as well as learning to perform a reggae song. In Learning Programme 3, pupils will revisit some of the key knowledge around Film Music before adding in new knowledge about Video Game Music and how this is written to enhance the experience of the consumer. There will be many opportunities for practical learning during this learning programme, including from a technology perspective. In Learning Programme 4, Year 9 will be exploring the genre of Britpop and its importance in British Culture. They will explore not only why this genre is popular and play a song

that is typical of this genre, but they will also begin to secure their knowledge of stylistic features. From a cultural perspective, they will begin to understand the significance of this music to the country they live in.

In Learning Programme 5, pupils will then complete a project to end their time in KS3. This is heavily focused on careers in the music industry with a focus on events management. As a year group, they will plan and prepare a short performance based 'festival' in which they will have the opportunity to take on the roles of organiser, performer and audience member. This will encompass many of the skills they have developed through KS3 and is also a good way to celebrate the end of the learning journey in music for those who have not chosen to take this to KS4.

At KS4, we deliver the BTEC Tech Award in Music Practice (2022 specification). In Year 10, pupils will complete the component 1 section of the course which accounts for 30% of their overall grade exploring music products and styles through a range of theory, practical and workshop-based lessons. Pupils then begin to prepare for Component 2 in their lessons by completing challenges and workshop based tasks to develop their skills before beginning the next controlled assessment in the September of Y11. Component 2 is completed by early December, leaving a little bit of time to prepare for the external assessment of Component 3 which is a 3-part task requiring pupils to choose a song from a choice of 10 and transform it into a different genre (from a list of 4). This requires pupils to be able to source their material independently, be incredibly self-motivated and be able to utilize their skills from across their time in school. For both internally assessed components, there is 1 resit opportunity available should this be needed.

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.

Outside of the main music curriculum, unfortunately this year we are unable to offer peripatetic music lessons in school due to the rising costs of these and how much we have had to pass to families/are making back into the school budget. We will in time look for this to come back into our music offering in school, however, we do still offer our extracurricular programme and singing lessons in school.

In school, we are proud to have a good extracurricular offering, providing our pupils with excellent personal development opportunities. We run a 'Glee Club' who perform repertoire of many kinds, a Rock and Pop band that is open to all year groups and abilities, a KS4 band dedicated to our BTEC pupils and have the resources to offer a Steel Pan Band open to all years, working to learn different repertoire and perform to audiences on these fantastic instruments. We are also going to put on a school musical performance of High School Musical in March 2026 following the success of Matilda Jr in March 2025 which involves many of our young musicians.

Pupils have many opportunities to perform, often in showcases, school events and assemblies to showcase their hard work and talents. Notably, in October/November 2025, we will be hosting and attending a trust wide singing event to unite our three schools in music.

At Birches Head Academy, we also have access to practice rooms. These can be used as breakout spaces for ensembles but are predominantly used to house peripatetic music lessons and also for the use of KS4 when rehearsing/producing recorded work for their BTEC. We are also in the process of putting together a media suite which will support the music department.

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.

In the academic year 2023-24, our pupils have performed in rewards assemblies and some school events, and in May 2024 we were incredibly proud to host a showcase evening to show off the hard work and dedication of our music and performing arts pupils which was a roaring success. We have also had a successful performance of Matilda Jr in the academic year 2024-25. In March 2025, we were very lucky to be able to take 43 year 7 pupils to Manchester's Bridgewater Hall to see the Halle Orchestra in concert which supported their learning for LP3. We also took a small group of musicians to perform at a SOT 100 centenary celebration at the Victoria Hall

For the academic year 2024-25 we are preparing to perform the musical High School Musical in March 2026 and look forward to future opportunities to take our young people out on trips and to participate in more musical opportunities in the future.

In the future

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

- There have been some major changes to the KS3 curriculum for the academic year 2025-26 aimed at creating more fulfilling musical experiences for pupils in the classroom and also securing skills that pupils can deepen throughout KS3 and into KS4 hopefully encouraging more pupils to take music to L2 and 3 standards.
- We will be participating in our trust wide singing event in October/November.
- We will be putting on performance of High School Musical in March 2026
- We would like to explore a means of bringing peripatetic music lessons back into our academy to offer more young people the chance to learn to play a musical instrument.

Further information (optional)

<https://bircheshead.org.uk/curriculum-music/> - information around the music curriculum including Learning Programmes, a curriculum overview and a curriculum map.