

**Artsmark
Platinum Award**
Awarded by Arts
Council England

Music Development Plan 2023-25

Introduction

Thomas Tallis School is named after the father of English church music, organist to Henry VIII and pioneer of printed music. He lived and worked in Greenwich and survived a period of great political and religious turbulence. He exemplified our Tallis Habits and Character traits. Music is in the school's DNA.

Music played a key role in our year long Tallis at 50 anniversary celebrations (2021-22). We collaborated with Peter Phillips from the Tallis Scholars and members of the Thomas Tallis Society, who performed a number of times throughout the year. Our orchestra, choir and bands performed at the Tallis at 50 event in July 2022 along with students from our conservatoire partner Trinity Laban..

In 1998, the school was designated a specialist arts college. We were founder members of the Creative Partnerships network and one of the first thirty national Schools of Creativity. We have twice been designated an Artsmark Platinum school. The Music department has been awarded the PTI quality mark and, along with the Dance department, we maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with Trinity Laban Conservatoire. This commits us to sharing best practice and coordinating at least one high quality music and dance project each year involving both partners. Our close association with the PTI gives us access to high quality CPD and the opportunity to share ideas with colleagues in music departments across the country.

The department currently has three full time Music teachers, two music technicians, and a team of five peripatetic music tutors. Music is part of the Performing Arts curriculum area that also includes Dance and Drama. Performing Arts benefits from a close partnership with the Visual & Media Arts curriculum area. Both are well-established faculties within the school.

Vulnerable music students are supported by two expert Education Assistants based in the Performing Arts. The department is fortunate to receive additional financial support from the Stephen Taylor Foundation in the form of an annual grant of £10,000. This is used to underpin a commitment to cultural entitlement, specifically the provision of free music lessons to any students on the Pupil Premium register. The team is led by a Curriculum Leader for Music. The team currently includes the school's Post 16 Performing Arts Progression Officer and Arts Award Coordinator.

We have collaborated with the Greenwich Music Hub on a series of high profile concerts held at Blackheath Halls.

Curriculum

Music is taught to all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 (KS3) for one hour each week. Students experience a wide variety of types of music including singing and instrumental tasks and are taught foundational skills that enable them to develop their listening, performance and compositional skills.

At KS4, we offer both a GCSE Music qualification and a Technical Award in Performing Arts with a dedicated music syllabus. Both courses further develop students' musical knowledge and skills and these are formally assessed through a combination of practical tasks and written examinations.

At Post 16, students can opt to study either A-level in Music Technology or A-level Music.

The curriculum is well-planned and resourced. A set of Threshold Concepts (Appendix 1) has been developed to guide both curriculum and lesson planning, offering students various invitations to think hard about their experience of music, its cultural significance and purposes. We started decolonising our music curriculum a few years ago now and continue to revise and improve this so our students can study a wider and more inclusive programme and see themselves represented in music lessons. For example, at KS4 and 5 (GCSE and A level Music) we changed our exam board from Edexcel to Eduqas, which gives us more flexibility in terms of choice of composers and music genres. At KS3, we introduced or adapted some of our schemes of work such as Blues music, Music from around the World, or Everyone can be a Musician to be inclusive and to remove outdated language and vocabulary. We are also tackling the Climate Emergency by making students aware of the situation and inspiring them to take action, exploring the idea of music being a powerful tool of communication, an aesthetic that is inbuilt into our music threshold concepts. Our 'I've Got Rhythm' scheme of work introduces learners to Scrapheap Orchestra and Stomp who use upcycled objects to make music. A homework task requires students to make their own instrument from found objects and household refuse.

Cultural Entitlement

The Music Department supports the school's Cultural Entitlement programme by ensuring that all KS3 students have access to at least one high quality arts experience each year. KS3 classes are assigned to the department by the Cultural Entitlement Co-ordinator at the start of the year and appropriate trips, workshops and/or performances are arranged with our various partners. For example, in 2022 a group of 30 KS3 students attended a Trinity Laban Orchestra rehearsal at Blackheath Halls. More recently (2023), we invited our most talented KS3 music students to attend the Jingle Bell Jazz concert at the Woolwich Arsenal Fireworks Factory, and we have further visits and workshops planned in the run up to 2024. We keep a document of these experiences in order to track equality of access each year. In addition, we provide a rich diet of co-curricular experiences for our students, including joining a band, becoming a member of the school's orchestra and various collaborations with Trinity Laban Conservatoire.

Instrumental lessons

At Tallis we believe that all students should have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and provide individual tuition for students who wish to progress further on their chosen instrument. We have a well established team of visiting instrumental teachers and each term, a letter is sent to KS3 parents to promote our instrumental lessons and these are also actively promoted during parents' and open evenings.

We currently offer lessons in piano/keyboard, drums, guitar (electric, acoustic, and bass), singing, and violin.

2023-24:

Number of students taking instrumental lessons: 121 (17 PP)
(Drums: 36/Singing: 3/Piano: 29/Guitar: 51/Violin: 1/Cello: 1)

Our aim for the near future is to expand on the instruments that students can study by employing a flute and saxophone teacher and a teacher of strings. We would also like to encourage more pupil premium students to take up the opportunity of free music lessons, and we are also looking into the option of small group lessons for those students who prefer to learn in this way.

School Choir

Singing is an integral part of our lessons in KS3 and we encourage students to join the choir. In 2022, we worked with the Thomas Tallis Society choir to try to develop our school choir. They performed at our Tallis Music recital and our 'Tallis at 50' outdoor concert. They also funded a vocal workshop delivered by the Ex-Cathedra company for our year 7 and 8 cohort.

Singing is high on the priority as we head toward 2024 and we have 27 singers involved in our summer musical theatre production.

Our aim for the near future is to establish a choir that all students feel able to join regardless of vocal abilities and to feel that they are represented by the chosen repertoire. We are currently approaching the London Gospel Choir with a view to them coming in to give a workshop and to coach a Tallis Gospel choir.

School Ensembles

Our Tallis Orchestra is growing stronger and stronger each year, particularly since September 2022 when it was rebranded The Tallis Contemporary Orchestra with the addition of more 'rock and pop' instruments such as drums, guitar, bass and synthesisers. We are collaborating with Trinity Laban students to support our music students during rehearsals and public performances.

We have a wide variety of bands and ensembles with many students performing in several bands across different year groups. Since the end of Covid, our peripatetic drum and guitar teachers have supported several bands who now perform at our various musical events, including concerts, open evenings, and celebration assemblies.

From 2023 we are very excited to be teaming up with Mounts Bay School in Penzance on a performance and songwriting project. Mounts Bay will be making a first visit to Tallis in November 2023 and will be collaborating with 20 of our year 10 musicians. We will continue our work with Mounts Bay online and through file sharing.

Specialist Facilities

The music department consists of three dedicated classrooms, four practice rooms and one recording studio with a control room and two vocal booths. Each classroom has 16 keyboards, 16 iPads and a set of percussion instruments. One of the classrooms also has 10 iMacs with MIDI keyboards and 25 Macbook Pro laptops. Each practice room has a drum kit, piano, guitars and bass and can be used by our peripatetic music tutors or students. Our studio allows us to record students' performances and our KS4 and 5 students to develop their coursework.

In addition, we have access to a large 240 seater Main Hall with control room, lighting board, stage lights and integrated stereo speakers. The school has a Recital Room, which has excellent sound attenuation, but this is currently used as a Post 16 classroom and occasional gallery space.

Performances

We have a minimum of three big, public performances each year. The *Festival of Light* is held in December, a collaboration with the Drama and Dance departments. The *Tallis Music Recital* takes place in the Spring Term and either a *Piano Recital* or a *Whole School Musical* takes place towards the end of the Summer Term. Students attend performances as part of our Cultural Entitlement programme.

Music is at the heart of Tallis and often the best way for students to learn is often from other students. From 2023 we are planning a regular assembly takeover, where our young musicians perform to students outside of their own year group, particularly to younger peers, showing them what they can achieve with practice, and to display the enjoyment they can feel from being involved in playing music.

We should not forget that all our music teachers and peripatetic staff are highly skilled musicians and performers, so we plan to display staff talents through a variety of informal performances demonstrating that we have many strings to our bows.

Progression

Our KS3 curriculum aims to provide a unit-based approach that is ambitious, engaging, well-sequenced and which leads to excellent musical outcomes for all pupils regardless of background or prior musical ability. In the classroom, students focus on an area of music for one term and are able to develop the skills to listen, perform and compose using features particular to that style. Our young musicians are a mixed-ability group and our curriculum is planned to engage the novice along with the seasoned learner, leaving no one behind. Our aim is simple: for students to learn about music and in doing so to become more musical.

Our music lessons focus on developing creativity through the Tallis Habits so that students practise becoming more inquisitive, collaborative, persistent, disciplined and imaginative. We want students to form a lasting relationship to music in all its forms, gradually building their knowledge, skills and understanding. The music threshold concepts are used throughout KS3 to ask probing questions about why music exists and how it has developed and been used throughout history. Our KS3 curriculum provides the skills and knowledge for all students to continue studying music at KS4.

At KS4, students can choose between GCSE Music or a Vocational Award in Performing Arts. Both courses encourage students to engage critically and creatively with a wide range of music and musical contexts and reflect on how music is used in the expression of personal and collective identities. Both qualifications require students to perform, compose and analyse music for a variety of different genres. GCSE music includes a range of set works that the students are required to study, while the Eduqas Vocational Award provides a research based approach where students make their own choices in the music they study, while charting their progress and evaluating the results. Both qualifications offer the opportunity for progression into A-level Music or A-level Music Technology, both of which are offered at Tallis Post 16 study.

We are disappointed that A-level Music was deemed not viable for this academic year (2023-24) due to low take-up. Our aim is to promote the value of studying A-level Music at Tallis so that we are able to reinstate the course next year.

Student Voice

Students are regularly consulted about their experiences in Music and the department responds to their feedback. We aim to provide the best musical experience for our learners and often the best way for us to do this is by talking with the students about what they want to learn. This, teamed with the government provided National Curriculum for Music, provided us with an excellent guideline for our curriculum. A recent conversation with some year 10 students from a school in Cambridge highlighted the lack of classical music taught at KS3 when there is a requirement to study it at GCSE. The students felt that not learning about classical music denied them their cultural entitlement or missed a large part of the historical context that provides our rich musical heritage.

Publicity

Students, colleagues, parents and friends of the school are kept regularly informed about music news and events using a variety of platforms. These include regular features in the weekly parent newsletter, use of social media, announcements in briefings, poster campaigns etc. Events are well attended and feedback is positive. Promotion beyond school guarantees that Post 16 provision remains strong and viable.

Website: <https://tallismusicdepartment.weebly.com/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/tallismusic/?hl=en>

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-697325881>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MusicTallis>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbl39VNx9hhlpSXgtr5viw>

Appendix 1: Threshold Concepts for Music



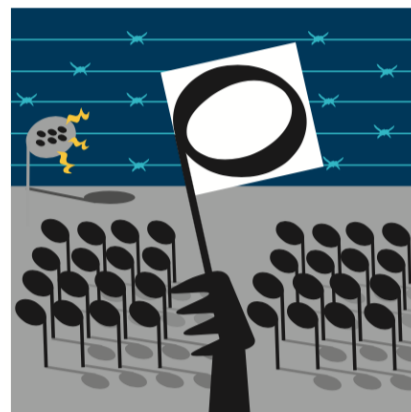
#1: Sound and music are closely related

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC



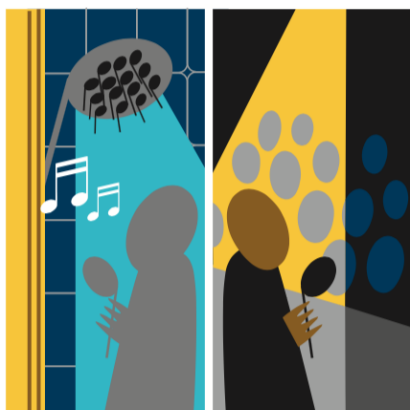
#2: Everyone can be a musician, with time and practice

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC



#3: The purposes of music are not always musical

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC



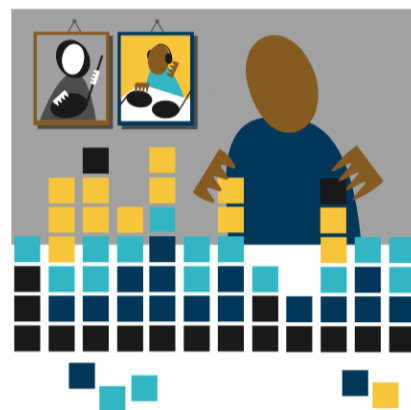
#4: Music can be personal but is designed for sharing

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC



#5: Music evolves over time

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC



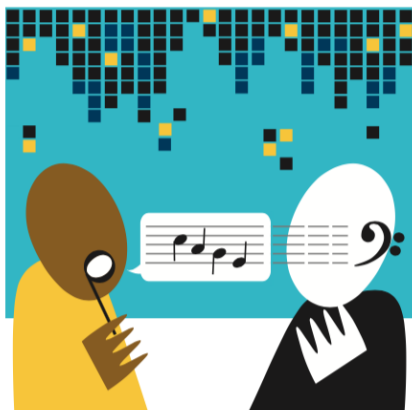
#6: To understand music you must learn how it is put together

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC



#7: Music affects you in mysterious ways

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC



#8: Music is a powerful means of communication

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC



THRESHOLD CONCEPTS FOR MUSIC