

## **NHGS - Performing Arts - Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact**

**NB – Performing Arts at NHGS is a completely non-curricular, voluntary pursuit. Any relation to the whole school’s curriculum is complementary and supportive rather than direct.**

### **Intent (Aims and purpose)**

We aim to create a variety of theatrical performances and experiences which develop the very best understanding of theatre in all its forms and stage craft from the actors, dances, singers, musicians and student production teams (First Bow) who choose to become involved. We challenge students to think, act and speak like those working in the field would. We do this by aiming to develop and achieve the following:

- a) Offering a variety of different performance opportunities each year which are accessible to students of all age groups, academic and artistic abilities.
- b) Creating working / rehearsal / performance environments which allow students to develop a “true to life” understanding of the challenges and expectations of professional theatre.
- c) Offering the opportunity for students to develop theatrical skills beyond those of performing on stage (e.g. set design / lighting and sound programming and execution / props creators and managers / stage management)
- d) To develop all students’ self-confidence and esteem and resilience regardless of where their starting point may be. The intention being each student’s educational experience is enhanced within both their on-stage and academic performances.
- e) Develop experience of theatrical etiquette in attendance of a variety of professional performances and theatrical workshops.

Our extra-curricular Performing Arts programme at NHGS goes far beyond what can be taught in lessons, for whilst we want students to achieve the very best examination results possible, we believe our curriculum goes beyond what is examinable. As a department, on an annual basis opportunities to achieve / experience points a-e (see above) are achieved through the following projects:

- a) Here I Am – A Performing Arts Showcase whose primary intent is to bring cohesion between the new students of Year 7, allowing them to perform on stage by the end of their first half term at NSB.
- b) First Bow – An opportunity for our Year 7 and 8 students to collaborate with our Year 12 students in the creation, rehearsal and performance of a 30 minute production which is purely student created and led. For the younger students this is usually their first taste of the expectations and challenges of what is involved in taking part in performing in a lengthier theatrical production. For the Year 12 production teams this creates an exciting but extremely challenging learning curve in their being responsible for the success of the eventual performances in every aspect from setting, stage management, directing, people management and much more. I have often likened this to an artistic version of “The Duke of Edinburgh Awards.”
- c) Main School Production – Each year, since our formation in 2015, we have staged a “full scale” theatrical play or musical. The students who become involved in a unique opportunity to develop the appreciation of the long-term commitment, usually the best part of 6 months each year, required in a plethora of ways to bring an extensive piece of theatre to a high performance standard. Equally within this, students increasingly have come to appreciate the many different (cogs and wheels) which need to be made to function effectively together to ensure the end product is as professional as possible.

- d) End of Term Concert (Christmas) – An opportunity for students from any year group in the school to “Do a turn.” This is a valuable opportunity particularly for students who may not be as conventionally / classically trained in many theatrical aspects but have talents and abilities that should be given the opportunity to shared with the rest of the school.
- e) Year 9 Shakespeare Workshops – Activities Week – Each year, in collaboration with the school’s English department all of Year 9 are given the opportunity to create a performance / presentation (dance / music / film / combat) which realises and complements the Shakespeare play they have studied in English lessons that academic year. For many students this provides an opportunity to try / experience something new. It is also for many the first experience students have of performing / presenting in front of their peers, undoubtedly the most challenging audience to do so with.
- f) Year 7 Performing Arts Award – Each Year Year 7 are set 15 targets to achieve across the subjects of English (Drama) / Music and PE (Dance). The aim of this is encourage Year 7 to become engaged in both the curricular and extra-curricular opportunities offered by these three subjects and to hopefully help them identify the links between academic studies and performing arts. Most years, most Year 7 students achieve at least the “base level” of achieving 10 of the 15 targets and a number increasingly achieve 14 or above.

Our curriculum in Performing Arts forms a backbone to our ethos statement. For any level of success or progress to be made within the field of theatre, many of the qualities identified within the school’s ethos statement are essential in their employment or development whether it be from the individual or a whole theatrical company. Within the various elements of what and how we aim to be successful in in Performing Arts is outlined already it can be seen that the correlation between this and the school’s ethos statement is thorough and employed on a daily basis.

Performing Arts is both a knowledge and skills-based discipline. The two are intertwined in bringing performances to fruition. As previously mentioned, within all of our performance opportunities we aim to provide students with as “true to life” experience as possible with what is involved in working in theatre professionally. This primarily requires an instilling of the necessary understanding and discipline of how each individual fits into the “bigger picture.” This could be an individual’s responsibility to be organised, reliable, learning of lines, dance routines, songs, music and alike. Within the rehearsals of any production, we aim to develop and improve each child / ensembles quality of presentation. The approaches to this are of course extremely varied depending on the type of performance intended.

We build the Cultural Capital of our students by helping them identify that “good quality theatre” can be and involves many different genres and disciplines. This is achieved through theatre trips, workshops, the wide variety of different types of performance opportunities we offer and increasingly so our guiding more experienced students, not necessarily the most senior, to take on leadership roles.

Further rationale behind our extra-curricular design is largely measured by numbers involved whether this be in our audiences or the number of students involved. This has swiftly grown over the past five years. This has allowed us to be increasingly ambitious, particularly within the area of choice of “Main School Productions. As students have become more experienced, we have been able to challenge them further each year. The key evidence of our success is largely shown in the technical demand of the theatre pieces we now feel confident we can stage to a high, audience satisfying, standard.

## **Implementation**

This is achieved each year through increasingly “joined-up” planning between each production’s production team. Having literally been a “one man band” back in 2015, we have now developed an extensive production team of technical, back stage, musicians, choreographers, producers and directors. Careful whole year planning and rehearsal organisation of multiple productions and the variety of different rehearsal requirements for each (singing, dancing, acting, technical etc) is integral to the organisation and success of everything we do and achieve. Within all of this, extremely good, clear communication is required between a large number of students. Having tried a variety of methods for this, we now regularly use Google Classroom as our main way of communicating. This is presently proving to be very effective in keeping people up to date with what is happening, what expectations are and also giving access to resources which are helpful in preparing for rehearsals etc.

In everything we do our ultimate aim each time is that our audiences are even more amazed than the last time they attended a theatrical production at NHGS and that the students involve have a fulfilling and enjoyable experience, and despite the high level of commitment each year, wish to come back for more.

## **Impact**

We know our approach to extra-curricular performing arts is working as a result of the following occurring over the past five years:

1. The quality and quantity of productions staged is always maintained and sometimes increased.
2. The level of ambition, in many ways, shown within each year’s subsequent productions has increased dramatically.
3. We are now able to cast a full-scale production of a full West End musical purely from students already within the school rather than relying on the initial enthusiasm of predominantly Year 7 students.
4. The number of students involved and increasingly so far a wide variety of backgrounds has gradually improved over the years. We now regularly see c.150 students from across all year groups engage in performing arts each year. It has been particularly pleasing to see an increased interest from boys, SEND students, Pupil Premium Students and those from ethnic minority backgrounds become involved
5. We now have a consistent full-scale production team working collaboratively each year.
6. Since the installation of the “Ticketsource” ticket sales website, ticket sales and audience attendance has improved to our regularly having “full houses” for every performance.
7. Level of voluntary staff support for productions has increased significantly.
8. Performing Arts at NHGS is increasingly becoming a significant “selling point” in attracting both Year 7 and Year 12 students to join NHGS.
9. Increasingly, across the whole school, student well-being and resilience has shown significant improvement. Performing Arts is of course only one of many contributing factors to this.