

NHGS – Music - Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact

Intent (Aims and purposes)

We aim to create the very best musicians. We challenge students to think, act and speak like those working in the field. We do this through quality first teaching which challenges our students to not only understand different styles and genres of music but requires them to explore, discuss and demonstrate this understanding in creative ways. They are challenged in all lessons to be able to demonstrate understanding and creativity through performance, composition, through collaboration with their peers and through evaluation of their own work.

Our curriculum at NHGS goes far beyond what is 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 we offer a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for those students who want to develop their musical skills and abilities beyond a classroom curriculum. Individual instrumental lessons are available to all students throughout the school. We also have a vibrant collection of musical ensembles which we believe offer opportunities to a wide range of students, allowing them to collaborate with other musicians and thus develop their performance skills, understanding and love of the subject. Where possible and appropriate we endeavour to expose our students to live music including visits to the theatre and to concerts. All students involved in music at NHGS are given regular opportunities to perform in front of others both as individuals and with the various groups. This builds on their performance skills and also helps to develop their confidence and understanding as musicians.

Our curriculum in Music forms a backbone to our ethos statement. Examples of how our curriculum supports the ethos statement are by providing opportunity for creativity throughout the KS3 and KS4 curriculum through composition. The whole of the KS3 curriculum requires students to be able to collaborate whilst being mindful to the opinions and abilities of others. We encourage students to be enquiring in the development of their ideas. Developing the confidence of our students is another vital part of our curriculum and students are frequently challenged to perform their ideas to each other whilst being encouraged to evaluate the success of these performances.

As a knowledge engaged curriculum we believe that knowledge underpins and enables the application of skills; both are entwined. As a department we define the powerful knowledge our students need and help them recall it by having a carefully planned progression through our curriculum which not only builds on prior knowledge but regularly enables students to develop key skills in all topic areas. We expect and encourage students to use key musical terminology within their work. We have created bespoke curriculum booklets which support the learning of our students at KS3 and KS4 giving them the opportunity to reflect on their achievements and areas which they feel need further development.

We build the cultural Capital of our students by teaching themes in context – exposing them to influences and traditions from many different cultural and historical contexts. We believe that it is essential to their understanding that they understand the ‘why’ as well as the ‘how’.

Further rationale behind our curriculum design includes ensuring that our students have the necessary skills to be able to access the optional curriculum at KS4 and KS5. We encourage students to appraise a wide range of musical styles through regular exposure. They are challenged and stretched by an expectation that they can justify their opinions using musical understanding. We build on more traditional composition skills from the beginning of KS3 so that the composition requirements of the GCSE curriculum are more accessible.

Implementation

Collaborative curriculum planning lies at the heart of what we do in the department. We are committed to a three-year plan of developing out schemes of work. In 2019/2020 we are working on KS4 schemes of work. These are focussed on embedding challenge, metacognition, memory techniques and literacy into our departmental curriculum.

Alongside our schemes of work, we are developing knowledge organisers at KS3. This is enabling us to define the core knowledge our students need to master.

Our curriculum covers the different key areas of composition, performance and appraisal. The nature of the delivery means that key skills are constantly revisited and key terminology is regularly embedded within the work that our students produce.

Impact

We know our curriculum is working in the Music department through the engagement of our students that can be seen in all lessons. KS3 topic work regularly shows good and exceptional understanding. Teaching and learning in the department is good and can be evidenced through positive internal learning walks. We have a healthy uptake at GCSE and regularly have 10% or more of a year group opt to take the subject. Our GCSE results are very positive and we have seen 30% of our students achieving levels 8 or 9 in the last two years. We have a small uptake at KS5 – we are one of two schools in the local area which offer the A level curriculum. A good proportion of students who opt for A level then continue to study the subject further at university.

Our instrumental tuition provision is successful. Retention is very good with many students continuing to learn an instrument throughout their time at NHGS. The majority of students who choose to be entered for instrumental examinations through both Trinity and ABRSM are successful.

The impact of our extra-curricular provision can be seen throughout the school. NHGS has a reputation for providing its students with endless opportunities to perform and engage in music making at a high standard. We have a large number of students who are committed in their membership of the various musical ensembles. Regular concerts in school give students the opportunity to display their talents and we receive regular compliments from audiences regarding the level of musicality with which our students are able to perform. As a department we firmly believe that it is the enjoyment of the students and staff alongside their commitment and enthusiasm to make music which drives the department's success.