The Sutton Academy

MUSIC DEPARTMENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2026 – 2027

TCAT

THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic Year	2026 - 2027
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Music Lead	Michael York
LEA Music Hub	St Helens Music Hub
Other Educational Partnerships	TCAT

Music Curriculum Intent

At The Sutton Academy we aim to create creative, well-rounded individuals who are imaginative, disciplined, inquisitive, collaborative and persistent who think, speak and act like musicians.

We aim to instil a passion for music whilst providing a flexible approach to prepare students with the skills and knowledge to develop their understanding of performance, composition, listening and appraising. Students will have extensive opportunities to engage with a fun, exciting curriculum that builds upon their practical music skills whilst embedding theoretical knowledge to support it.

The curriculum units of work covered are designed to provide a range of different musical styles and genres, which suitably prepare students to access Music at GCSE. The curriculum design should allow students at all levels of musicianship to develop, and continue to develop, their ability in the disciplines of performance, composition, listening and appraising.

Our curriculum offers all pupils opportunities to:

- Learn to sing and to use their voices, to create and compose music on their own and with others, have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, use technology appropriately and appreciate and understand a wide range of musical contexts and styles;
- Play and perform with increased confidence in a range of solo and ensemble contexts using their voice, playing instruments musically, fluently and with accuracy and expression;
- Improvise and compose; and extend and develop musical ideas by drawing on a range of musical structures, styles, genres and traditions • understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations.
- Develop their listening skills with increasing discrimination and awareness to inform their practice as musicians.

The music curriculum at The Sutton Academy stretches beyond the class room where students are given the opportunity to learn a wide range of instruments from various families, these include; brass, woodwind, strings and singing. We hope to extend this provision further in the coming years.

Students are also encouraged to participate in our extra curricular choirs, concert bands and musical ensembles, all of which contribute to the three performances that we stage each year; Christmas Concert, Rock Night and Summer Concert.

Music Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 3

Year 7

During year 7 students study music for one hour per week. To ensure that all students have a base knowledge of music regardless of their previous learning we deliver a curriculum that enables students to develop their listening and analytic skills, performance skills, compositional skills and understanding of music. Students are exposed to a wide range of genres and styles of music throughout year 7 to prepare them for their on going journey through the KS3 music curriculum and beyond into KS4 and 5 should they opt to continue with their educational journey in the subject.

Building Bricks

Students will learn about Pitch, Dynamics, Duration, Tempo, Texture, Timbre or Sonority, Articulation and Silence and are introduced to Graphic Notation and Graphic Scores. It is hoped that this unit will develop pupil's understanding of the Elements of Music and provide students with a foundation of musical vocabulary for use at Key Stage 3 which can be developed for GCSE Music.

Keyboard Skills

This unit is all about effective keyboard performance technique including basic treble clef staff notation. Students learn about other keyboard instruments such as the Harpsichord, Celesta, Accordion, Organ, Clavichord, Piano (upright and grand) and Synthesisers before establishing the importance of correct playing position and posture and the importance of keyboard warm-ups.

I've Got Rhythm

A sense of pulse is fundamental, a prerequisite of almost all musical activity. As such, it needs to be understood from the outset and then developed and strongly reinforced throughout Key Stage 3. This unit introduces or reintroduces the concept of pulse through a variety of experiences which include pulse games and other rhythmic activities, the creation of patterns, including ostinati, and repetitive rhythmic textures – cyclic and polyrhythms, listening activities and the composition and performance of class and group rhythm pieces.

Form and Structure

This unit begins by establishing what is "Form and Structure" in music and why Form and Structure is important. Through performing, composing, improvising and listening and appraising, students then explore four different musical structures: Question and Answer Phrases, Binary Form, Ternary Form and Rondo Form.

Students begin with an exploration into Question and Answer phrases as one of the simplest types of musical structures, relating this to Call and Response singing and how musical Question and Answer phrases balance with each other to form a complete structure. Binary and Ternary Forms are then explores with an emphasis on how musical contrast is achieved between "A" and "B" sections revising the Elements of Music. Rondo Form is explored as a type of recurring musical structure with students adding pentatonic improvisations as "Episodes" between a n"A" section.

Sonority City

This unit develops students' knowledge and understanding about orchestral instruments and families/sections of orchestral instruments. Students learn about the construction, sound production and timbres/sonorities of different orchestral instruments, the layout, grouping and the instruments which belong to each section of a modern symphony orchestra.

Folk Music

This unit investigates some of the different techniques of Musical Accompaniments through the exploration of Folk Songs. The concept of Harmony, relating specifically to Intervals, is reinforced through progressively more complex Musical Accompaniments from a simple Pedal (octave), Drone and Ostinato (fifth), to Chords as Triads, Broken Chords, Arpeggios and Alberti Bass patterns (root, third, fifth). The concept of Harmony is developed further in the exploration and addition of Counter Melodies (in fourths and fifths) in Folk Songs.

Music Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 3
Year 8

As students at the academy progress into year 8 they are offered a Performing Arts Option, this enables them to study over every two week period a combination of Music and Music, Music and Drama or Music and Dance. This results in a proportion of students studying three units during an academic year (these units will be marked core to identify which units all students study), If students have opted to study Drama or Dance alongside Music or six units during an academic year if they opted to study solely Music.

Hooks and Riffs (core)
Hooks and Riffs explores music based on repeated musical patterns through the genres of Popular Music (Hooks and Riffs) and Music from the Western Classical Tradition (Ostinatos).
The unit aims to combine the inter-related musical strands of Performing: Playing and Singing; Creating - Composing and Improvising and Listening and Appraising.

Offbeat (core)
This unit begins by exploring the origins of Reggae music from Mento, Ska and Rock Steady and looks at the famous Reggae musician, Bob Marley, and his influence on a worldwide audience.
The unit uses two Reggae songs as case studies to explore the musical features of the genre: “Yellow Bird”: a Caribbean song, and “Three Little Birds”.
Students learn about the different textural elements that make up a Reggae song: bass line riffs, melodic hooks, offbeat chords, syncopated rhythms and the vocal melody line.

Variations
The unit begins by exploring basic ways to vary an existing theme using the elements of music and simple musical devices in terms of changing: pitch (octave), timbre and sonority, articulation, tempo, dynamics, rhythm and adding: pedal, drone, ostinato, rhythm, decoration (passing notes).
This is then developed by progressively exploring and using more complex variation techniques including: augmentation, diminution (revision of note values), canon/round and adding a counter melody, before students learn how to vary a theme using changes in tonality and investigate how inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion can be applied to a theme as more advanced variation techniques.

All That Jazz (core)
This unit develops pupil’s understanding of the key musical features of Jazz and Blues, exploring chords, chord patterns and how improvisation is used within Jazz and Blues genres.
The history, origins and development of the Blues and different types and styles of Jazz can be interspersed throughout the unit in as much depth as the teacher deems appropriate. Instruments, timbres, and sonorities used in Jazz and Blues are also explored and the different roles between Frontline and Rhythm Section instruments within Jazz and Swing/Big Bands.

All About the Bass
Bass Clef Reading and Notation forms the foundation of this unit which explores a range of commonly used Bass Line Patterns within a variety of different types, styles, and genres of music from different times and places.
Pupils begin by exploring the various meanings of the term ‘bass’ before looking at the Bass Clef and the names of the notes in the lines, spaces and ledger lines on the Bass Stave. Instruments and voices which use the Bass Clef are referred to throughout the unit.

Saharan Sounds
This unit explores the main rhythmic musical features and devices used in African music, particularly the African drumming tradition of West Africa.

Pupils explore the different African Drum performance techniques and the effect this has on the timbre and sonority of the sounds produced. They then move on to perform and create, by composing and improvising simple rhythms and, using repetition, turn these into cyclic rhythms. These are then combined and overlapped to create polyrhythms and a a polyrhythmic texture: a characteristic of much African music.

Music Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 3
Year 9

Students will continue with their Key Stage 3 Performing Arts option throughout year 9 with the three unit six unit split.

Dance Music
Dance music takes an explorative look into rhythm, chords and metre in a variety of different types, styles and genres of dance music. By exploring the characteristic musical features of dance music from different times and places, students will understand the important connection between the steps, movement and formation of the dance and how these are inter-related within musical features such as time, metre, rhythms and chords in the music.

Soundtracks
The unit begins with an introduction into the purpose of film music and the decisions and challenges a composer of film music faces.
Leitmotifs are an important aspect of film music and students explore how composers have used these to represent certain characters and situations within films and how, through the manipulation of the elements of music, these can be changed to suit different on-screen situations.

Computer and Video Game Music
The unit begins by looking at Character Themes in computer and video game music before students move on to explore ways in which Character Themes can be developed and changed for different atmospheres and scenarios within computer and video games.
The characteristic musical features of much computer and video game music: jumping bass lines, staccato articulation, chromatic movement and syncopation are included as musical knowledge through composing and performing tasks.

New Directions
New Directions takes an in-depth exploration of two of the many various styles, movements and genres of twentieth century music: minimalism and expressionism. Through exploring a wide range of music from the minimalist and expressionist styles, students learn about common trends in twentieth century music such as the use of different tonalities, chromaticism, dissonance and extremes of pitch and dynamics as well as how composers use unusual and experiments timbres, sonorities, sounds and instruments within their work, which students are encouraged to explore and use in their own performances, improvisations and compositions to get a feel “of the style” in which they are exploring.

Samba
This unit introduces the polyrhythmic style of Latin-American Samba and revises and revisits may key concepts concerning rhythm, beat and pulse from pupil’s learning including features such as polyrhythms, cyclic rhythms, syncopation, ostinato and call and response.
The experience of performing together as a class or larger group ensemble aims to give students the exhilaration and physical impact of ensemble percussion music.

What Makes a Good Song?
This unit begins by exploring ‘What Makes a Good Song?’ through practical musical investigation of two ‘good’ songs as case studies: “Shape of You” by Ed Sheeran and “Shotgun” by George Ezra. Students explore Hooks/Riffs, Structure, Melody and Lyrics through listening and analysis and performing parts of each song as short musical arrangements. This unit culminates in students creating their own arrangements of a popular song.

Assessment
Music is assessed through a mixture of composition and performance practical work, which is recorded when applicable, and a listening and knowledge tests that are written. Frequent and constructive verbal feedback will be given to pupils throughout lessons from the teacher and through peer assessment. A variety of composition and performance assessments are recorded and allow students to reflect on their progress throughout the course whilst students are also expected to display their knowledge and understanding in analysis of a wide selection of music. Students will also develop self-reflection skills though evaluating their own work against set criteria.

Music Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 4

Music at Key Stage 4 is studied through five 1 hour lessons per fortnight following the AQA GCSE Music 8271 specification. The three components that the students follow at GCSE are; Understanding Music , Performance and Composition.

Curriculum Overview

Understanding Music

Students will study the four areas of study in depth throughout Years 10 and 11. The areas of study include; AoS 1 - Western classical tradition 1650–1910, AoS 2 – Popular Music, AoS 3 – Traditional Music and AoS 4 - Western classical tradition since 1910. Throughout each area of study they will focus on the use of; Melody, Tonality, Structure, Sonority, Texture, Tempo, Metre and Rhythm. Specific focus will be paid to the Specialist Listening Focus' for AoS 1 – Mozart Clarinet Concerto in A and AoS 2 – The Little Shop of Horrors.

Performance

GCSE students will use their skills from Key Stage 3 to develop a solo and ensemble performances. In relation to the assessment criteria specified by AQA, students will look closely at various performance pieces to prepare for assessment in relation to its difficulty. Students will then develop their performing skills on their chosen instrument, recording one solo and one ensemble performance. Students will spend lesson time demonstrating and improving on their instrument skills.

Composition

Students will develop two compositions throughout their final year of assessment. In Year 10, they will continue to develop their composition skills to a higher level, thinking carefully about form and structure, tonality, texture, developing harmony, how to develop their use of melody, dynamics and instrumentation. Students will create a free composition and a second composition based on a brief published by AQA in the final year of their qualification. Students will create a final recording, programme note and score to be submitted for this aspect of the qualification.

Assessment

Component 1 - Understanding music is assessed through an externally marked exam in two sections lasting one hour and thirty minutes. It is marked out of a total of 96 marks and constitutes 40% of the total marks for the qualification.

Students will be assessed on their ability to evaluate the music heard in the exam and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical elements and musical language.

Section A will consist of eight sets of linked questions covering all areas of study. Students must answer all questions in this section.

Each question will contain excerpts of music from unfamiliar music representing the styles/genres listed for each area of study.

Students will be played the excerpts a stated number of times (between two and four) depending on the length and tempo of the excerpt and the nature of the question

Component 2 – Performing Music is internally marked by teachers and externally moderated by AQA , marked out of 72 and constitutes 30% of the total marks for the qualification.

Music Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 4

Each student must select, following a discussion with their teacher, the pieces that the student will perform during the assessment. Each student must perform two pieces lasting a combined minimum time of four minutes. One performance must be as a solo and one performance as part of an ensemble. Each student must perform for at least one minute as part of an ensemble.
If the student's performance does not meet the required duration a penalty is applied to the mark (the size of the penalty depends on the severity of the timing infringement). It may also result in schools or colleges being investigated for maladministration. Teachers must check the final performance for assessment of each student's work to ensure it meets the minimum duration requirement.
There is no maximum duration for performances.
Performance must be through one or a combination of the following methods:
·playing music
·singing music
·realising music using music technology.

Component 3 – Composing Music, each student must compose two pieces. One composition must be in response to an externally set brief and the other composition must be freely composed by the student.

Both compositions will be assessed on the student's ability to demonstrate:
Creative and effective selection and use of musical elements
Appropriate selection and use of musical elements (to the compositional intention)
Technical and expressive control in the use of musical elements.
Each composition must demonstrate selection and use of at least four types of musical element as follows:
at least two of rhythm, metre, texture, melody, structure, form
at least two of harmony, tonality, timbre, dynamics, phrasing, articulation.

Key Stage 5

Music at Key Stage 5 is studied through nine 1 hour lessons per fortnight following the Edexcel A Level Music 9MT0 specification. The four components that the students follow at A Level are; Component 1- Recording, Component 2 - Technology-based Composition, Component 3 - Listening and analysing, Component 4 - Production and Analysis.

Curriculum Overview

Component 1 – Recording
Students will use technology to explore a range of techniques for capturing, editing and manipulating sound which will help them understand the impact of music technology on creative processes in the studio. They will then produce a completed mix.

Component 2 – Technology Based Composition
Students will use technology to explore a range of techniques for developing ideas. They will then turn their ideas into completed technology-based compositions. Students should develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of musical elements and musical language, and apply these, where appropriate, to their own technology-based compositions.

Component 3 – Listening and Analysing
This component gives students the opportunity to identify, analyse and evaluate a range of creative music production techniques, as applied to the unfamiliar commercial recordings supplied in the examination. As well as identifying effects and their associated parameter settings, students will explain the principles behind the choice of the effects heard on each recording, and their sonic character, in a series of written responses. Through the deconstruction and analysis of a final, commercial product, students will expand their knowledge of the recording and production practices associated with a number of historical eras.

Music Curriculum Overview

Component 4 – Production and Analysis
Students will work with unedited audio and MIDI materials provided by Pearson that have been captured using microphone, DI and sequencing techniques. The examination will assess the ability to process and correct these materials using a range of production skills, culminating in a series of audio bounces/exports for individual instrumental/vocal parts, plus a final stereo mix. Students will refine and combine pre-existing 'ingredients' of a mix to form a convincing final product. Students will also comment on sonic characteristics of the materials provided, interpreting the underlying theory associated with these as well as justifying decisions they have made in respect of selecting processes and parameters when undertaking the practical tasks.

Assessment

Component 1 – Live Recording
Students must choose one song from the list of 10 songs or artists released for the correct series and produce a stereo mix of that song that meets the requirements listed below.
A list of 10 new songs or artists will be released every year.
The list will be released:
● on 1st June in the calendar year preceding the year in which the qualification is to be awarded ● via the Pearson website.
The length of the recording must be between 3–3½ minutes. The recording should be captured and produced in the student's academic year of certification.

Component 2 – Technology Based Composition
Three new technology-based composition briefs will be released each year.
The briefs will be released:
● on 1st September in the calendar year preceding the year in which the qualification is to be awarded ● via the Pearson website.
Students should choose one technology-based composition brief released for that series with the support of their teacher.
The format of the briefs will be the same each year but the specific content will vary.

Component 3 – Listening and Analysing
The assessment is 1 hour 30 minutes.

- The assessment is marked out of 75 marks.
- There are two sections in the examination:

o Section A (40 marks) – four written questions, each based on an unfamiliar commercial recording supplied by Pearson
o Section B (35 marks) – two essay questions based on unfamiliar commercial recordings supplied by Pearson.

- Students must answer all questions.
- The paper may include multiple-choice, gap-fill, diagrammatic, short-open, open and extended open response questions.
- Each student will have seven audio files.
- Each student will need access to headphones and an individual audio player to hear the audio files.

Component 4 – Production and Analysis

- The assessment is 2 hours 15 minutes, plus an additional 10 minutes setting–up time.
- Each student will need access to a computer workstation, music production (DAW) software, MIDI keyboard and headphones.
- Students must not have access to the internet or use a calculator.
- Each student will have the audio/MIDI materials required for the examination.
- The assessment is marked out of 105 marks.
- There are two sections in the examination:
- o Section A (85 marks) – five questions with a selection of written and practical responses based on the audio/MIDI materials
- o Section B (20 marks) – one essay question based on a specific effects process or music technology hardware unit.
- Students must answer all questions.
- The paper may include multiple-choice, gap-fill, diagrammatic, short-open, open and extended open response questions.
- The paper will also include a range of practical tasks, for which four audio exports/bounces will be submitted for assessment (three individual instrument/vocal bounces plus a final mix).

Extra-curricular Music

The music curriculum at The Sutton Academy stretches beyond the class room where students are given the opportunity to learn a wide range of instruments from various families, these include; brass, woodwind, strings and singing, these lessons are funded by the school and allocated on a first come first serve basis with attention to attendance paid. We hope to extend this provision further in the coming years. Students are also encouraged to participate in our extra-curricular choirs, concert bands and musical ensembles, all of which contribute to the three performances that we stage each year; Christmas Concert, Rock Night and Summer Concert. Along-side the performances we stage at the academy we also contribute in a wider context and provide performances for our trust wide TCAT Performs, performances which are held twice a year during term 1 and term 3.

Students will be made aware of all extra-curricular music experiences through the academy's extra-curricular co-ordinator notifications published in news-letters, advertised throughout our social media channels, discussed and explained in ready to learn time and in school digital notice boards.

As well as our curriculum and extra-curricular experiences we also provide students with the opportunity to travel to professionally staged musicals to enhance their opportunities and exposure to live music performances.

Future Aspirations

- Provide students with a wider range of peripatetic instrumental lessons to choose from to increase our range of instrumentalists in the academy concert band, performers at academy concerts and students opting to continue to study Music and Music Technology at GCSE and A Level.

- Update our Music Technology facilities for wider use in Key Stage 3, enabling students to experience a wider even more diverse curriculum than we already offer at this stage of their music education.