

Welcome to Music and Performing Arts at Manor Church of England Academy York, part of Heartwood Learning Trust.

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Performing Arts staff team

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Our current internal staff team is as follows:

Mr Otway - Senior Leader link for Performing Arts

Mr Lowe - Director of Learning (Performing Arts) and Subject Leader (Music)

Mrs Fox - Subject Leader (Dance)

Mrs Feetenby - Subject Leader (Drama)

Mr Lanzillotti - Subject Teacher (Music)

Mrs Couldry - Subject Teacher (Dance)

Mrs Harland - Specialist Cover Supervisor (Music)

Mr Metcalf - Volunteer specialist theatre technician

Mr Cornhill - Piano Tutor

Mrs Wood - Piano Tutor

Mr Bousfield - Strings Tutor

Mr Jennings - Drum Kit Tutor

Mr Adams - Classical Guitar Tutor

Mr Morrison - Electric and Acoustic Guitar Tutor

Mrs Lynch - Woodwind Tutor

Mr Brown - Bass Guitar Tutor

To be announced shortly - Voice Tutor

We currently have a vacancy for a brass tutor. If you know anyone who might be interested in joining our team, please ask them to email Mr Lowe at d.lowe@mce.hlt.academy

Intent and Ethos

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At Manor, we aspire to constantly delivering the gold standard in music, dance and drama education. As a team we are always learning ourselves and always developing the experience we offer to our students.

In music, we are one step along the way for each student to be making music, becoming better musicians, and overall becoming more musical. All students have 'music' built in and all have had some experience of music in their lives. Our role is to help them to understand their unique musical potential and help them to flourish. We want them to get as far as possible in their understanding before they leave us to continue their education post-16. Their musical learning is developed through learning in music, dance and drama.

Some students have had experience in performing arts clubs before arriving at Manor but few have formerly studied dance and drama so we also deliver bespoke courses in those subjects.

Performing Arts involvement is life-changing for our students. Everyone accesses the curriculum and has opportunities to develop more confident understanding through our activities programme and events. Ultimately we want every student to have the opportunity to thrive as an independent learner and in collaboration with others. We also want them to have the opportunity to become leaders in their specialist subject areas.

We approach their learning by offering three equally important focuses. These three collectively make up the Performing Arts curriculum.

- 1. Classroom learning**
- 2. Instrument and Voice Tuition and Music, Dance and Drama activities**
- 3. Events, trips and performances**

When they arrive we want every student to feel like they are 'enough' and have a unique and important role in our school community. We adapt our work to make it possible for everyone to thrive from wherever they've reached so far. With the right holistic support, and commitment and determination from the students, they use our starting points to create work that is beyond anything we can imagine.

How do we know our work is life-changing? We see the students transform and it is a privilege just to be there. We see deeper understanding in how the students can describe what they're doing, we see confidence in them as they work, rehearse and perform, and we see a very high standard of performance for this age-group. We see students with more confidence in what they can create and a community who works together to find an even richer product or performance.

Classroom Learning (Music)

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All students have 1 hour of classroom music every week in years 7, 8 and 9. By the end of year 9, we want every student to be able to confidently write their own original music and perform it with control, using their voice, an instrument or technology.

To achieve this, students need to acquire as many musical skills as possible from their 'My Music Brain'. They use this resource to track their own progress as they see their knowledge, understanding and experience growing.

We have a strong focus on the musical quality of what they do at every stage and students are challenged to listen critically and improve their ideas from day 1. In years 7 and 8 lessons are delivered as a whole class, with students breaking into smaller groups to experience rehearsal and performance. Feedback is given verbally by the teacher and in the moment as we learn together. Instead of formalised homework, we encourage every student to 'do more music' between lessons and many choose to explore this through the opportunities below.

Our classroom music has a strong focus on composition. In year 9 students study 900 years of music history by focusing on key works through our 'Tune of the Week' course. They study the composers, the countries and environments that inspired them and the purposes of the music, which ultimately creates inspiration for students to write their own new musical ideas.

In line with the Church of England foundation of our school, students study a wide-ranging repertoire of Christian and secular music. The curriculum is also designed to help students to be more reflective, spiritual and expressive in their work, as well as giving them insights of the opportunities at KS4, 5 and beyond. They can have a great impact on the culture capital of their community. In everything we do, we are focus on serving others, growing together and living life to the full.

Our Music course begins with a baseline test. That, together with a yearly music parents survey, gives us a picture of the musical understanding of each new cohort.

Year 7 Music

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Autumn 1 - Voice

Discovering what our voices can do and how to look after them. Meeting each other and making music together. Growing together.

Autumn 2 - Elements

Exploring the dimensions of music. Pulse, Tempo, Metre, Duration, Rhythm, Pitch, Dynamics, Texture, Melody, Structure, Instruments/Timbre/Sonority/Sound/Silence.

Spring 1 - Music Production

Discovering how a band works together, reading a lead sheet and recording using technology for piano, bass guitar, electric guitar and drum kit. Recording, editing and mixing.

Spring 2 - Notate

Our 'Right Here Write Now!' project runs throughout the course, but this topic has an additional focus on bringing together all the musical notation learned so far to begin to write new ideas and arrangements.

Summer 1 - The Happy Birthday Project

Folk Music, discovering our inner ear and exploring melody and harmony in piano performance. Discovering how music is learned by others. Composing variations.

Summer 2 - Improvisation

Discovering techniques for making up music on the spot, developing confidence in using our musical skills without overthinking. An important skill for the development of new ideas for composition as well as reacting musically to others we perform with.

Year 8 Music

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Autumn 1 - Communication

Focusing on what good communication looks like, leadership and teamwork in music, developing small group rehearsal and performance skills. Also exploring rhythmic devices, textures and structure in our compositions.

Autumn 2 - Pirates Performance via Technology

Beginning with the analysis of a notated melody, we explore $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature, anacrusis, melodic structure and harmony in a minor key. We explore the role of a wider selection of orchestral instruments and how to compose music to support a narrative.

Spring 1 - Traditions and Tonalities

Exploring tonality and the constructions of scales. Melody writing. Revisiting improvisation as a tool for composition. Exploring music from different cultures and traditions.

Spring 2 - Melody in Context

Exploring the purpose and design of melodies written in a defined context. Students analyse and recreate more complex melodies used in video game design, film and theme park music

Summer 1 - Great Works Great People

Exploring more style/genre-specific musical features. Students study and experiment with musical genres including: Reggae, Baroque choral work, Rock, Classical Piano solo, Disco and Rap

Summer 2 - Video Game Music

Studying the history and purpose of video game music. Composing music to a brief.

Exploring more advanced musical devices. Working with a user-defined musical structure. Designing musical loops with a purpose. Advanced rhythmic devices.

Year 9 Music

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In year 9 we have a different approach to the whole class and small group teaching in years 7 and 8. By this time in the course we want each student to be individually responsible for their own learning and progress, and therefore more independent.

Ultimately we want every student to be able to write their own original music and to perform it with control using their voice, an instrument or technology. To support the different paces that students develop at, our teaching is available for them to access on YouTube so they can watch each next demonstration when they need it and pause and rewind any sections they want to look at again. Students with a hearing impairment or students who speak English as an additional language use the automatic subtitle function to create a better learner experience. The live music teacher is still of vital importance to confirm tasks have been completed to the required level, to confirm confident understanding and to discuss and

breakdown concepts as needed. In year 9, more individual feedback is important to support the many different stages of learning in individual musical contexts.

We use iPads and Showbie for students to upload and receive feedback of their hand-written music. Using this platform, teachers and students can also record voice notes in context with the work, or upload music software screen recordings when these are most appropriate to support learning.

The 'Portfolio: Free' area is a secure online space for students to store their own music. Only individual students and their teachers can access this.

Autumn 1

Tune of the Week

Based on significant research and inspired by the Model Music Curriculum, students listen to one important piece of music each week. Students begin each lesson by reading a sheet of facts for each piece. To help them to access and break down the text, they are encouraged to highlight key information such as composer names, dates, countries and the purpose of the music as well as musical terminology. While reading and highlighting the sheet, they listen to the music they are reading about. Immediately afterwards, there is a Kahoot quiz to reinforce what they have read. Students are rewarded with music merits for achieving 80%, 90% and 100% in each of these tests.

Progression Tasks Project: Rhythm

In Mr Lowe's book "How to Write Great Music: Understanding the Process from Blank Page to Final Product", the progression tasks project challenges students to work through a series of 40 practical composing tasks, each one building more complexity on the tasks already completed. The order of the tasks is also important, designed to support students by starting with the simplest musical decisions and progressing to very advanced tasks by the end of the course. We've adapted the PTP project to cover the three dimensions of music students find most helpful; Rhythm, Melody and Harmony. They cover one in each of the three terms.

Portfolio: Client briefs (Rhythm)

Now our key stage 3 course is more established, students are finding they can complete the autumn rhythm tasks more quickly. To create an opportunity for more advanced work and an inspirational opportunity to have a related-industry experience, students can choose from our client brief projects. Students write their own original music to meet the required client brief and create a musical score and recorded performance. If the work they complete is suitable for the client's needs, they receive merits, just as a professional composer or sound designer would receive payment.

Autumn 2

Tune of the Week continues

Piano Performance

Students learn to play a short piano piece written by Mr Lowe. They are challenged to develop their hand shape for playing and learn specific fingering, enabling them to perform the music expressively as detailed in the score. Students are challenged to perform with their right hand, left hand and hands together. This project also helps students to feel more confident at the piano, giving them a helpful tool to hear ideas as they write them.

Spring 1

Tune of the Week continues

Progression Tasks Project: Melody

Portfolio: Client briefs (Melody)

Spring 2

Tune of the Week continues

Performance via Technology: Star Wars

Students analyse a famous music cue from Star Wars, written for Oboe, Piano and Cello. They learn to create a performance using technology. In addition to focusing on the accuracy and expression of their performance, they learn how to edit in more musical detail and learn about mixing, panning, automation and using digital effects such as reverb.

Summer 1 & 2

Tune of the Week continues

Progression Tasks Project: Harmony

Portfolio: Client briefs (Harmony)

Portfolio: Free

* Note, this is the curriculum at the time of writing, but we are constantly improving our course as we learn more about what our students need.

Assessment In Music

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Our library of 130 bespoke Kahoot quizzes, created specially for the Manor Music City course, help us to check student understanding.

In line with the Heartwood Learning Trust assessment schedule, we have a midpoint listening and theory test in January and endpoint listening and theory test in June for each year.

We encourage specialist music students (those who have voice or instrument tuition) to pursue graded music exams. To help students to celebrate their achievements we have a 'Wall of Fame' in the music department. Students can choose to be included on the wall. When they pass the next grade they move up the wall and also feel part of a larger community of like-minded young musicians.

AQA GCSE Music is offered as an optional subject in years 10 and 11. Students have 3 hours of classroom music every week. This gives students who are passionate about their musical learning opportunity to learn even more about music and work towards a qualification they can use in the future. The GCSE includes 'Tune of the Week Style', in which we consider how the specific dimensions in music define a wide range of styles. Students also study pieces set by the exam board in much more detail. The qualification is assessed by one Listening Exam (40%), two performance recordings (30%) and two compositions (30%). Our GCSE Music students learn to use Logic Pro and Sibelius Ultimate. They have daily access to their own Mac Workstation in the music department and many more opportunities to make even more music.

Students can backup their work onto Showbie, to also transfer their projects to and from the recording studio, where they can record audio tracks and mix and master their final product.

Classroom learning (Drama)

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In years 7 and 8, Drama is taught on a rotation for half of each year. In total students have 10 hours of classroom Drama per year. In year 9, we offer Drama as an optional subject in which students receive two hours of class time every Tuesday 3.30-5.30pm. Drama is a vital part of our broad and balanced curriculum and helps students to develop skills that enhance what they can do independently and collaboratively in other areas of school life and beyond. For many it is a starting point to realising the joy of performing and they want to stay in the department to take part in our major school productions, so then engage in several additional hours of Drama rehearsal each week.

Students wanting to go deeper into Drama, can choose the BTEC Level 2 Tech Award in Performing Arts in years 10 and 11, in which they receive 3 hours per week of class time in the Drama Studio.

Year 7 Drama

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The 10-hour course includes:

- Developing group dynamics
- Freeze frames
- Thought tapping
- Status
- Teacher in role
- Hot seating
- Conscience circles
- Spontaneous improvisation
- Vocal skills
- Asides and areas of the stage
- Physical theatre

Year 8 Drama

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The 10-hour course includes:

Part 1: Greek Theatre

- Introduction and Oedipus
- Chorus workshop
- Role of the messenger

Part 2: Medieval Theatre

- Introduction and Second Shepherds play
- Mummers plays
- Commedia Dell'Arte

Part 3: Elizabethan Theatre

- Introduction
- Stage combat

Part 4: Victorian Theatre

- Introduction and melodrama
- Pantomime

Year 9 Drama

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Students explore various theatre practitioners and their techniques. Students study a variety of scripts looking at different styles and genres. Students continually take part in vocal and movement workshops to improve and develop their performance skills and they are given lots of additional opportunities to perform throughout the year. During the year students have the opportunity to devise, improvise and work with scripts. They also take part in workshops to help develop and improve their performance skills. We will look at various scripts and explore a range of styles and genres. There are lots of opportunities for students to perform and share their work.

Students also experience elements from the BTEC Tech Award course to give them a taste of what to expect if they opt to take it in years 10 and 11.

There are no midpoint or endpoint assessments in key stage 3 Drama.

Classroom learning (Dance)

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In years 7 and 8, similar to Drama, students study a 10-hour course each year. In year 9 Dance is continued for all students and is taught once every other week throughout the year.

Year 7 Dance

The 10-hour course includes:

Part 1: Safe dance practice

- Self and others
- Spatial awareness
- Studio rules

Part 2: Dance Decades

- Roaring 20s, differences between social and contemporary dance
- The 30s, partner, mirror and contact
- Swinging 60s, steps and introduction to choreography
- Sensational 70s, steps and choreography tools
- Electric eighties, breakdance
- Decades dance mash-up

Part 3: Rooster

Year 8 Dance

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The 10-hour course includes:

Part 1: Capoeira

- Spatial awareness, Ginga, origins
- Attack and defend, pairs of actions
- Creating a duo using transitions
- Dynamics and structure
- Roda final performance

Part 2: West side story

- Jazz steps
- Travelling sequence and variation
- Learn and return dynamic sequence
- Creating meaning and mood
- Performance

Year 9 Dance

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The year 9 course includes three performance projects:

- Matrix
- A Linha Curva
- American Pioneers

Assessment in Dance

In Dance there is a midpoint assessment at the end of the Y7 course and the Y8 course. In year 9 there is a midpoint assessment in January and an end point assessment in June.

Facilities for learning in Music, Dance and Drama

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- Performance venue: 400-seat hall with sound and lighting, extendable to 600
- Performance venue: 209-seat theatre with fully configurable audio, media and lighting systems, as well as box office, changing rooms, scene dock and bar
- Drama studio with lighting, sound and projection
- Two dance studios, both with sprung floors, lighting, sound and projection
- Recording studio live room with Yamaha U1 Piano, amps and drum kit
- Recording studio control room with Focusrite Scarlett 18i20 and a variety of microphones for different needs
- 22 Mac Workstations across the Music department with Logic Pro and Sibelius Ultimate software
- Practice rooms with guitars and amps
- 30 Djembes
- Student charging stations
- Two additional drum kits, percussion and a professional xylophone
- Headset radio microphones
- PA system
- Three Roland stage pianos and 40 desktop pianos

Instrument and Voice Tuition and Music, Dance and Drama activities

We have an extensive programme of tuition and activities for students to learn more music, dance and drama. Frequently described as “The beating heart of the academy”, there’s always something going on.

We currently have about 160 students learning to sing or learning to play an instrument with a specialist tutor either in school or privately.

If you are interested in your young person having lessons at Manor, please email Mr Lowe with details of which instrument you would like to find a tutor in. His email address is d.lowe@mce.hlt.academy. Mr Lowe will assign an MMC number to your young person. Our timetables use their MMC number and they will keep this for the whole of their time at Manor. These are our current co-curricular activities (subject to change):

Tech Crew - open to everybody depending on places available, the student team that serves all our students in their performances. Performance technical management and leadership, lighting, sound, radio mic management, media design, installation and support

Producers - This club opened in January 2026 as a daily opportunity for students in Key stage 3 to access and create their own music with our Logic Pro Workstations and meet and collaborate with other young people with a similar interest.

Production rehearsals for our Pantos in December and Musical Theatre Productions in June/July of each year

The **Manor Concert Orchestra** - our fully inclusive orchestra for students of all ages and abilities who play string, woodwind and brass instruments and is also open to piano players. Students are encouraged to take part in MCO from the moment they know how to open their case and set up their instrument. We write parts for everyone, to make sure everyone feels part of the orchestra, but with just the right amount of challenge to inspire them to progress. MCO is a very special group of young musicians who care for and encourage each other.

House Dance competition

GCSE Music **Composition workshops and 1-1 support** (daily)

GCSE Performance **Recordings**

Piano Club - a weekly opportunity for up to 30 piano students to get additional support

Manoeuvres Dance

Funk Band - a genre specific band for more advanced players

Rock Band - genre specific bands for everybody

Everybody choir - a completely open choir for everybody

Voices choir - a multipart choir, entry by audition

The piano room - every two weeks, the piano room opens as a place for students to perform music they are learning to each other

Worship Band - open to everybody

Leaders Orchestra - an ensemble for string, woodwind and brass players who have achieved at least grade 4 on their instrument

In addition to our in-house programme, we encourage students to continue their involvement outside of school. Use the links below (in our partners/friends section) to find more information about additional opportunities. [return to welcome page](#)

Events, trips and performances

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Most years, our performance calendar includes:

- A Music concert in October/November
- Everybody Dance festival at York Theatre Royal in November
- GCSE Prizegiving and awards evening
- A carol service at York Minster in November/December
- A panto in December
- A senior citizen Christmas party
- A Christmas assembly for the whole academy
- A Music concert in March
- A Dance showcase in March/April
- An Easter assembly for the whole academy
- A Musical Theatre production in June/July

Previously our trips have included:

- London residential Performing Arts trips with west end workshops at Pineapple dance studios, and attending performances at London theatres and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
- Voices Choir rehearsing and leading at St Paul's Cathedral, London
- Voices Choir leading evensong and performing for holocaust memorial day service at York Minster
- Worship Band tour of Georgia and Alabama, USA
- Dance festivals at York University
- Attending concerts at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester
- York schools choir festival
- Attending drama and dance performances in local venues and across the region
- ORA:Singers and Q&A with Suzie Digby
- Gabrieli Roar projects
- Q&A with Christopher Tin

Our Partners and Friends

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In addition to our specialist tutor team, there is another group of specialist people and organisations who support our work, offering opportunities for students or providing future pathways for study.

[York Music Hub](#)

[Yorchestra](#)

[York Music Forum](#)

[York Dance Space](#)

[Phoenix Dance](#)

[York Music Centre](#)

[Shepherd's Brass Band](#)

[MBedza Malawi](#)

[Chapter House Youth Choir](#)

[Gabrieli Roar and Paul McCreesh](#)

[York Guildhall Orchestra](#)

York Minster

The Diocese of York

University of York Music Education

University of Huddersfield Music Education

Dr Ally Daubney

Huntington School

All Saints School

Fulford School

Joseph Rowntree School

Vale of York and other Heartwood Learning Trust schools

Archbishop Holgate School

[CAPA College](#)

[Music Teachers Association](#)

BBC Radio York

[York Young Musicians](#)

KS4 Courses at Manor

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[AQA GCSE Music](#)

[AQA GCSE Dance](#)

[BTEC L2 Tech Award Performing Arts](#)

Manor Music City

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Manor Music City is the overarching name for everything musical that happens at Manor. Our first MMC model, launched in May 2021 appeared in several national education magazines and was chosen as a finalist at the National Music and Drama Awards in the 'Outstanding Musical Initiative' category in March 2022.

We've learned so much from our first 4 years and are planning to launch MMC 2.0 in 2026.

The best music and performing arts education happens when all three areas (classroom music, tuition/activities, events/experiences/performances) have equal importance, and when all stakeholders understand enough about how young people develop in these specialist areas. Development in music, dance and drama is like nothing else. Understanding more together helps us to work to provide the very best learning environment possible for every student.

Updated: 11th February 2026

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