



The Purcell School  
*for young musicians*

# Strategic Plan

## 2021 – 2026



# The Mission and Aims of The Purcell School

**The revised mission and aims of the School are:**

## Mission

The mission of The Purcell School is to provide young musicians who demonstrate the potential to become exceptional (irrespective of background) with outstanding teaching within a supportive school environment and to equip them with the self-confidence, adaptability, maturity and perspective to sustain their professional development and personal fulfilment throughout their lives.

## Aims

- To sustain a safe, happy and healthy environment in which all can flourish musically, academically and emotionally.
- To deliver outstanding musical and academic education.
- To provide a range of high-profile and developmental performance opportunities.
- To deliver personalised pastoral care and support so that the individual needs of each student are met.
- To provide access to musical opportunity and widen participation in areas where this is especially difficult.
- Maintain (as far as is practically possible) open access by admitting students solely on their ability, not according to financial means.

## The Purcell School Vision

The Purcell School strives to be the leading music school of its kind in the world. Through unique partnerships with Government, artistic organisations, the business community and individuals, we will become a leading voice in the cultural life of the UK and beyond. Our inclusive vision is to seek out, support and develop young musicians of exceptional promise from within the UK and beyond, providing them with the opportunity to learn from the world's finest musicians and teachers irrespective of their social

or economic background. Building upon 60 years of expertise and utilising 21st century technology, inspiring musical and academic teaching, and housed in modern, world-class facilities, The Purcell School's name will stand for excellence, inclusion, collaboration and innovation. To be associated with The Purcell School as a student, teacher, partner or supporter, will be to play a significant and influential role in securing the future of music across the globe.

# Overview of the Principal Strategic Aims 2021-2026 (2031)

Principal Strategic Aim 1	<b>To maintain and develop an exceptional student experience underpinned by outstanding artistic ambition.</b>
Principal Strategic Aim 2	<b>To attract, retain and add value to the finest national and international talent.</b>
Principal Strategic Aim 3	<b>To facilitate transformational engagement with partners, communities and the wider world.</b>
Principal Strategic Aim 4	<b>To develop world-class resources and facilities.</b>
Principal Strategic Aim 5	<b>To ensure financial sustainability through effective financial planning and management, diversification of income and significant and sustained fundraising.</b>

**N.B.** Numerical order does not denote priority.





## Principal Strategic Aim 1:

To maintain and develop an exceptional student experience underpinned by outstanding artistic ambition.

Any successful vision for the School must be focussed on the quality of the student experience: if we get this right, not only do our students leave better prepared to meet the challenges of the world we inhabit, but there is a secondary impact in terms of reputational gain and, consequently, the recruitment of students and quality staff. Our starting point has to be to ensure that every member of the school community is safe, happy and healthy. Over the past three years, we have invested a considerable

amount of time and energy into improving (significantly) the safety of our students, but we must never become complacent and safeguarding must remain at the very heart of any strategy for the future. As well as embedding our safeguarding culture over the coming years, it is now imperative that we turn our minds to the happiness and health of students (especially their mental health) and there is much to do here: unless students feel safe, happy and physically and mentally healthy, they will never achieve their potential

musically or academically. Beyond this, we need to be constantly reviewing our academic and musical provision to ensure it meets the needs and expectations of today's students/progression routes and we also need to consider how we might continuously review and reinvigorate the quality of our academic delivery so that a student's experience of their academic life is as rich and stimulating as their musical life.



# Safe, Happy, Healthy:

## An integrated pastoral and wellbeing strategy.

### By 2026 the School will have:

- Fully embedded an open, transparent safeguarding culture at all levels (staff, students, parents, Governors) that embraces training, environment, reporting, record-keeping, and goes beyond merely compliance to create a truly safe and secure environment for our students and staff.
- Ensured sufficient staffing levels (especially in “boarding hours”) to keep the site and its inhabitants safe.
- Revised physical access routes into the School and the security of the School’s perimeter.
- Embedded an innovative curriculum which places support and wellbeing (SEND, study skills, resilience training, maintaining good mental health, learning to learn, self-awareness etc.) at the heart of the student experience about which all other activity circulates.
- A comprehensive team of wellbeing professionals (councillors, performance coaches, SEND practitioners, EAL support, literacy and numeracy support, physios and medical personnel) who will work collaboratively in the best interests of the students creating a culture in which such support is seen to be an everyday and essential aspect of the student journey.
- A dedicated Wellbeing Suite where some of the above staff are accommodated but also includes some dedicated quiet spaces, working stations, sources of information, advice and guidance.
- Devised and implemented a comprehensive “life skills” programme for Sixth Form to enable them to move from school to the outside world with confidence and assurance. This will include everything from managing finances, cooking, and “what to do if...” training to managing a career, artistic promotion, etc.
- Developed a wellbeing programme for staff to ensure they are happy and healthy at work.

# Academic Strategy

## By 2026 the School will have:

- Comprehensively reviewed its curriculum offer and have embedded new pathways, especially at Sixth Form level, that meet the needs and expectations of today's students.
- Comprehensively reviewed academic staffing to ensure appropriate staffing levels and the delivery of an outstanding and inspiring experience for students.
- Embedded a rigorous quality assurance system including performance management which enables the school to record and celebrate the strengths of provision whilst identifying and working on areas requiring development.
- Developed a programme of cross-curricular (including musical) projects, opportunities and activities which creates a fully integrated, whole-school curriculum.
- Reviewed and implemented the School's support for those with special educational needs and/or English as an additional language to ensure that these students are enabled to succeed in all aspects of their educational experience.
- A vibrant and stimulating continuing professional development (CPD) programme for all staff with regular training to enable sustainable success at all levels.
- Implemented a new timetable system enabling more efficient working, better information processing and a more "user friendly" output.





# Musical and Artistic Strategy

## By 2026 the School will have:

- Continued to provide an innovative, exciting and high-profile artistic programme year-on-year which responds to the needs of the students, facilitates and enables partnership, and secures our reputation as the leading music school in the UK.
- Devised and implemented “Purcell@60”: a year-long programme of events, many of national significance, celebrating the School’s 60th anniversary in 2022.
- Reviewed one-to-one provision against affordability and agreed a way forward.
- Increased the number of pathways available at Sixth Form level in recognition of the diversity of the 21st century music industry. This would enable us to recruit more widely with first study routes in Music Tech, Production, Popular Music, Folk Music and non-Western disciplines.
- Considered the benefits of introducing a BTEC pathway (alongside A level) at Sixth Form level to enable a wider range of entry and more effectively support those students who currently study Jazz and/or have some issues of language.
- Increased the range, quality and regularity of live-streamed and other online events as a window into the regular life of the school.
- Implemented a range of musically focussed wellbeing initiatives throughout the school including performance health, tackling performance anxiety, the healthy musician, building musical resilience etc.



## Principal Strategic Aim 2:

To attract, retain and add value to the finest national and international talent.

The School's survival is dependent on the continued (and increased) recruitment of suitably qualified young people and we have seen growth from the traditional 180 to 196 over the past two years. We must therefore fully understand the size the school should be for it to be economically viable and how we need the school to "look" in terms of its student body (instrumental disciplines, year group sizes, ratio of boarders to day students etc.). We recognise that the current limitations of physical infrastructure mean we have almost certainly reached the maximum number of boarders we can currently accommodate.

In the short-medium term, there is opportunity for a limited growth of day students assuming that such growth is mirrored by some necessary and proportionate increases in other resources.

As a consequence of Brexit, MDS funding is no longer available to students from the EU. Therefore, we need to do three things: increase our share of the UK market so we leave no MDS place unallocated; identify routes through which talented, but economically disadvantaged students from the EU might still be enabled to come (this will be reliant on fundraising to some degree) and explore new fee-paying markets.

We need a much more proactive approach to identifying potential students and considering where our students come from. Regrettably, we are working against a backdrop of persistently diminishing access to music, musical opportunities and musical tuition in the UK – especially for those of limited financial means. We should be concerned about those young people of talent who never find an opportunity to discover the gifts they possess, and play our part in addressing this issue.





Our proposed recruitment strategy is outlined below.

**By 2026 the School will have:**

- Completed a targeted and managed recruitment campaign focussed on attracting a small number of additional (possibly fee-paying) day students.
- Stabilised the whole school numbers at approx. 195-200 with a more even balance of approx. 21 in Years 7-11 plus approx. 95 in the Sixth Form. These targets will never become wholly prescriptive (or, indeed, restrictive) but will enable us to target recruitment initiatives where we see possible risks of under-recruiting in particular year groups. It will also stabilise the through-route.
- Ensured a balanced instrumental ecology across the school based on artistic needs (populating an orchestra etc.) and logistical needs (ensuring there are enough pianos for all pianists). Again, this would never be restrictive but would enable us to target recruitment initiatives more effectively if we had an optimum whole-school plan for instrumental disciplines.
- Developed and implemented a Virtual Feeder School. Initially fee-paying, the VFS would provide an online version of the Purcell musical experience for students from all over the country (and world). Students would receive a programme of musicianship, theory, aural, composition, history etc. as well as practical music and instrumental lessons in evening/weekend classes appropriate to their skill level. Admission to the programme would be following an online audition and interview; the programme would run throughout the academic year and opportunities to participate in live events (such as workshops, celebrity masterclasses or some performances/event) may be possible. Provision would focus initially on younger students from Years 6 – 9, offering a through-route into the main school from Year 10 (or sooner) for suitably qualified students.
- Considered the long-term position of Year 6 within the school given the erratic nature of its recruitment.
- Increased our visibility internationally (via partnerships, agents and overseas. events/marketing), and developed a strategic approach to international recruitment.

### By 2031 the School will have:

- **Either:** Explored the development possibilities of the existing site sufficiently to support growth to c.240-250 students. This would necessitate a new boarding block with some additional practice room space and significant investment in infrastructure throughout. Further modifications would also be needed to classrooms and/or timetable to accommodate larger classes and a second performance/rehearsal space.
- **And/Or:** Explored alternative options such as relocating to a site more fit for purpose than the current one which has the growth potential already built in.
- Secured sufficient funding to enable the Virtual Feeder School to offer a significant number of places on a means tested scholarship basis.
- **And/or:** Explored the possibilities of opening a primary school under the free-school system in an area (probably, London) we believe offers the potential to make a significant social impact. The new school would deliver a full primary experience but with two defining characteristics: class and whole-school musical opportunities would be embedded into the fabric of school life at every stage; all students would have access to one-to-one instrumental lessons. Alongside the core funding offered by DfE for founding and running the core business of the school, we would seek private sponsorship and partnerships to enable the one-to-one and music specialism to flourish. Those students who are then flourishing by Year 6 would move on to the senior school on an MDS place (or bursary). Those who are not would move on to a local secondary in the usual way. This initiative would be absolutely consistent with the original aims and mission of The Purcell School, would meet our important obligations to widen participation and enable access to quality musical experiences for young people and offer a potential through-route to the main school, thus growing the domestic market.





## Principal Strategic Aim 3:

To facilitate transformational engagement with partners, communities and the wider world.

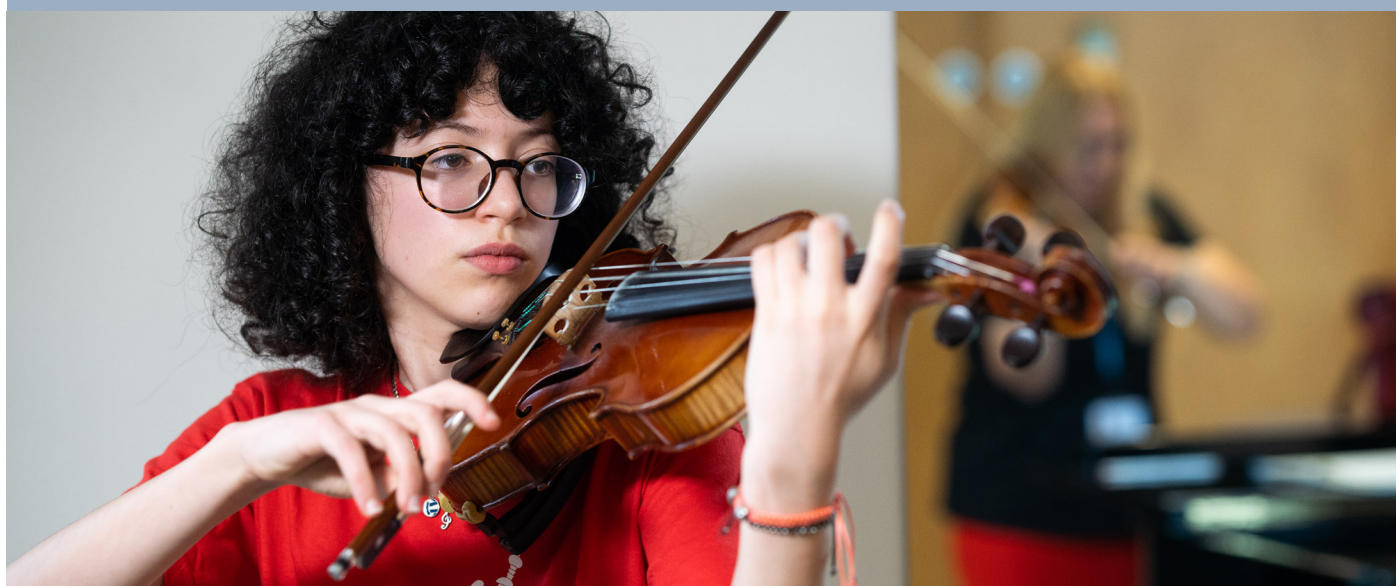
It is essential that the School takes its rightful place as an influential cultural leader within the UK, shaping the debate on matters of music and arts education. We therefore need to raise both our profile and visibility. It is vital that we engage with other key institutions not only for the benefit of our current students and our long-term artistic and musical health, but also for the purposes of lobbying and shaping the national debate. We need to lead by example through innovative and creative practice which extends beyond the confines of the school and engages the wider community – both near and far.

It will be increasingly important for us to build

meaningful strategic and artistic partnerships with other organisations who can enable us to recruit (feeder schools; choir schools; music hubs etc.), develop creatively, provide new opportunities for our students (with other music schools internationally; professional orchestras; ensembles; individuals), ensure strong progression routes (conservatoires in the UK and beyond; universities and other institutions who provide HE pathways) and engage with one - or more - media partner(s) to promote and distribute the highlights of our own work as widely as possible.

Should there be any doubt about the continuation of MDS funding in the future, we need to

position ourselves so we can demonstrate significant impact beyond the education of those enrolled in school. This can be best achieved with a forward-thinking, innovative and nation-wide outreach programme which may involve our students directly or it may run under our name by existing or new staff. Such a programme must demonstrate lasting and/or continuing impact and be truly transformational for those with whom we engage. Clearly, it will need its own funding stream, but with the right strategy and focus, this should be possible on a project-by-project basis from a variety of trusts and private sources.



## By 2026 the School will have:

- Established a network of partner schools who are likely to produce suitably qualified students for us. Benefits of such a partnership might be priority auditions for their students, a waiving of any audition fees, artistic exchange and projects led in partnership and/or by us.
- Strengthened our relationships with HE providers recognizing that as we diversify our own intake, students will potentially be interested in a greater range of progression routes. We should expect more from those partners for whom our students are of particular interest and seek more collaborative exchange with conservatoires, in particular.
- Negotiated a formal partnership with at least one (if not more) significant equivalent institution(s) abroad, most notably in America, Europe, Russia and/or China. Both would publically recognize the association which would be based on student and staff exchange, collaborative projects (including virtual), public acknowledgement, fluid transfer of expertise and shared objectives.
- Established a meaningful artistic partnership with a major London orchestra with clearly understood objectives and regular opportunities for active student engagement.
- Established a similar partnership with a notable chamber ensemble.
- Increased our representation at appropriate bodies, committees and organisations of influence to be sure we have voice in shaping the national debate.
- Reviewed and re-engaged with existing patrons, established some new connections and implemented a new set of expectations about what the relationship means.
- Established an engaging and regular alumni programme including opportunities for alumni to engage with current students and for us to engage them as “ambassadors” for the school.
- Conceived, devised and implemented an innovative “outreach” programme of significant social impact which embraces a wide variety of communities and environments in partnership with some key strategic partners and sponsors.
- Identified, approached and secured a strategic media partner who can enable us to significantly extend our reach and visibility.
- Used the 60th anniversary year to increase visibility and generate interest in the work of the school.

## Principal Strategic Aim 4:

### To develop world-class resources and facilities

If the school wants to make good on its claim to be a leading (the leading!) music school in the country/world, its resources have to be of sufficient quality to support and inspire

world-class work. There is no question that the current physical resources (buildings, rooms, teaching facilities and some instrument stock) do not match the level of ambition

we have for the school and we must therefore work progressively to address this if our other strategic aims are to be fully.

## Staffing

### By 2026 the School will have:

- Refreshed its patrons and engaged other high profile musicians in affiliated positions in order to promote the school, attract student interest and add value to the student experience.
  - Secured a music staff of distinguished performers and teachers to ensure the highest quality teaching and contact with the profession. Our “roll-call” must be of higher calibre than other music schools.
  - Comprehensively reviewed the current school staffing structure across all levels (Music; Academic Music; academic staff; support staff; management) to ensure it is based on current and anticipated
- need rather than historic inheritance. The staffing structures must align with the School’s expectations of outstanding provision but must also be economically sustainable and provide value for money.
- Implemented a staff pay policy which supports incremental progression, recognises outstanding performance and compensates for additional responsibilities whilst remaining sustainable.
  - Implemented and embedded an effective and supportive performance management system across the whole school structure.
- Delivered an outstanding working environment which attracts good staff, rewards those who perform consistently well, looks after staff wellbeing and enables the School to compete effectively when recruiting and retaining quality staff.
  - Made significant progress towards external recognition for support of staff through an Investors In People and/or Athena Swann accreditation.



## Teaching for Learning Resources

### By 2026 the School will have:

- Refurbished all teaching spaces to ensure they are modern, comfortable environments which are supportive of, and conducive to, effective learning.
- Created a dedicated wellbeing and study support area.
- Created a dedicated staff work area.
- Comprehensively refurbished the Science Labs.
- Equipped all teaching spaces with high quality interactive white boards, sound systems and laptop docking stations; equipped all class teachers with their own laptop so that any subject (aside from very specialist areas) can be taught in any classroom facilitating significantly better room utilization.
- Comprehensively refurbished the gym and other outdoor sports /recreation facilities.

## IT Systems and Strategy

### By 2026 the School will have:

- Devised and implemented a rolling 10 year IT renewal strategy.
- software to plug current gaps and inefficiencies removing the risk of information being held by a single person in a single place (Academic timetable system; instrumental timetable; Boardingware; Google Suite; room booking and scheduling; finance and accounting).
- Identified and implemented new

## Instrumental Investment Strategy

### By 2026 the School will have:

- Devised and implemented a 10 year rolling piano renewal strategy.
- Devised and implemented a 10 year rolling renewal strategy for other instruments.

## Buildings and Estate

### By 2026 the School will have:

- Undertaken the refurbishments in the existing building identified in previous sections.
- Considered the need for additional performing, practice, recording and Music Technology accommodation.
- Assessed the future needs of the school, considered expansion to c.240-50 and devised a comprehensive building plan to meet those needs.

### By 2031 the School will have:

- Undertaken a significant phased building project to bring the current estate up to the standard necessary to support the ambitions and aspirations of the school.
- Delivered new boarding accommodation, enhanced performance spaces and a comprehensive refreshment of the whole estate.

### Or:

- Considered any other site which may offer better facilities whilst not losing any of the current benefits afforded by location.









## Principal Strategic Aim 5:

To ensure financial sustainability through effective financial planning and management, diversification of income streams and significant and sustained fundraising.

The greatest challenge of the coming five year period is financial. Whilst the rest of this strategic plan offers an optimistic and positive vision of the future and a clear “route map” for achieving it, we have to recognise that we are entering a period of profound economic uncertainty and we may be forced to accept that some of the projected timelines may require adjusting as we respond to any unforeseen economic turbulence: the speed with which some of the aspirations in this plan can be achieved will be

dependent on affordability. The most significant uncertainty we currently face concerns the, as yet unknown, impact (both on the country and the school) of Covid-19. We do not yet have a clear idea of the scale of the economic fallout (although we are told to expect it to be significant) nor how this will impact upon the employment and economic positions of current and (more significantly) future families, but we must expect there to be some impact. Similarly (and as discussed in more detail previously) we do not

yet fully understand the impact of Brexit on our recruitment. One thing is certain: our MDS funding is unlikely to be increased; it is much more likely to remain frozen (which is a cut in real-terms). We therefore need to ensure we have a forensic financial plan to get the best value from our principal source of income (MDS). This will require a line-by-line examination of current spending, a plan to diversify income and a much more proactive and effective approach to high-value fundraising.



## By 2026 the School will have:

- Undertaken a comprehensive financial spending review, identifying and actioning all possible efficiencies.
- Undertaken a financial review of the strategic plan and identified the priority ordering of actions based on urgency of need and affordability.
- Identified and implemented a number of income generating initiatives including year-round short courses (both virtual and on site); summer-schools (including non-residential summer schools held in different parts of the country), and lettings/other commercial activity.
- Identified clear fundraising objectives in terms of annual expectations and the costs of specific initiatives.
- Reviewed the staffing of fundraising to ensure the School has the necessary expertise to develop its work in this area and enable the Principal to dedicate a minimum of 33% of his time to fundraising activity.
- Developed and implemented a fundraising strategy which supports the aspirations outlined in this document. It is likely to focus on three key support areas:
  1. People (bursaries and staffing of specific roles and/or projects).
  2. Activity (commercial support for concerts; core funding for specific projects such as outreach).
  3. Capital (support for building, instrument and other significant capital items)
- Used the anniversary year to launch a high-value public campaign.





# The Purcell School

*for young musicians*

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