

PURCELL PARENT NEWSLETTER

20th January 2026

Dear Parents,

It seems a little late to be wishing you a “happy new year” but as this is the first Newsletter of 2026 it feels appropriate to do so. I hope you enjoyed a relaxing Christmas break and enjoyed spending time together as a family.

This term is well and truly underway and has seen lots of focused work from Years 11 and 13 in the run up to (and during) last week’s mock exams. All students will have some valuable lessons from the mocks and I would encourage you to discuss outcomes and any resulting actions with your son or daughter. Teachers will, of course, be working through the mocks to ensure that students know what they need to work on between now and the summer - which will come around all too soon.

We have been deliberately a little lighter on evening events and concerts in these first few weeks to allow time to focus on the mocks but rehearsals are well underway for many of our exciting upcoming events - not least the Symphony Orchestra concert at Cadogan Hall on February 9th. This promises to be a spectacular evening so please try to join us - and bring friends and family along, too.

I am delighted to be able to share lots of good news in this Newsletter and I look forward to seeing you at some point soon.

With all good wishes,

Paul

Best-schools Top 100 boarding school for GCSE and A Level

I am delighted to report that the School has been listed in the Education Advisers Ltd league tables following our exam results last summer. We are in the Top 100 Co-ed Boarding Schools for [A Level](#) and the Top 100 Boarding Schools for [GCSE](#). For a non-academically selective school this is an astonishing achievement and a real testament to the quality and commitment of our teaching staff who all support students through their school journey.

RSL Diploma

It has been an objective of the School's Strategic Plan to launch an alternative academic pathway to A level in Years 12 and 13. I am really pleased to announce that, after some very significant work, we are in a position to launch just such a new course from September 2026.

The RSL Diploma is a nationally recognised vocational course designed to reflect the realities of today's music industry. It offers a practical, project-based alternative to traditional academic routes, with assessment through coursework rather than exams. Students would specialise in one of four pathways:

- Pop Performance
- Classical Performance
- Composition
- Music Production

Applicants working across a range of styles, including jazz and crossover genres, are welcome and will be supported within the pathway that best reflects their primary focus.

Alongside developing advanced skills in their chosen specialism, students will gain broader industry knowledge, including collaboration, recording and production techniques, creative entrepreneurship, self-promotion, event planning and understanding how musicians build sustainable careers.

The Diploma includes two study options. Students may enrol on the subsidiary diploma alongside A Levels in one or two other subjects, or choose the extended diploma, which is a single vocational qualification equivalent in size to three A Levels.

The programme will be led by Andrew Williams, Head of Academic Music, and would integrate fully with Purcell's wider musical life, facilities and performance opportunities.

RBC honour - from Chair of Governors

Dear all,

I'm delighted to add to this newsletter in order to tell you something about Paul Bambrough that he is too modest to share himself.

The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire has awarded him an Honorary Fellowship in recognition of his significant contribution to music education as Principal of The Purcell School, former Vice-Principal of RBC and former Director of Music of the Sixth Form College, Farnborough.

Just to explain, Honorary Fellowships are awarded to distinguished musicians, professionals from the world of theatre, screen or broadcast who have made a significant contribution to the work and life of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire through professional or voluntary work.

It is so good to see his astonishing work recognised in this public way (the award will be made in the summer), and I know you will want to congratulate him on it and share his pride in it.

Yours,

Bernard Trafford, Chair of Governors

Head of Composition

I am thrilled to announce that, following a rigorous and demanding interview, we have appointed Dr Daniel Fardon to the role of Head of Composition from September. Daniel joined the School six years ago and teaches academic music and composition. He also has a very significant and important profile as an award-winning composer. Daniel will succeed Alison Cox who retires in the summer.

Concerts Coming up - please buy tickets!

It has been wonderful to see students back at school and performing in the first two weeks of lunchtime concerts in 2026. The Concerts Department is already very busy organising and promoting a number of exciting events taking place this term.

Our CP Hall concert series at the school site begins with the Live Film Score Concert on Tuesday 20 January, presented by the Music Technology Department.

The Purcell School Symphony Orchestra will perform at **Cadogan Hall on Monday 9 February at 7.30pm**, with an exhilarating programme of music inspired by the 1940s film scene. Our Concerto Competition winner, Julia Majewska, will perform Korngold's lush and cinematic Violin Concerto. If you are able to travel to London, we warmly encourage you to join us for what promises to be a magnificent evening of music.

Our Jazz Department students will appear at three off-site events this term:

- Cadogan Hall, Monday 9 February, 6.30–7.00pm (main foyer)
- Thwaites Violins, Watford, Tuesday 10 February, 6.00pm
- **Watford Palace Theatre, Tuesday 24 March, 7.30pm**, performing with distinguished saxophonist Simon Spillett

The Composition Department will present several concerts both internally and externally this term, most notably at **Wigmore Hall on Thursday 12 March at 1.00pm**, celebrating works by composers associated with The Purcell School.

We are also delighted to introduce a new **Staff & Alumni Concert Series** this term. The first concert, a triumphant performance by piano faculty member Alexander Ullman, took place earlier this month. Two further concerts are scheduled:

- Seb de Krom (drums) Birthday Concert – 11 February
- Tomoki Park (piano) Solo Piano Recital – 25 February

We are extremely fortunate to have world-class musicians among our staff and alumni, giving us the opportunity to hear them up close in the intimate setting of the CP Hall.

All concerts are listed on our website, including ticket information:

<https://www.purcell-school.org/news-events/concerts-events-guide/>

If you have any queries or require further information, please contact us at concerts@purcell-school.org.

We very much look forward to welcoming you to our concerts.

Yours sincerely,
Sanae Honda
Concerts Manager

Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools ‘Boarding School Mental Health Award’ – Gold Status

We are proud to share that The Purcell School has been awarded the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Boarding Schools – Gold Award, recognising our whole-school commitment to mental health. Nationally, more than 1,400 schools are engaged with the Carnegie mental health framework, making Gold status a significant and highly respected achievement.

Schools are assessed against eight key criteria, with a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice aligned with the latest professional and government guidance. To achieve Gold level, schools must demonstrate not only robust structures, strategy, and support for the mental health and wellbeing of their own community, but also a commitment to sharing knowledge, resources, and best practice more widely, both nationally and internationally.

Particular recognition was given to how Purcell’s approach is thoughtfully tailored to our unique identity as a specialist music school and we were praised for “meeting the community

where they are,” nurturing and empowering students to succeed not only as individuals, but as musicians.

The assessors were also very impressed by the School’s proactive approach to outreach and inclusion and our alumni engagement was highlighted as a special strength. In their final recommendation, the assessor stated that they had “no hesitation” in awarding Gold level status, describing The Purcell School as “an example of best practice and a role model for other specialist schools”.

Giving Day

A big thank you to everyone for making our first Giving Day such a resounding success on the last day of term in December. Aside from the money raised, the event produced an incredible amount of engagement and positivity both in school and within our community.

The final total raised, including Gift Aid, is an incredible £47,176. The funds will make a significant difference and will be directed to the School’s Bursary Fund.

The entire concert is available to re-watch on our [YouTube channel](#) and the [Giving Day donation page](#) will remain open for the next few weeks.