A1 Curriculum Policy

Aims

The Purcell School curriculum is truly comprehensive, encompassing music tuition with specialist teachers, classroom lessons, masterclasses, performances, chamber music, choirs, PSHE and a host of other complementary educational experiences which aim to provide an exceptional holistic education with music at its heart.

According to The Purcell School's first prospectus from the early 1960s, the founders intended that a good musical education should be balanced by a good general curriculum "of true educational value", and that "a career in music is not taken for granted and a broad range of academic subjects is included – without diminishing the musical priority".

This statement remains true today. A truly world-class education of any sort is an holistic one and the School is clear in its assertion that cultivating the most creative and informed musicality involves the education of the whole person, such that the creative impulses which fire the most inspired musicality are nurtured and stimulated by an informed and imaginative awareness of the world in general. Thus the imperative to provide a world-class musical education is served by an equal commitment to the very best in complementary academic study.

Although most students at The Purcell School aim at a career in music and will go on from the School to conservatoire or to university to read music, the School insists that this path is not taken for granted. Additionally, modern musical careers rely on a portfolio of skills and experiences and demand that students have proficiency in a range of skills, from self-promotion on websites and social media to proficiency with recording technologies. For those students who decide not to apply for conservatoire and not to apply to read music at university, the School aims to provide an enabling education equal in quality to that of the best non-specialist schools, such that Purcell students can apply to top universities in the UK and beyond with success, ready to commence the best degree courses. In recent years, Purcell students have progressed to Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College, Kings College London, Harvard, Princeton and other top universities in the UK and abroad to read subjects as diverse as English, Physics, Law and Aeronautical Engineering. Careers and higher education advice aims to be impartial and wide-ranging in order to serve the interests of all Purcell School students, whether or not their aim is for a career in music.

The curriculum at The Purcell School aims to achieve the best and most effective balance between musical studies and other classroom subjects. The curriculum aims, with appropriate structures, to support each individual student to achieve their potential, musically and intellectually. In the years up to and including GCSE (years 7 to 11), students concentrate on achieving proficiency in as wide a range of academic subjects as possible. The curriculum allows for a smaller number of GCSE and IGCSE examinations to be taken than at mainstream academically selective schools: this enables Purcell students to manage the balance between academic and musical study and to devote appropriate time to their musical specialisms.

Subjects are offered at GCSE and IGCSE which enrich and enhance the student's overall creativity and musicality. A traditional distinction in the curriculum has derived from the school's commitment to providing GCSE education in German as well as French, both languages enabling a more informed access to key repertoire items and periods.

Academic departments at The Purcell School are free to choose a subject specification which best matches the interests of their students. International GCSEs (IGCSEs) are offered in a number of key subjects.

In general, GCSE and IGCSE subjects are taken at the end of year 11. Occasionally, individual students' interests are best served by a particular GCSE in another subject being taken at the end of year 10, but this approach is generally discouraged in the interest of cultivating a depth of understanding.

Younger students need a larger number of academic subjects to ensure that the basic skills and breadth of knowledge are in place, that national basic requirements are met and to ensure they are able to achieve at GCSE. As students get older, they are expected to spend more time practising, taking part in chamber music and orchestral or choral groups, and so the number of academic subjects decreases. Depending on a student's age and instrumental commitments, between 25% and 50% of curricular time is spent on musical activities. By the start of the Sixth Form in year 12, students are ready to specialise, and whilst the majority of Purcell School Sixth Form students study at least three subjects, students with exceptionally advanced performing careers may be allowed to consider studying fewer subjects.

Subject teaching and associated schemes of work aim to nurture the progress of all students and to take into account students with SEN and other specific requirements. Additionally, subject teaching and schemes of work do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

PSHEE

PSHEE has dedicated weekly curriculum time in Years 7 through to 11. In addition tutors are expected to use one of their tutorial sessions each week to support with delivery of the PSHEE curriculum and are supplied with materials and guidance. Where appropriate, assemblies are also designed to support the PSHEE programme e.g. promoting tolerance – Holocaust Day, E-Safety week, Positive Mental Health week.

PSHEE in the Sixth Form is delivered as part of a wider Personal and Professional Development programme and is adapted to fit the needs of the cohort and any external factors. Encompassing specific workshops alongside targeted assemblies and tutorials, a more detailed breakdown can be found in the Sixth Form Personal Development Programme (policy reference P12).

ICT

ICT skills are primarily delivered through the main curriculum and supported in tutorials. Students are inducted into the use of school systems when they enter the school and quickly become familiar with email, the intranet, specialist music notation software (Sibelius, Dorico etc.) and, in some cases, sequencing, mixing and editing software. Students then learn and develop their use of standard desktop programmes through their activities as part of the main curriculum: for example typing essays, analysing data in spreadsheets and preparing presentations and the more specialist musical packages via their studies in composition and Music Technology.

Fundamental British Values

The School is committed to actively promoting the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Activities promoting these values are embedded throughout the school curriculum and throughout wider school life. Departmental Schemes of Work may signpost opportunities for the exploration of British values through discussion, debate, research tasks, historic and contextual awareness and, in some cases, core content. The opportunity to promote British values permeates the PSHEE programme which is supported by related and topical discussion in tutorial sessions, full-School and House assemblies. The Boarding Policy makes it clear that respect and tolerance underpin the whole boarding experience and the School develops a respect for law and order through the application of its Behaviour and Sanctions policy as well regular discussion and debate about topical and legal issues. Students actively participate in democratic processes through various "student voice" activities including the election of School Council, prefects and Head Boy/Girl. The School's truly multi-cultural and international community ensure that exploration of different faiths and beliefs are part of every-day life, and the need to work together in orchestras, ensembles and other musical and social activities facilitate a deep respect and tolerance for those of different backgrounds.

Years 7 & 8

Students have lessons in Music, English, Mathematics, Science, French, History, Art, Drama, P.E. and PHSEE. For international students EAL lessons may be substituted for, say, a foreign language, Art or History. There is one supervised practice session during each school day of between 40 minutes and one hour.

Year 9

Students in Year 9 follow a full range of academic courses, whilst at the same time increasing their musical commitments. Given the special importance of German to the culture of European classical music, the language is compulsory for all in year 9 as a second foreign language, laying an appropriate foundation for those who wish to take the language forward to GCSE.

Years 10 & 11

As a rule, students are advised to take seven or a maximum of eight GCSE subjects. All students take Music at the end of Year 10, and GCSE Mathematics, Combined Science Trilogy (Biology, Chemistry and Physics, Dual Award) and English Language at the end of Year 11. Optional subjects include English Literature, French, German, History, Art and Drama. Single separate Sciences may be studied in Year 11 at the discretion of the Head of Department. All students have one session per week of PSHEE and Physical Education.

Years 12 & 13 – the Sixth Form

It is assumed that entrants to the Sixth Form at the start of year 12 will have at least five GCSE / IGCSE passes at grade C / 5 or above. Exceptions to this may be made in the case of 'overseas' students or following a decision from the Principal. Academic Music is a compulsory subject: all students currently take A level Music. Sixth Formers generally take two further subjects. Sometimes EAL can replace one subject option for international students. Occasionally a reduced programme is negotiated and arranged for those with a particularly heavy performance schedule.

Subjects on offer are: Music, Music Technology, English Literature, Mathematics, French, German, History, Art, Drama & Theatre Studies, Biology, Physics and Chemistry.

Equal Opportunities

Entry to all programmes of study is based on academic suitability and appropriateness, regardless of sex, race, disability, religion or belief.

Schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all students, including those students with an EHC plan.

Disabilities

In accordance with statutory requirements, the school aims to make the curriculum accessible to all students as far as is reasonably practicable. The school has a Curriculum Accessibility Plan and an Accessibility Plan which are available to parents on request and embedded within the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Availability of Courses

The classroom curriculum and its delivery are under constant review and may change from year to year. The School cannot guarantee the availability of particular courses or particular subjects in future academic years, as availability will depend on demand and the ability to provide teaching of a sufficiently high standard.

- Related documents
- Sex and Relationship Education
- Learning Support and Special Education Needs
- Assessment and Reporting
- Homework

Policy author / reviewer:	***Policy date / review date:***	***Next review due:***
JCH	October 2018	October 2019
C Rayfield	October 2019	Summer 2020
C. Rayfield	September 2020	September 2021
Paul Bambrough	September 2021	September 2022
Michael Long	September 2022	September 2023
Michael Long	September 2023	September 2024
Paul Bambrough/Michael Long	September 2024	September 2025
Paul Bambrough/Michael Long	August 2025	September 2026
Paul Bambrough/Michael Long	August 2026	September 2027

APPENDIX 1 – Curriculum Summary: 2022 – 2023

Please note: The courses listed here are available during the current academic year, but no guarantee can be given about their future availability. Prospective parents and students are advised to contact the school to confirm the curriculum for the next academic year.

The timetable is divided into units of 20 minutes to provide flexibility in the allocation of time. The number of minutes allocated to each subject per week is indicated in brackets after each subject. The Music provision in Years 7 - 8 includes aural, theory, history, analysis, composition, ensembles/piano class, choir and practice. Chamber music and musicianship options are added in Years 9 - 11.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) is also available in all years for those who need it.

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
Music (540)	Music (640)	Music (580)
Mathematics (180)	Mathematics (180)	Mathematics (180)
English (180)	English (120)	English (180)
Science (120)	Science (120)	Science (180)
French (160)	French (120)	French (180)
History (60)	History (120)	German (160)
Drama (60)	Drama (60)	History (60)
Art (120)	Art (60)	Art (80)
PE (120)	PE (120)	Drama (60)
PSHEE (60)	PSHEE (60)	PE (80)
	German (40)	PSHEE (40)

Years 10 & 11 (GCSE / IGCSE)	
Common core (5 Awards) (All Students)	**Options 2, 3 or 4 Subjects**
Music (600 / 520)[1]	English Literature (160 / 160)
Mathematics (180 / 180)	French (140 / 140)
English Language (120 / 100)	German (140 / 140)
Dual Award Science: 3 Subjects Resulting in 2 GCSEs (180 / 180)	History (120 / 150)
	Art (120 / 150)
Non-Examined: PE (60) PSHEE(40)	Drama (120 / 150)

Sixth Form	
Most students study 3 subjects at A2 level. Each of these subjects, listed below, is taught for 280 minutes per week. EAL may be studied in addition or instead of one A-Level	
Music (Compulsory)	German
Music Technology	History
Mathematics	Art
English Literature	Drama and Theatre Studies
French	Physics
Biology	Chemistry

[1] 1 GCSE taken at the end of Year 10; Year 11 studies include more advanced harmony, history and analysis and Outreach training.

Curriculum at a Glance:

	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Music							
Music Technology							
English Language							
English Literature							
EAL							
Mathematics							
Science							
Biology							
Chemistry							
Physics							
French							
German							
History							
Art							
Drama							
Physical Education							
PHSEE							

Note: **COMPULSORY** **OPTIONAL**