Music development plan summary: Watling Academy Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2026-2027
Date this summary was published	July 2026
Date this summary will be reviewed	July 2027
Name of the school music lead	Mr. Simon Frost
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music	Mr. Martin Gibbs
Name of local music hub	Milton Keynes Music Hub
Name of other music education organisations	Milton Keynes Music Co-operative

This is a summary of how our school delivers music education to all our pupils across three areas – curriculum music, co-curricular provision and musical experiences – and what changes we are planning in future years. This information is to help pupils and parents or carers understand what our school offers and who we work with to support our pupils' music education.

Part A: Curriculum music

This is about what we teach in lesson time, how much time is spent teaching music and any music qualifications or awards that pupils can achieve.

Curriculum Information

Our secondary music curriculum is designed to inspire and engage students, fostering a lifelong appreciation and understanding of music. The curriculum details for each year group are published on our school website, you can find the full curriculum details here.

Allocation of Curriculum Time

The time allocated per week for curriculum music is structured to ensure comprehensive coverage and development of musical skills across all key stages:

Key Stage 3: Students receive 1 hour of music per week throughout the academic year, divided into half-termly units focusing on different aspects of music education.

Key Stage 4: Students opting for music as a subject will have 5 hours per fortnight. The course runs over two years and covers the GCSE syllabus in depth. We currently run the Eduqas GCSE in Music.

Key Stage 5: Students opting for music as a subject will have 9 hours per fortnight. The course runs over two years and follows the Eduqas A Level in Music

Curriculum Framework

Our music curriculum is informed by the Model Music Curriculum (March 2021), which provides non-statutory guidance for teaching music from Key Stages 1 to 3. This ensures our teaching practices are aligned with national standards and incorporate a broad and balanced approach to music education and is designed to prepare students for further study of the subject at Key Stage 4 and 5.

Our Key Stage 3 music curriculum is designed to build a strong foundation of musical understanding, ensuring students are well-prepared for further musical study and participation in the school's musical life. By the end of Year 9, students will have developed aural knowledge, engaged in creative processes, understood musical elements, and improved their fluency in music notation.

Key Features of Our Key Stage 3 Music Curriculum

Performing, Composing, and Appraising

Performing: Students arrive at Key Stage 3 with experience in performing music. Throughout Key Stage 3, they will continue to develop their performance skills through

individual and ensemble opportunities, including whole-class and small-group ensembles.

Composing: Students engage in creative processes through improvisation and composition. By the end of Year 9, they will be able to form and use primary & secondary chords, create bass lines, melodies, and rhythmic accompaniments, and develop their own compositional voice.

Listening: Listening activities focus on both technical exercises and exploring musical meaning. Students will gain aural knowledge of significant musical works and styles from a broad range of musical backgrounds, enhancing their overall musical understanding.

Music Technology Integration

Music technology is a developing component of our Key Stage 3 curriculum. We utilise a variety of hardware and software solutions, including cloud-based Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs). We have trialled opportunities for some students in Year 9 to develop these skills and plan to develop this further as the school grows. We have a full suite of 30 computers with notation software installed, and a bank of 20 laptops for exclusive use in the Music department, with industry standard DAW software installed.

Progression and Pathways

The Key Stage 3 curriculum builds on the learning from Key Stages 1 and 2 and is designed with Key stage 4 and 5 end points in mind, ensuring smooth progression in musical skills. This approach prepares students to succeed in GCSE music and participate actively in the school's musical life.

Specific Curriculum Elements

Singing

Building on the strong foundation from primary school, we emphasise group singing in year 7 and 8 and are continuing to develop repertoire and resources suitable for year 9, developing students' ability to sing in harmony, produce sound expressively, and perform confidently. Opportunities for solo singing are also provided within small group work.

Composing

Our curriculum allows students to explore melodic composition, harmony, rhythm, and improvisation, gradually finding their own compositional voice. By Year 9, students will confidently handle primary chords and more sophisticated harmonic structures, as well as key features of important musical styles.

Performing/Instrumental Performance

Instrumental performance is highly diverse and adapted to our school's resources. We provide whole-class and small-group ensemble opportunities, encouraging proficiency on various instruments. Keyboard skills are emphasised due to their relevance in music composition, and music technology, enabling students to form chords and improvise melodies effectively. Guitars and Ukuleles are used to expand on opportunities and interests of individual students, and students who have their own instrument are encouraged to utilise this skill in their lessons.

Listening

Listening and appraising exercises are used in each topic to help students understand musical elements and explore musical meaning and develop exam skills so that they are prepared for further study of the subject. Repertoire and approaches are chosen to build on skills developed in Key Stages 1 and 2, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of music.

Musical Opportunities

Students at our school have numerous opportunities to engage with music, including:

Whole-Class Ensemble Teaching: In Year 7, all students participate in a whole-class ensemble program as a key part of the curriculum during our “Sonority City” unit, whole class ensemble work forms appropriate parts of other units throughout Key Stage 3.

Solo and Group based Music Making: All students engage in a variety of lesson activities designed to develop both individual performance, composition and appraisal skills, as well as group skills

Singing Programs: Regular singing has been embedded into year 7 and 8 in the years from 2023-2025 and continues to be developed further for all key stage 3 groups. These are integrated into the curriculum, promoting vocal skills and ensemble performance.

Instrumental Lessons: Students can opt for individual music lessons on various instruments, facilitated by visiting music specialists through the Milton Keynes Music Co-operative. We currently have provision for Strings (Upper and Lower), Woodwind, Brass, Guitar, Piano/Keyboard and Drum Kit.

Partnerships and Support

We are proud to partner with our local music hub and have created links between venues and organisations such as The Stables. We work closely with the Milton Keynes Music Co-operative, who provide peripatetic lessons on a range of

instruments. These partnerships provide additional resources, specialist teaching, and performance opportunities for our students.

Music Mark: I am incredibly proud to share that through our hard work developing Music as a subject at Watling, we have achieved the Music Mark of Recognition for Dedication & Improvement, through this we have shown that Watling Academy understands the importance of music education and are dedicated to finding ways to embed consistent and inclusive provision.

Music Qualifications and Awards

Our secondary students have access to a range of music qualifications and awards, ensuring they can pursue their musical interests and achievements at various levels:

Key Stage 4: Students can elect to study GCSE Music from year 10 onwards, which covers performance, composition, and appraisal skills. We currently follow the Eduqas GCSE specification

Key Stage 5: We continue to develop our key stage 5 provision in the year 2026-2027, with our first cohort of year 12 students joining us in September 2026.

Supporting SEND and Disabled Pupils

Our music department is committed to ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, have full access to the music curriculum. We employ various strategies to support these students, such as differentiated instruction, classroom adaptations and personalised learning plans.

With the increasing need for adaptive teaching processes, we aim to introduce accessible musical instruments, where needed.

By continually developing our curriculum and expanding opportunities for all students, we aim to cultivate a vibrant and inclusive musical community within our school.

Part B: Co-curricular music

This is about the extra-curricular activities and learning opportunities available to students both in-school and in partnership with external providers.

Music Tuition Outside of Lesson Time

Our school offers a comprehensive range of music tuition opportunities beyond the core curriculum to nurture and develop students' musical talents:

One-to-One Tuition: Students can receive individual lessons on a wide variety of instruments, currently including woodwind (flute, clarinet, saxophone), brass (trumpet), strings (violin and cello), voice, drum kit, guitar, and bass guitar. These lessons are conducted by visiting music teachers over the course of thirty-four, twenty-minute sessions across the year on a rotating timetable, designed to lessen the impact on the normal timetabled curriculum. We have a hardship fund available to support students who require financial assistance, ensuring that all students have access to music education. Further musical instruments can be taught by our visiting music teachers and are booked based on demand and availability.

Choirs, Ensembles, and Bands

Our school boasts a variety of ensembles that students can join, enhancing their musical experiences and allowing them to perform regularly:

Choir: Students from all year groups can join our school choir, which rehearses weekly and performs at school events.

Instrumental Ensembles: We offer a range of instrumental groups, including:

Orchestra: Open to students who play orchestral instruments, the school orchestra rehearses weekly and performs in concerts throughout the year.

String Group: Focused on string players, this ensemble helps students develop their skills and enjoy playing in a group setting.

Independent Band & Solo Practise space: Students have access to the practise rooms after school for their independent practise needs, this is signed up for in the same way as clubs.

All music clubs and ensembles are currently free to attend, ensuring that every student can participate regardless of financial circumstances.

Progression Opportunities Outside Lesson Time

We provide numerous avenues for students to make progress in music outside of lesson time:

Rehearsal and Practice Facilities: The music department has several practice rooms that can be booked before and after school for individual practice. Students can arrange bookings through the Head of Music.

Weekend, After-School, and Holiday Provision: We collaborate with the local music hub and other organisations to signpost students in the direction of out-of-school musical opportunities. This includes the MK Music Centre, where students can receive additional tuition and participate in ensembles, and The Stables, where workshops and performances can be booked.

Instrument Loans: Students can borrow instruments through our partners at the MK Music Hub, allowing them to practice at home and progress more rapidly. This service is available to all students, and the Music hub offer a wide range of the most common instruments which are suitable for beginners.

Qualifications and Awards: Beyond school-based assessments, students can pursue graded music exams through recognised boards such as ABRSM and Trinity with guidance from their peripatetic music teachers.

Ensembles and Clubs: All music clubs, including choir, orchestra, and string group, are free to attend. This policy ensures inclusive participation for all students, regardless of financial background.

Partnerships Supporting Co-Curricular Music

Our school has established strong partnerships with the local music hub and other music education organisations, enhancing the breadth and quality of our music provision. These collaborations provide additional resources, specialist teaching, and unique performance opportunities for our students. Many resources that are accessed are utilised in co-curricular activities.

By offering a diverse range of co-curricular music activities, we aim to create a vibrant musical community within our school, fostering students' talents and passion for music.

Part C: Musical experiences

This is about all the other musical events and opportunities that we organise, such as singing in assembly, concerts and shows, and trips to professional concerts.

Musical Events and Opportunities

Our school is committed to providing a wide range of musical experiences for our students, enriching their education and fostering a love for music. Here are the planned musical experiences for the academic year:

Regular Events

Showcase Performances: Our music faculty organises a showcase performances in conjunction with other faculties, highlighting our extra-curricular ensembles and featuring individual student performances. These events celebrate the talents of our students and provides a platform for them to share their music with the school community. We currently have plans to add further performance opportunities across the school year, including recitals for our new A Level cohort.

Concerts and Shows

School Musical: In the academic year 2023-24, we successfully staged our first school musical, "Bugsy Malone." Students participated in the band and as part of the cast, following two terms of rehearsals and learning the songs. Building on this success, we plan to produce more musical performances in the coming years, providing students with the opportunity to develop their performance skills and experience the excitement of live theatre.

Interactive Performances: We invited performers from MK Rock School to deliver an interactive performance assembly to Year 7 students. This year, we are intending to expand this initiative in collaboration with the Milton Keynes Music Hub to include more year groups and diverse musical genres.

Trips to Professional Concerts

Theatre Trips: Over the past year, we organised trips to Milton Keynes Theatre to see musicals. These trips were designed to spark discussion around the GCSE Music and Drama curriculums and support the delivery of Area of Study 2: Ensemble Music, of the Eduqas Music GCSE. This year, we plan to organise similar trips to inspire and educate our students through exposure to professional performances.

Getting Involved

Participation: Students from all year groups are encouraged to get involved in our musical events, whether as performers or audience members. For school musicals and

showcase performances, auditions and rehearsals are open to all interested students, providing inclusive opportunities for participation.

Audience Engagement: We aim to involve students as active audience members in trips to professional concerts and theatre productions. These experiences are designed to broaden their musical horizons and enhance their understanding of live performance.

Charging and Subsidisation

Affordability: We strive to keep these events affordable for all students. We work with venues to provide discounted tickets and offer financial support for students in receipt of pupil premium, ensuring that no student is excluded from participating in our musical experiences due to financial constraints.

Partnerships

Local Music Hub: Our partnership with the Milton Keynes Music Hub plays a crucial role in supporting our musical experiences. This collaboration provides additional resources, access to professional musicians, and opportunities for our students to participate in larger-scale musical events.

In the future

This is about what we plan for subsequent years.

Planned Improvements in Curriculum Music

Our vision for the future of the music department includes several key improvements aimed at enhancing the quality of music education and ensuring we meet the highest standards of musical provision.

Curriculum Music

New Instrument Introduction: We aim to expand the range of instruments taught within the curriculum to a greater degree. By introducing instruments such as the ukulele and guitar to more students within the curriculum, we hope to diversify students' musical experiences and encourage wider participation. We have also expanded our instrument library to include some common brass, woodwind and string instruments for students to trial build further interest and engagement. We are also exploring the utilization of music technology in lessons over the next year to a greater degree.

Model Music Curriculum Integration: We will further align our curriculum with the Model Music Curriculum (March 2021), ensuring our teaching practices reflect the latest educational standards and best practices. We are developing singing resources in line with the model music curriculum and over the course of two years will have embedded singing across key stage 3, with a view to supporting students to be able to sing independent lines in harmony

Co-Curricular Music

Expanded Instrumental Tuition: We will continue to offer additional one-to-one lessons across a broad range of instruments, including more specialist instruments based on student demand and tutor availability. This will provide students with greater opportunities to explore different musical paths and enhance their skills.

Enhanced Ensemble Opportunities: As the department grows, we would like to introduce new ensembles such as a jazz group and percussion-based ensemble, offering students more diverse group performance experiences. These ensembles will be open to students from all year groups, fostering a collaborative musical environment.

Musical Experiences

Termly School Performances: We will continue to hold a termly school performance, ensuring that students have regular opportunities to showcase their talents and gain

performance experience. These performances will include a variety of musical genres and formats, from solo recitals to large-scale productions.

Live Performance Opportunities: We plan to increase the number of trips to professional concerts and theatrical productions, as well as work with providers to bring performance opportunities into the school, ensuring that every student can enjoy live performances at least once a year. We will continue to collaborate with local venues and organizations to make these experiences accessible and affordable.

Guest Workshops and Masterclasses: We will explore the possibility of inviting professional musicians and educators to conduct workshops and masterclasses, providing students with unique learning experiences and inspiration from industry experts.

Alignment with High-Quality Music Provision

Our planned improvements are designed to align with the seven features of high-quality music provision:

Timetabled Curriculum Music: Ensuring at least one hour of curriculum music each week for Key Stages 1 to 3.

Access to Instrumental Lessons: Expanding the range of instruments available for lessons and ensuring inclusive access.

School Choir or Vocal Ensemble: Maintaining and growing our school choir and vocal ensembles to include more students and varied repertoires.

School Ensemble, Band, or Group: Introducing new ensembles to offer a wider range of group performance opportunities.

Rehearsal and Practice Spaces: Enhancing our practice facilities to support individual and group practice needs.

Termly School Performance: Committing to regular school performances each term to showcase student talent.

Live Performance Opportunities: Ensuring all students experience live performances annually, enriching their understanding and appreciation of music.

By implementing these improvements, we aim to provide a robust and dynamic music education that supports the development of our students' musical abilities and fosters a lifelong love of music.

You can find out more information about our local music hub at https://miltonkeynesmusichub.co.uk/

You can find out more about our local peripatetic music lesson provider at https://mkmusiccoop.com/

The Department for Education publishes a guide for parents and young people on how you can get involved in music in and out of school, and where you can go to for support beyond the school.