

Music development plan summary: St. James' Catholic High School Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2025/2026
Date this summary was published	January 2026
Date this summary will be reviewed	September 2026
Name of the school music lead	Rhiannon Wear
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Adam Nokes/ Laura Moss
Name of local music hub	Stockport Music Service
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	Greater Manchester Music Hub

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.

The Music department aims to build global Catholic citizens by developing children's knowledge through a variety of instrumental performances, creative tasks, technology projects and critical listening. We aim to provide all children with the opportunity to perform and grow their confidence through a range of engaging and challenging topics. In Key Stage 3, children will develop the skills necessary to succeed at GCSE level by developing on skills learned in each year. At KS3, all children have a one hour long lesson per week.

Music lessons provide children with a diverse, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that delves into music from a variety of cultures and contexts. Children will explore a range of instruments including keyboard, ukulele, and samba and African drums. In each topic, children will learn key terms and develop their musical vocabulary.

In Year 7 children are given a benchmark assessment that is used to inform future teaching strategies. Children will explore a number of topics through key musical

elements such as rhythm, pitch, and texture via a range of relevant and differentiated examples. Throughout the year children will have the chance to compose, perform and analyse a range of musical styles. In Year 8, children will build upon their previous knowledge and begin to learn more complex techniques such as improvisation and extended chords. Children will learn how to perform and compose in a variety of styles including Blues, Reggae, Minimalism, and Pop. Children will also begin to use music technology to compose music. In Year 9, children begin to study topics that closely link to those on the GCSE specification such as Film, Game, and Electronic Dance Music, using both a practical and compositional approach to maximise learning. They will begin to develop a deeper knowledge of how music is created and apply this to their own work.

During KS3, children are assessed in a variety of ways including solo performances, group performances, aural tests and projects. Children are then given detailed feedback on ways to improve. Music is taught fully inclusively at both key stages, and in mixed ability groups. There is equal access to music lessons for all children regardless of demographic, SEND status, disadvantage or any other characteristic. Children with additional needs are supported to access the subject and succeed in line with their SEND one page profiles and the music curriculum has been carefully designed to ensure that no child is disadvantaged as a result of any potential socio-economic challenges.

At KS4, Music is delivered as an optional subject. It is allocated 3 hours per week. Children who opt to study music at KS4 obtain a GCSE in Music from OCR. Our KS4 curriculum builds on the solid foundation provided at KS3. Throughout KS4 children continue their musical education through the study of 3 components: Performance, Composition, and Listening and Appraising.

Over the 2 years of GCSE, children study the development of the concerto through the Baroque, Classical and Romantic eras, and music from 4 key areas of the world- Western Africa, South and Central America, India, and the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, looking at their cultural roots. This is alongside studying the evolution of Popular music from the 1950's present day, and Film and Game music. All these units give opportunity to explore different cultures and conventions whilst developing practical, composition and listening skills.

The OCR Music GCSE is 60% portfolio based and gives the opportunity to explore performance skills and composition skills equally. By the submission deadline in Year 11, each child will have recorded a solo performance on their main instrument, as well as an ensemble performance with at least one other player . They will also have written a free composition in any style of choosing, along with a piece inspired by a choice of given briefs set by OCR.

Our music curriculum is designed to build confidence through expression and performance. Its purpose is to widen children's perception of other cultures by investigating their music. The extra-curricular opportunities in school give children the chance to showcase their talents and apply their new skills to the outside world. We believe that music facilitates learning across a range of subjects by engaging and linking the right and left hemispheres of the brain, helping co-ordination, and improving memory and language skills which, consequently, assists in the development of the whole child and enhances their learning throughout the school.

Our KS3 & KS4 Music curriculum overviews can be found via [this](#) link.

Part B: Co-curricular music

This is about opportunities for pupils to sing and play music, outside of lesson time, including choirs, ensembles and bands, and how pupils can make progress in music beyond the core curriculum.

At St James', the instrumental and extra-curricular provision has recently undergone an extensive rejuvenation process. There are a wide variety of one-to-one and small group instrumental lessons on offer via our peripatetic teachers from Stockport Music Service. Currently we offer lessons in piano, violin, cello, singing, guitar (acoustic and electric), bass guitar, flute, clarinet, saxophone, and drum kit. These are arranged through SMS on a direct parent-billed basis but lessons are timetabled and managed by the Music department staff.

Many of our children also take additional instrumental grade exams with Rock School, Trinity, or the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) as extra musical qualifications (which are acknowledged by the National Qualifications Framework).

All peripatetic-lesson children are offered the chance to loan an instrument from Stockport Music Service to ensure a lack of equipment doesn't become a barrier and, in some cases, the fees for this are waived or paid by the school. Looked after Children and PP children can use part of their funding for lessons, and in some circumstances, this will also cover the purchase of an instrument for them to use.

In school, we currently offer a choir, which is open to anyone who enjoys singing and making music in a group. There is no audition required and rehearsals are weekly. In 2026 we are introducing a school band, which will lead to increased performances and engagement from a wider range of children and allow us to reach out into the community in Cheadle Hulme.

Larger teacher-led rehearsals take place during lunchtimes in the Music room, but children are welcome to practise in their own time (break & lunch) for their own projects and rehearsals in one of our dedicated practice rooms.

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.

Our teachers have built strong links with Stockport Music Service and the Hallé which we are developing into a richer enrichment programme. Children are invited to participate in Stockport Music Services ensembles for their specific instruments/genres which take place over the weekday evenings and Saturdays.

St James' stages a bi-annual musical theatre production which provides children with opportunities to sing (both solo and as part of an ensemble). Our choir performs for the annual community Christmas carol concert where local residents are invited to visit the school and share coffee and cake with a selection of our staff and children.

From a school community and pastoral approach, our children participate in collective hymn practice, led by one of our Music teachers, which consists of every child engaging with 20 minutes of singing per fortnight outside of their Music lessons, embedding a sense of community around music.

Our talented musicians regularly play at Open Evening and Excellence Evening where we celebrate the success of children across the school.

In the future

This is about what the school is planning for subsequent years.

With reference to the 7 features of high-quality music provision, St. James' Catholic High School is fully committed to further developing and enhancing the already excellent provision that is in place for our children in the following ways:

- Continued timetabled curriculum music of at least one hour each week of the school year for KS3
 - Our Expressive Arts team continues to explore music pedagogy in further depth, researching the best/most effective musical pedagogies.
- Access to lessons across a range of instruments and music technology

- Our Music teachers are planning to visit feeder primary schools to promote instrumentation and peripatetic lessons on entry to St. James' in Year 7.
- We have had a lot of investment in Macs and midi keyboards and the use of Garageband is embedded in lessons at KS3 and KS4, with Sibelius software being used at KS4.
- A school choir and vocal ensemble
 - This is well established and continues to grow year on year. We have plans in place to further widen the scope of children involved in the choir and vocal ensembles with plans to work more closely with primary schools in the local area.
- A space for rehearsals and individual practice
 - We have dedicated spaces for individual and small group rehearsals and practice alongside one specialist music classroom.
- Expanding school performances
 - We have a new team of Music teachers who have plans to build in smaller performance opportunities that allow a greater range of children to engage fully with live performance.
- Enrichment and raising cultural capital
 - Plans are in place to allow children to engage with The Palace Theatre outreach programme and work with the musicians at the Hallé in Manchester.

Further information (optional)

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