

Music development plan summary: Altwood

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	20245-2025
Date this summary was published	
Date this summary will be reviewed	July 2025
Name of the school music lead	Ms. A Rankine
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Ms R Nehme
Name of local music hub	Berkshire Maestros
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	

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.

At Altwood Music is a valued subject, all Key Stage 3 students receive regular timetabled music lessons with a specialist teacher. Year 7 receive one lesson a fortnight and this increases to two lessons a fortnight in Year 8 and 9. The Music curriculum at Key Stage 3 has been designed using the DfE model music curriculum guidance. Year 7 focus on building basic skills in performing, composing, and listening, by focusing on skills such as notation, rhythm, and elements of music. Students have the opportunity in year 8 to study a variety of genres such as film music, world music, and the blues. Year 9 students learn to develop their skills through ensemble work such as song work. It is understood that students arrive from multiple primary schools with varying experience within Music, the curriculum at KS3 takes this variation into account. Each lesson is designed to incorporate an element of listening, performing, and composing. The curriculum provides students with a broad exposure to music

whilst ensuring that depth of knowledge and a focus on skills is developed. The curriculum is designed to inspire young people and foster a love of the arts.

The music department is located on the ground floor and has a large, specialised teaching space, three practice rooms and a large rehearsal room. The department is well resourced with the main teaching space providing a keyboard for every student. Practice rooms are used during ensemble exercises, providing students with the space to create and develop ideas ready to perform.

Music is delivered in broad banded groups at KS3. At Altwood, the core values of knowing our students, valuing our students and providing them with the space to succeed is upheld within the Music setting. Contextual data is used to ensure that teaching staff know their students. This data is enhanced by a baseline music assessment, which is completed within the first half term of year 7. Students complete a survey as part of their introduction to Music allowing the music department to identify students with prior expertise and interests. Lessons adhere to the Altwood school teaching cycle with a philosophy of teaching to the top and scaffolding for all, emphasising the desire for every student to succeed. All lessons include 'Thinking Hard' activities, encouraging students to extend their knowledge. Students model examples for their peers and where appropriate LSA's are effectively deployed to support the learning of all.

Students have the opportunity to learn instruments such as keyboard, vocals, ukulele, and percussion in a whole group setting. The curriculum offer is enhanced through our relationship with Berkshire Maestros. This provision enables students to take additional 1 to 1 or small group lessons. The current offer includes piano, clarinet and saxophone lessons. Altwood has formed strong links with the local arts centre, Norden Farm, a provision which is used to enhance the curriculum. Well selected opportunities are used to compliment student learning. One example is students attending a rehearsal of the Household Cavalry Band at Norden Farm to see instruments of the orchestra in action. Experts from Norden Farm have also delivered whole class ensemble teaching, such as Djembe drums.

The KS3 curriculum prepares students for further study at KS4, if they wish to follow this pathway. As part of the options process students can select Music at GCSE, we currently deliver the Eduqas examination. Students who opt for Music GCSE have six lessons over a fortnight. Students who do not opt for GCSE studies are encouraged to maintain their interest in Music through the enrichment offer.

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.

The extensive enrichment offer, which develops music beyond the classroom, provides students the opportunity to consolidate and extend their learning.

Berkshire Maestros offer 1:1 and small group lessons at Altwood in clarinet, saxophone, and piano. Specialist teachers in these instruments deliver lessons within the music department during curriculum time. The value that is placed on the arts ensures students are supported in leaving timetabled lessons to access their instrument lessons. Students have the opportunity to continue these lessons from their Primary schools. However, the offer is open to all students. Lessons are subsidised by the school allowing us to offer further quality teaching at a reduced price. Taster sessions take place throughout the year allowing students an opportunity to try sessions before committing. Berkshire Maestros provide the opportunity to study a variety of genres and take grades in chosen instruments.

As part of a whole school drive to provide students with a wide range of enrichment activities, the music department offers excellent opportunities for students. The Altwood choir rehearse and perform several genres such as classical, popular music, and jazz. The Orchestra offers students an opportunity to practice their chosen instrument in an ensemble setting. A highly popular enrichment offer is the musical theatre club. This chance for students to combine different disciplines within the arts enhances confidence through singing, acting, and dance.

Student voice is used to develop the ever-growing enrichment offer within music. Older students are encouraged to act as mentors and leaders within the arts settings. KS5 students support the delivery of Musical Theatre club providing them with the chance to develop their own directing and choreography skills with the support of staff. Each enrichment activity has the opportunity to perform. To develop confidence in performance a range of different performance settings are used. Small showcases are held for parents and carers to view work in development and more formal performances are held at external venues.

Students have access to rehearse and practice ensemble or solo pieces in our practice rooms or music room at lunchtimes and before and after school. Here they can rehearse pieces they have been practicing in class, outside of school, or from our enrichment programme.

Complimenting the student offer, Altwood is proud of its staff choir, who perform alongside students at the annual Carol Service.

The enrichment offer, which compliments the curriculum work, ensures that students are provided with opportunities to enhance their personal development.

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.

Altwood has an exciting and varied performance programme which is adapted for the needs of each cohort. Music plays an important part in developing the whole school identity and nurturing the house identity. Our Church of England status provides a unique opportunity for students to understand performance music in multiple settings, including Church and community events.

The Altwood School Carol Service is a highlight, not only of the Music calendar but the whole school calendar. Students perform various musical items and lead the service at All Saints Church. Soloists, ensembles, choirs and orchestras are all involved in this whole school event.

The Norden Farm Showcase features students from every year group. This high-quality event showcases soloists in a variety of instruments such as singing, piano, violin, clarinet, and ensemble performances from the orchestra, choir, musical theatre, and school bands.

As a Church of England school, students perform secular music at assemblies. Music is a key feature of rewards assemblies, where students reflect on their successes whilst students perform music.

Outreach to our local community is an important part of our whole school ethos. The Head of Music and the school Chaplain, Reverend Jo, have established strong links with local community projects. Music students have attended community lunches, hosted at St Peter's Church, and performed for the visitors. This event allows local residents who find themselves spending time alone a social setting with a hot meal. Our students entertain through their music but also talk to the guests about their music.

At Christmas students visit a local care home to perform Carols. We are informed that this is a highlight of the year for many of the residence.

To prepare students for performing in more formal settings, showcases are held throughout the year. These are hosted in the Drama Studio, which is a more intimate space with a smaller audience. Parents, carers, staff and students are invited to attend this event free of charge.

As part of the whole school pastoral system, students belong to one of three houses. To enhance the house identity weekly house competitions are held. The music department are key supporters of these events. There are termly talent shows, each with a different focus. Altwood's Got Talent, ensemble edition allows bands to shine, the instrumental edition focuses on musical compositions and the open edition allows all performers to engage. Students audition for the final and are supported by Music teachers in preparing their act.

The Music offer is further supported by trips and visits. Using our Farm Out funding we are able to subsidise regular trips to Norden Farm. Trips to the Westend in London are also offered. Wicked has been a firm favourite over the last few years. The Creative Arts team keep abreast of the offer from local theatres and opportunities in London. Where appropriate additional funding is made available to ensure this offer is accessible for as many students as possible.

In the future

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

As a growing school Altwood aims to provide two hours of music curriculum per fortnight for the all of KS3. This will require an additional music specialists to support the delivery of the curriculum. We also aim to offer more music technology at Key Stage 3. Soundtrap and Bandlab will be used to explore loops and create beats for song writing projects and rap. Our curriculum is under constant review, so it remains relevant and challenging to all students.

We will also offer a Performing Arts BTEC course at Key Stage 5 allowing students an opportunity to continue their studies in music and drama. We will continue to encourage more KS5 students to take part in enrichment music events, for example, having an ensemble group at our Carol Service.

We hope to get more instrumental teachers with Berkshire Maestros and offer more instrumental lessons such as guitar and drums. After meeting with Berkshire Maestros, we aim to bring in more students and offer group lessons which will be at a more discounted price for our students.

As an ambitious and growing department, we plan to attend music events in our local community where we can meet and collaborate with other schools and musicians.

Further information (optional)