

# The Quality of Education: Performing Arts - Purpose and Provision

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**St Christopher's:**  
A Church of England Academy

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither-  
whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:3

## The Purpose of Study

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The Performing Arts Curriculum at St. Christopher's aim to support and add to the National Curriculum in Music and to be a subject where pupils and students can flourish in creativity and expression in the fields of Dance, Acting, Physical Theatre and Musical Theatre.

**We believe that pupils deserve a broad and ambitious Performing Arts curriculum, rich in skills and knowledge, which ignites curiosity and prepares them well for future learning, in performing arts, music or employment. Our Performing Arts curriculum aims to:**

- Develop a thorough knowledge of the performing arts industry, through dance, acting, musical theatre and physical theatre
- Develop self-confidence through performance, both through lessons and extra-curricular participation in the department's clubs and school musical
- Develop resilience as a key skill for all pupils and students that can transfer across subjects
- Encourage creativity through improvisation and physical theatre skills
- Understand the industry through analysis of a wide range of styles, genres and practitioners in theatre and performance
- Encourage personal development through group performance, individual performance and through the school musical
- Understand the role that the performing arts plays in society
- Understand how performing arts can support the development of life skills, such as confidence, self-awareness, perseverance and resilience and provide a creative experience for all pupils and students.
- Develop their cross-curricular skills of problem solving, perseverance, diligence, teamwork, time management, organisation, responsibility and cultural history
- Gain a sense of achievement and build resilience through performance.
- Make all aware that performing arts is for everyone regardless of background or ability and can have a lifelong effect on their lives
- Instill a life-long appreciation of the arts across a variety of genres and cultures
- Develop analytical and critical thinking skills
- Develop skills and techniques such as mastery in practical lessons and performance that can be utilised throughout the curriculum.

The study of key skills in Performing Arts are at the core of the curriculum and these lead to all pupils being able to undertake further study in the arts. The building blocks across the Triple Threat including, space, dynamics, action, relationships and movement all contribute to a development of skills and their application in performance.

The curriculum is wide and varied covering all aspects of dance, musical theatre, acting, and physical theatre. The curriculum ensures that all pupils and students gain basic skills at KS3 which can then be developed and built on through key stages 4 and 5. All pupils and students are encouraged to take part in the many extra-curricular activities run by the department and the Music Department and the importance of involvement in extracurricular activities cannot be underestimated for the impact it can have on a pupil's life, such as taking a dance or drama class, joining one of the music department's many ensembles or participating in performances, concerts, events and the school musical.

The curriculum is broad and varied in order for all pupils and students to find an area they can thrive in. They will gain an understanding of the performing arts industry and the key skills required to succeed as a performer in their chosen field.

Staff, within their own teaching and planning, are encouraged to structure and scaffold lessons in light of the class they are teaching whilst ensuring the SOL is covered in its entirety. All staff are expected to adhere to the Scheme of Learning and to ensure that there is consistency across all key stages with all pupils and students completing the same work, scaffolded where necessary. Any resources produced by staff are expected to be shared across the department, having been discussed at a departmental meeting and for all pupils and students to have access to these. The department frequently looks at performances, the rubrics for assessment and the log books that pupils and students keep documenting their progress.

Performing Arts is a tool for all pupils and students to express themselves and to gain valuable skills in resilience and confidence building. All of the skills and experiences contribute to a pupil's and student's overall academic success.

# Complementing the School Purpose

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## Foundation Scripture

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Performing Arts reflects our foundation scripture and through performance and liturgical performance pupils can flourish and grow.

As performing arts teachers, if we do our job correctly both as teachers and mentors for our pupils, then we will send them out into the world ready to serve God in all they do, to be like the tree that flourishes and bears much fruit that is evident in a young person's life. If we model a life built upon the foundations of a living relationship with Jesus in which we demonstrate love for all and value everyone we create empathy for others in our young people. If we have built resilience through performing arts skills then trials become easier to bear as a young person gets older. If we have built the techniques of mastery in performance then these can be applied through life. Overcoming the battle of musical and movement memory, of learning lines, of reacting to others in a performance that seems impossible sometimes in a rehearsal, through practice and determination, can provide an exemplar for life. This clearly reflects our foundation scripture and will encourage all pupils and students to build the skills required in life to prosper.

The Performing Arts Department seeks to value and respect all pupils and students and to see in all of them the image and likeness of God. Each student has an intrinsic value, unique to them to be developed and nurtured for them to flourish, not just as performers but as young people who can bear much fruit in their community and abroad.

Drawing out potential in a young actor or dancer of any ability, helps them to develop and flourish not just as performers but as young people. Aiming for excellence in performance skills within a student's own level and potential, develops and cultivates skills that are invaluable.

Staff working as a team with students in performance drive forward academic achievement as potential is realised and skills developed. Working together as a team in an performance, in a production, or in a musical builds essential social skills, encourages good and healthy relationships and creates within pupils and students a value for each other avoiding them sitting in the company of mockers.

Rehearsals often create an environment where pupils feel comfortable talking to each other and sharing difficulties helping them to heal each other in love and friendship. This has a direct impact on their studies helping them to overcome barriers and challenges that could otherwise hinder progress and academic success.

Performing Arts and the theatre is everywhere in life and harnessing the skills required to perform within the triple threat will ensure a pupil or student planted by a stream of water, whose life glorifies God and who cannot but succeed and prosper in life.

## Key Themes

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Our curriculum in Performing Arts supports the mission statement of the school. In many ways, performing arts throughout the school forms part of the ethos of the school from curriculum to worship to performances. Performing Arts is deeply embedded in the life of the school.

The curriculum is carefully designed in order for all pupils and students to be able to develop their potential as young performers in which ever field they choose, and for all students to work together to improve, refine and develop these skills. Through this nurturing of performance talent, across a wide range of abilities, all students can learn how to live well in society, with each other, and most importantly how to contribute positively to society.

## Knowing what it is to be fully alive

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What better example could we have of what it feels to be fully alive than that of a performance whether as a performer in a classroom, as a performer in a school production or in a competition. Performing Arts can help pupils and students express deep and powerful emotions that they otherwise would not be able to share. It can aid mental health and build resilience for a pupil or student to manage personal circumstances. Through improving the ability to develop basic skills in Year 8 to honed and advanced techniques at Key Stage 5 provides a growing sense of wonderment and amazement at the power of performance and the feeling of being alive. Exploring the triple threat and physical theatre and understanding performance repertoire in a variety of genres from key theatre practitioners to liturgical dance heightens any sense of 'being alive' a student may have.

## Learning how to live well together

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Performing a chair duet in a drama lesson to mastering the intricacies and skills needed for a group performance to performing on stage in a production teach team building and working together skills like nothing else can. Learning to rely on other performers within the work, learning to maintain their own part with security and assurance, learning to adjust for your fellow performers demonstrates most ably the ability to live well together.

Performing in a school production and the intensity of rehearsals and performances often in pressured circumstances, teaches more life skills in one week than anything else could possibly do. Building empathy with others, understanding others and taking them at face value for who they are breaks down barriers of wealth, culture and ability. Helping others practically and emotionally at the height of a performance week builds empathy and love for others.

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## Securing wisdom and understanding

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Wisdom can only be found through the fear of God. A respectful fear and one in which a pupil or student aims to get things right. Building a set of performance skills which are transferable across life is invaluable to gaining wisdom and understanding in all things.

Improvising a piece of drama or physical theatre and learning how to refine and develop this aids understanding across a wide set of other subjects and skills. Persevering through a difficult rehearsal, and supporting your fellow performers through this, provides wisdom in how to deal with the challenges of life. Understanding a complex piece of drama or dance written by a specific theatre practitioner can give an insight into the mind of a practitioner and an understanding therefore, of how the mind works in communicating performance and its meaning to an audience and becoming a critical thinker in analysing it.

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## Christian Virtues

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Christian virtues are taught through the curriculum throughout all three Key Stages. Love for one another as you work together for a performance at Key Stage 3 or a BTEC Level 3 Performance, supporting one another in love is clear. And amusingly the hope here that the other person will indeed get it right!

Living and working together in lessons of dance, drama, musical theatre and physical theatre develop fortitude as you strive to improve skills and performance level. It is the not giving up that counts and the wonderful sense of achievement as you master something that was previously unobtainable. This demonstrates fortitude within a pupil or student that they can reflect in life.

Perhaps the most important value that performing arts can convey is one of hope. Hope for our fellow performers, hope to make a difference, hope to encourage others and take them along with you in performance as you strive for excellence. Hope for each other and lifelong friendships formed across a bond of performing and striving for excellence. The 'music and performing arts gang' is one to be involved in, non-judgemental, totally accepting of each others skills, and a loving and supporting environment which challenges and build confidence and resilience.

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## Curriculum Aims

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Performing Arts can offer pupils and students an opportunity to explore their faith and beliefs. Through performing a simple dance routine in class to competing in a local competition as part of the team or through acting a simple scene affords the performer the time to absorb it and reflect on the performance and material. Creating a piece of improvised theatre and building an understanding of world theatre can help other faiths and beliefs to be explored. In the study of Blues and African dance such as that by Alvin Ailey reflecting the struggles of the slave trade offers a focus on life and all its trials which can help a pupil or student explore some of life's greatest challenges. It also allows an insight into not making those mistakes again and to learn from history. All of these add to the rich culture of performing arts that we have in the West.

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## Provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve

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Performing Arts at St. Christopher's is inclusive for all regardless of background, the ability to pay for singing lessons or academic ability. All pupils and students can study singing and Musical Theatre. All instrumental teachers are carefully appointed and offer students of all abilities a clear structured course with progression towards graded examinations. The department's clubs offer the opportunity for all performers of all abilities to participate in, perform, gain valuable skills and make progress performing with others. In performing arts lessons each lesson is differentiated to allow all pupils and students to access it. There is clear progression through the Department's ladders of assessment and departmental meetings offer the opportunity for staff to share good practice and lesson ideas and resources. Book scrutiny and lesson observations allow the DoM to observe good practice, as line manager, and to ensure that all pupils and students are learning and achieving across each key stage.

At Key Stages 4 and 5 difficulties to pupils and students success are identified early and extra support and provision put in place. All students can access these extra sessions. Further resources are employed to raise pupil standards and expectations and extra examination practice and support are offered. Pupils at Key stage 4 are often mentored by a member of staff or Sixth Form performing student.

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## Promote the moral, cultural, mental and physical development of all pupil

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Performing Arts can provide the most amazing support for students who are struggling with their mental health and it helps to support them as they get involved with others, build friendships and encourage one another. Skills studied in all the disciplines have health and mental health benefits. Singing and Musical Theatre is good for all of the above and could be described as 'food for the soul'. If we sing we lift our own hearts, feel a sense of purpose and achievement and develop as young people and adults alike. Taking part in a performance helps us to 'escape' from the realities of life for a while and then return stronger to face them.

Experiencing other performers in a competition and meeting with students from another school, performing with the African Children's Choir all aid to a student's cultural development and acceptance of other cultures. It makes the world a much friendlier place!

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## Prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life

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**'Performing Arts has helped me to develop into the person I am, gain confidence and have the ability to walk out onto the stage in a character role'** Sixth Form Student.

Performing and overcoming difficulties and striving for excellence build essential skills to success in life. A rich curriculum offering a multitude of opportunities for students can give them a love of performance which will transfer to their own children. The value of theatre in a young person's life is priceless.

Understanding their own limitations as they act sing and dance, being able to build skills and knowledge to overcome these and the sense of achievement as they succeed should never be underestimated. What better preparation could there be as we set them out into the adult world and all the challenges it presents?

Discussing the emotional and intellectual meaning of performance and the exploration of theatre practitioners in class discussions from Year 8 to 13 creates an emotional intelligence within students.

# Complementing the School Provision

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## Teaching Approaches

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All departmental staff use a variety of teaching approaches in order to get the best out of the students. All members of staff have a wide and diverse skills set and this is used to the fullest in curriculum lessons and in performance practises. Modelling is often very successful and for the BTEC Level 3 student, higher level questioning in order to tease out the intricacies of a performance have proved to be successful in raising student attainment.

Structured and good feedback at Key Stage 3 is invaluable – and building in some reflection time into lessons for students to act on the feedback has met with much success.

In performance lessons peer and self-evaluation in line with the ladders of assessment has proven to show good development of the performances. This has also built confidence amongst the pupils and students.

Perhaps the most important teaching strategy we have is one of encouragement – at whatever the level the student is at. Encouraging a performance of a simple improvised drama piece to a performance of a BTEC Level 3 performance gives confidence thus building better skills and mastery of technique.

## Pupil Attitudes

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Performing Arts is popular amongst many of the students and this is evident in the uptake for KS4, the numbers in dance classes at lunchtime and after school as pupils and students meet, chat and perform together. Pupil voice has given key insights into the curriculum popularity and this has been used after a departmental inspection.

Being able to participate in several local events each year and the always oversubscribed school musical, shows the aptitude for performance of the pupils and students and their pleasure at being involved.

Pupils and students from across the whole school community are thoroughly involved in Performing Arts.

## Going beyond the National Curriculum and / or Exam Board Specifications

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If a pupil or student leaves with a love of performance, their memories of a school production and an appreciation and understanding of that then we have done our jobs well. If a BTEC Level 3 student progresses on to study performing arts at a Conservatoire or college then enter the profession, having joined us with limited skills in year 7 then we have nurtured and shaped talent and given them an artistic future.

We strive for excellence in all ensembles and drive the students to master performance techniques that should be beyond them. In the Key Stage 5 curriculum we study a vast amount of additional performance material allowing a greater understanding of the historical and stylistic areas of practitioners and encourage the students to write about these in their essays.

## Extra-Curricular and Enrichment

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There are many opportunities for all pupils and students to get involved in performance. The department has several clubs covering the entire ability range from beginner to advanced.

Dance clubs, school production, performance in worship opportunities, competitions and both external and internal performance opportunities such as anti-bullying week all allow pupils and students to flourish.

Across the school from Year 7 to 13 there are opportunities for pupils and students to get involved in and showcase performance.

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## Whole School / Cross Curricular Elements

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There have been several cross-curricular events with other departments to provide a holistic approach for students. This involves both the Music Department and other departments such as art and textiles.

Reading time is allowed in most lessons as we cover the background of theatre practitioners and their works. Silent reading time is used as well as sharing reading throughout the class. At Key Stage 5 all students are encouraged to read round the subject and are provided with a reading list, often given books to read and then these are discussed as a group in lesson.

As part of the whole school the line manager HDS has complete the Leadership Pathways Programme, the Diocesan Christian Leadership Course and is also the SLE in music for the East Lancashire Teaching School. HDS is also an examiner for three examination boards for Music and Performing Arts and a moderator for music with AQA.

The Department has a reputation within the County – one of where performance and music is encouraged and developed, where every student can learn to the best of their ability and most importantly to succeed. All pupils and students are encouraged to get involved in performance outside of school by joining a local youth theatre company or dance school.










# Ad Gloriam Dei

## To the Glory of God



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