



music

AT RIPLEY ST THOMAS

At Ripley, Music permeates all aspects of school life and, as such, is a prominent part of much that we do. Aside from curricular and co-curricular activities (seven choirs, two jazz bands, orchestra, concert band, &c.), as a Church of England academy, music contributes significantly to acts of worship. The robed Chapel Choir is a visible presence, leading the congregations at large services, and singing a fortnightly service of Choral Evensong in the school chapel which is open to pupils, staff, parents and members of the local community to attend.



We strive to give our pupils the highest-quality musical experiences and recent performance venues have included St Margaret's Westminster, Clare College Cambridge, Liverpool Cathedral, and a televised Prom in the Royal Albert Hall. We also do regular foreign tours, with trips to Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg in recent years. In May 2016 we were selected to be the first state-comprehensive school to host the MMA annual conference, bringing together music teachers from across the country and, in 2017, were named 'Best Music Department' in the national Music Teacher awards for excellence.

The most notable aspect of the role of music in the school community is the way in which pupils and staff support each other at performances. Aside from the large number of pupils who take part in school ensembles, those who have interests other than music are frequently seen in audiences at formal and informal concerts alike to celebrate their friends' achievements; as such, there is a sense that music is seen at Ripley as being as valid a pursuit as sport or other co-curricular activities.



One of our defining features is singing, and this is evident in the way that all pupils throughout the school take part in singing assemblies. Often these are simply a way of energising pupils in the morning, having fun through singing together; sometimes they take the form of a hymn practice in preparation for end-of-term services. Whereas it can be the case in some schools that such activities are successful in the lower years, with less enthusiastic participation higher up the school, we have developed a culture of community singing where everyone can, and does, take part. We have had particular success with VI form pupils who have, in recent years, requested to increase the number of these sessions which they have throughout the year.

The Ripley Music department aims to ensure opportunity





for all pupils to make progress as musicians, regardless of prior musical experience or family circumstances. In class, pupils follow a bespoke Key Stage 3 music curriculum which develops the skills needed by musicians across all styles and genres: singing, keyboard-playing, aural skills, music theory, composition, and critical appraisal. Pupils are then encouraged and supported to pursue their own musical interests outside of the classroom through one-to-one instrumental/vocal tuition or our wide-ranging ensemble provision; we also have seven practice rooms which pupils can use before or after school for their own private practice, or band rehearsals. We have a core of open-access ensembles and choirs which anyone can join (indeed, if you know how to hold and play a few notes on your instrument, you can play in the orchestra); these then feed in to a series of auditioned groups working at different levels. Members of the auditioned groups are expected to attend open-access rehearsals in a leadership capacity, both to support less-experienced pupils, and to consolidate their skills by helping others. In recent years a number of members of staff have also taken up instruments and it is pleasing to see them taking part in ensembles, often being helped out by a more experienced pupil.



The way in which we have constructed the KS3 scheme of learning means that pupils at the end of the course are able to access GCSE Music (using singing or keyboard for performance) without necessarily having had to pay for instrumental tuition. Some pupils in this situation have then gone on to study A level Music with us. To this end, Ripley is committed to ensuring that there is no gap in attainment between those pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding, and their peers; as such, all pupils in any of the PPR categories are eligible to receive free instrumental/vocal tuition in school and, where necessary, the loan of an instrument. Rather than waiting for pupils to show an interest, KS3 pupils on the PPR list are invited to take part in this programme and are given taster lessons on instruments to help them make an informed decision.



To stretch and challenge our most able musicians across all year groups, we currently run an 'externals list'. Pupils who are performing at a high standard are asked to have 10-minute solo or ensemble sets ready for performance at short notice; they are then selected to perform at a variety of events in the local area, often as background music for receptions or entertainment at conferences.

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