

The Drama Curriculum

The primary intention of the drama curriculum is to give all students the opportunity to engage with practical theatrical learning, key terminology and extensive performance skills. Students are introduced to a wide repertoire of practitioners, styles and genres of theatre and the curriculum is supported by a wealth of extra-curricular enrichment.

Secondary to this, the drama curriculum also focusses on the development of skills deemed desirable in further education and employment; problem solving, teamwork, public speaking and the confidence to be creative. There is a long-standing programme of extra-curricular opportunities including drama clubs, theatre trips, musical theatre performances and workshops offered to all students. These opportunities are all-inclusive and cater for students in the examination programmes and those outside of it.

KS3

Students engage with three schemes of learning across the three terms. Each lesson provides staff with loosely structured activities that can be easily cherry-picked for each individual tutor group; wherein teachers use their specialist knowledge to complete these adaptations. At the end of each scheme of learning students are formally assessed on their ability to create, perform and respond.

In the autumn term, the drama curriculum shares cross curricular links with Theology & Ethics and English. Students study DNA by Dennis Kelly, they look at extracts from the script, explore key themes through 'off-text improvisation' and hot seating activities, and begin to work with higher level thinking skills by justifying sub-text and evaluating contextual purpose. They learn about character motivation, character action and morality, and how this infers acting and performance skills.

In the spring term, the curriculum focuses on comedy and the work of Splendid Theatre in order to develop comedic techniques. Students learn about slapstick, melodrama, exaggeration and uses these forms of characterisation to explore both text and devised processes. Students learn about formations, spacing and the use of tableaux.

In the summer term, the drama curriculum shares cross curricular links with History. Students study the American 1920's, exploring and developing their devising skills as well as accent work. Students learning includes Bugsy Malone and Al Capone.

Extra-curricular

As students only have 16 hours of learning in year 9, teachers encourage those considering this subject as a GCSE option to attend out 'Acting Up club on a Wednesday 3:30-4:30pm. Teachers and sixth form students run 'Acting Up'. The club is designed to bring students from year 9 and year 10 together, giving them a more inclusive experience. This cumulates in two projects – a scripted project in the spring term that is performed to an audience – and a second project in the summer term that ties in with the MAT Performing Arts Festival in May.

KS4

Year 10

Students primary focus in year 10 is developing skills to prepare them for the devising sections of work. Therefore, students spend the opening term of year 10 developing skills, an awareness of genre and style, and building the basic learning achieved in year 9. When conducting this unit of work in the summer term, students are introduced to two or three practitioners (usually Brecht, Stanislavski and Frantic Assembly), and are given a level of personal choice over who to continue to study. Groups are mixed ability and are composed of students with this similar interest.

Students are also introduced to their study of Component 3; Interpreting Theatre (40% of qualification, examined assessment). In preparation for year 11, students introduced to their set text. In September 2023 the set text is changing to *Find Me by Olwen Wymark*. In addition to creating, performing and responding; the scheme of work explores the taboo around mental health, and provides students with many opportunities for PSHCE learning links.

Year 11

In the final GCSE year, students develop a more complete understanding of the Component 3; Interpreting Theatre. In addition to learning required for the set text, students prepare for the Section B. Students are encouraged to visit the theatre with staff, and the National Theatre Collection is used in all classrooms while we are permitted to use recorded theatre for this aspect. In recent years students have studied a vast range of theatre, and most students have two performances prepared.

Students practical focus is the Component 2; Performing from a Text. Staff ensure that text choices suit the students desired/favoured genre or style and where possible students across the year group do not study the same text. Students explore the context of the text and prepare for performance work that is to an audience of parents and staff. In recent years texts that have been prepared include *Shakers, Bouncers, Our Boys, Dumb Waiter, Macbeth, Girls like That, Effie's Burning, Mother Figure, Playhouse Creatures*.

KS5

A-Level

The theatre studies A-level course builds on the GCSE curriculum, it invites students to better acknowledge the links between theory and practice and encourages students to be bold and daring in all forms of performance. Similar in structure to the GCSE, 6th form students spend the first year of the course team building and confidence building. They are exposed to different styles and forms and begin to make more detailed connections between audience, director and actor. Lessons are a range of practical and theoretical learning opportunities.

As part of the subject content for Component 1; Theatre Workshop, students reinterpret a scripted extract in the style of a given practitioner. Students must produce a performance and a creative log that outlines and explains their process of rehearsal.

In Component 2; Text in Action (40% of the qualification) students complete two performances in front of an examiner. The first performance is a devised piece, the second is a scripted piece. These performances share themes and contextual information but differ in style and form, demonstrating the student's vast knowledge and understanding of theatre as a complete art form. Alongside this practical demonstration students provide an evaluation of their work.

Finally, in Component 3 students sit a 2hr30min written examination on three areas. In September 2025, these text areas are changing, however the current cohort student Edward Bond for Section A, Shakespeare for Section B and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime for Section C.

Professional Pathway

The skill building in this course allows students to better develop an ability to shape a performance, students are taught simple skills such as building and editing music tracks, the correct breathing technique for vocal work, but also academic skills such as Harvard Referencing.

Unit 1 requires students to build a hypothetical profile for post-18. They must respond to an advertisement and prepare interview skills. In addition to the requirements for learning, students are given the opportunity to have a headshot taken, create a showreel and prepare audition pieces.

Unit 2 offers students the understanding of building a production. Students must write a hypothetical proposal for a large-scale community event. To better prepare students for this, they practice the process by organising a year 8 workshop, DASP Literacy performances and World in Dorset Day workshops. Students also take production roles in The Limelight Production. Students, through these experiences, learn funding and budgeting skills, they learn organisational skills and understand how to put together health and safety documents.

In Unit 3, students must demonstrate an understanding of performing arts culture. They are given a statement and must produce a write up and two performances that show 'answer' to the statement. In addition to the requirements for learning, the students explore the history of theatre and the history of musical theatre. They begin to understand times of theatrical censorship and how political mood changes the tone of theatrical work.

Both Unit 3 and Unit 4 are primarily practical units, where students study repertoire and create a series of performances. As part of this learning, students are encouraged to behave like production companies. They must consider the set, costume, lighting (etc) for the work alongside the performance elements. In recent years students have studied a vast range of practitioners, chosen based on the skills of the class. These practitioners have included specialist dance, drama and music practitioners as well as musical theatre or combined arts practitioners. For example; Steven Sondheim, Splendid, Jody Sperling, William Shakespeare, The Beatles, and Bob Fosse.