

Music GCSE

Year 9: Grade 5 Theory (ABRSM)

Year 11: GCSE (AQA 8271)

The three-year GCSE course at K.E.S. is designed to enable all keen musicians to achieve a high grade. The Year 9 course builds on strengths identified during Key Stage 3 and gives students the opportunities to develop new skills; the bulk of the content and non-examined assessment will be delivered in Years 10 and 11.

The AQA GCSE in Music leads seamlessly into the AQA A level; the approaches to composition and performance are the same, and the Areas of Study continue, providing an opportunity for the best GCSE students to challenge themselves by accessing A level learning materials.

Why Learn Music?

Academic benefits

Music and mathematics are famously linked; much of music is about the manipulation of patterns. Learning the historical and cultural context of the music you are performing helps broaden a general knowledge of history and the world.

Benefits for study skills

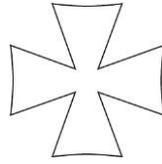
Regular practice quickly improves a student's ability at a particular piece; this means he will see a tangible link between effort and achievement.

Social benefits

All students perform in ensembles both during class and in extra-curricular activities. These opportunities contribute to team-building skills and also provide leadership opportunities for those who excel in Music.

Music for music's sake

Most crucially, the study of music helps to build a greater understanding, ability and appreciation of music which will enhance enjoyment of the subject. [This document](#) *Why Choose GCSE Music* explains this idea in more depth.



What will I study?

Year 9

The Year 9 course is highly practical in content. Learning about the musical elements through performance, listening and composing activities forms a large part of the curriculum. In addition to this, students work towards Grade 5 Theory, with the expectation that any students who do not have the qualification will take it in the Lent or Summer Term. If a student has Grade 5 Theory, they follow a mixture of advanced technical work and extension exercises when the rest of the class is working on theory. Occasionally, working towards Grade 3 Theory is a better choice for some students. Students also arrange some pieces for an ensemble of their choice as well as learn about string playing techniques.

Listening skills and ensemble performance are focused on a broad range of musical styles from Handel to musicals. At the very end of the year, the last half-term is spent playing the set works for the Western Classical Tradition Area of Study.

Year 10

The year begins with an in-depth set of practical exercises in orchestration. This is the skill of arranging music so it is playable and effective on a different set of instruments.

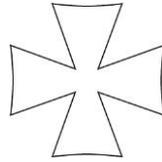
You will study two of the groups of set works: Western Classical Tradition 1650-1910 (Beethoven Symphony no. 1, 1st movement and Traditional Music (three tracks by Esperanza Spalding)).

During the year, you will compose in a number of different styles, leading up to the Free Composition coursework in the Summer Term.

Year 11

The other two groups of set works, studied in Year 11, are Popular Music and Western Classical Tradition since 1910.

There is also a Composition to a brief (set by AQA in September) and, of course, from February half-term onwards, an increasing focus on examination technique.



How will I be examined?

1: Understanding Music (*1h30m written examination, 40% of GCSE*)

Listening (68 marks)

Contextual understanding (28 marks)

2: Performing Music (*two recordings made during Year 11, 30% of GCSE*)

Solo performance (one to six minutes, 36 marks)

Ensemble performance (one to six minutes, 36 marks)

The recordings must total four minutes of performance (i.e. not including any lengthy introductions).

3: Composing Music (two compositions totalling three to four-and-a-half minutes' performance: one during Year 10, one during Year 11, 30% of GCSE)

Free Composition (36 marks, Year 10)

Composition to a Brief (36 marks, Year 11)

What are the entry requirements?

Due to the opportunities for development afforded by the course being delivered across three years rather than the national standard of two, there are no minimum requirements for entry to the course. However, students will be expected to be able to play an instrument to some degree, to have instrumental/vocal lessons throughout the course and to take an ABRSM Grade 5 Theory examination, for which tuition is provided in curriculum time, during Year 9. Students taking GCSE Music will be expected to engage fully in the extra-curricular musical life of the School.