



INSPIRE – MUSIC

Crescendo



King's High
School

Sowing Seeds, Growth and Development

Music is central to the life of King's High and Warwick Prep. Our talented department supports music across all genres from ages 3-18, and fosters creativity, excellence, inclusion and community. It does not matter whether a child has had any experience of music beforehand or is already very advanced. We will help everyone at every stage develop, nurture and expand their love and appreciation of music so that they can play or sing whatever they feel with confidence and joy.

Our aspiration is that every pupil will leave school with a continuing love of music in a variety of genres and styles. Taking part in the making of that music, either informally at home, or by playing or singing in orchestras, choirs, ensembles or stage shows, is something that expands our creativity, our communication and our humanity. The acts of listening and appreciation are also vital.

We make sure that all pupils have the chance to be immersed in the medium of music as much and as often as possible from the very beginning of their time here. The music department now has world class facilities. There is an acoustically built auditorium which can seat 144 people, which is perfect, both for small scale formal recitals and for informal concerts, presentations and workshops. Our Rehearsal Studio is another large space and is home to the Lady Susi Jeans organ, which we recently purchased (with generous donor support) from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. In addition to the technology suite, there are 2 other classrooms and 14 practice rooms.

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Academic Music and Practical Music Making in the Classroom

Classroom music is taught at every level by specialists. Pre-school and Early Years Music use musical games and song, to develop rhythm and pulse and, crucially, the children's own creative voices right from the beginning. All children are given plenty of opportunity to experience music using instruments during their time at school. In Year 2, every child works with a string instrument - violin (which can translate later to viola), cello and even mini double bass. Strings are much easier to learn when started young, so those that do catch the bug and wish to continue will have a flying start. In Year 3, every student learns a woodwind or brass instrument, giving all pupils a rounded and wide-ranging set of musical experiences to carry with them through their school life. Later, while in their first year at senior school, the Year 7s are all given the chance to learn with percussion, woodwind, brass or strings, forming class orchestras. At the senior end of the department, academic music is therefore already well grounded in its practical applications, and GCSE and A Level are popular and successful exam choices. Creativity in composition, already encouraged informally in earlier years, is supported by expert tutors and a technology suite running Sibelius and Cubase software. The performance element of the exams is similarly supported by our expert specialist instrumental teachers and accompanists.

Recent leavers have gone on to read music at leading Universities, including Oxbridge, or music performance or composition at Conservatoires. Some have gained scholarship awards, including to The Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Instrumental Music

Outside the classroom, extra instrumental and vocal lessons are offered on every instrument and genre by our outstanding team of visiting music teachers. This team are the very best in the region. They teach to a national level for organisations such as the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, the National Children's Orchestra of Great Britain and the Benedetti Foundation and most also perform with renowned orchestras, including the Halle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, or choirs, including Ex-Cathedral and Tenebrae.

Theory and aural classes are also offered to supplement music lessons and to help prepare pupils for music exams. We are a centre for hosting both Associated Board and Trinity Music exams. Our own results are outstanding. In recent years there have been many distinctions at Grade 8, while some pupils have also gained distinctions in prestigious diploma exams.

Co-curricular Music

There are many instrumental ensembles and choirs across the department.

Choirs

Singing together starts right from the earliest years and there is a choir to suit everyone. At the senior end of the school there are two chamber choirs: one for Years 7-9 and one for Year 10 and above. For advanced singers, there is the chance to join the Madrigal Choir and Foundation Chamber Choir in collaboration with the boys from Warwick School, which opens out the broader choral repertoire written for Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass.

Orchestras

There is an orchestra for Year 6 and below, and a senior school orchestra, while the more advanced orchestral players are encouraged to join the Foundation Symphony Orchestra in collaboration with Warwick School. This orchestra has recently performed at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on invitation from Music for Youth. There is also a Foundation Wind Orchestra that regularly wins awards and the newly formed Foundation String Ensemble and Foundation Percussion Ensemble, showcasing the talents of the very best musicians in these instrumental groups.

Other ensembles

In addition to the large groups there are also windbands, brass groups and jazz groups. There is also the opportunity to play in rock and pop bands or small chamber music ensembles. Chamber music is a hugely important part of music making at King's High with over 30 different chamber groups rehearsing each week led and mentored by our expert teaching staff.



Performance opportunities

During the school year there are many opportunities to perform for all ages. At the Prep School, large-scale concerts are staged each term as well as regular “Morning Melodies” for parents before school. Nursery and reception classes each put on Nativity plays and there are large scale musical productions each year for Year 1, 2 and 6.

At the senior school there are also four large-scale concerts each year held in the Warwick Hall. Solo instrumentalists can demonstrate their progress in our Musical Horizons series, while the finest performers may be offered the chance to perform a full solo recital for the public, either at St Mary’s Church in Warwick or in our fabulous new Auditorium at school. Our new Friday Live series has been a hugely popular opportunity to perform informally during lunchtimes.

In addition, there are Foundation Concerts featuring the Foundation Symphony and Wind Orchestras. Musicians also enjoy supporting the drama department in their excellent and varied musical theatre productions each year, bringing a multi-disciplinary approach to our musical creativity.

Musical highlights of the year always include The Landor Carol Service and the Service for the Commemoration of Benefactors where the school gives thanks for its wide and generous community. These events feature young and older musicians, often playing and supporting each other. Older musicians often perform in assemblies for the younger pupils, helping to foster the sense of continuous development and mutual inspiration and support.

Masterclasses, talks and concert visits

The music department also offers extra educational experiences with performance classes, masterclasses, lectures and workshops led by the very best performers, teachers and composers, including in recent years: Steve Bell, Kate Romano, Darren Bloom and Lynn Arnold. Trips to see concerts and operas feature each year, including English National Opera (London) and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (Birmingham).

Outreach to the Wider Community

The music department is constantly outward looking. We have strong collaborative links with Ex-Cathedra who work with our singers but who also work with the wider school and local community in music for wellbeing, events frequently hosted by us.

In recent years we ourselves have put on large-scale performances involving other local schools, choirs and musicians, and we are proud that musicians from the Warwickshire council rehearse in our state-of-the-art facilities. Shared experiences build bridges and make for wider friendships. With music at its heart, this will help to create alliances and shared purpose, as well as to foster the performers and audiences of the future, and so safeguard local music making.

