

Music development plan summary: Townsend Church of England School

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2024-25 & 2025-26
Date this summary was published	1 st August 2025
Date this summary will be reviewed	1 st July 2026
Name of the school music lead	Ethan Barnett
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Hazel Line
Name of local music hub	St Albans Music Service
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	

Part A: Curriculum music

At Townsend we believe Music is something that should be accessible for all, and accordingly the Key Stage 3 curriculum provides students with the knowledge and skills to appreciate and participate in music making throughout their lives, as well as preparing students for further study in Music. Learning is largely practical, with students experiencing a range of instruments and computer software. There is an emphasis on collaborative group work and independent working.

Key Stage 3

In Years 7 to 9, students receive two hours of Music education per fortnight. These are scheduled timetabled lessons, taught by the Head of Music. Teaching is focused on these three principles:

- **Listening:** developing an appreciation of musical styles from a range of eras, and how to recognise and describe musical elements, such as, dynamics, musical structure, etc;
- **Performance:** developing individual and group practical skills, first in a range of disciplines in Year 7 (singing, keyboard, guitar and drums) and then focused on one in Year 8 and 9 to develop a standard equivalent to ABRSM Grade 3 by the end of Year 9;

- **Composition:** learning how to use Apple software, such as GarageBand and score writing software Flat, to create individual and group pieces of music.

All learning is underpinned by a taught, continually developed understanding of how to read music.

Students are assessed by:

- online, by multiple-choice and open-ended questions to test understanding of music theory and listening skills;
- practical assessments for performances (individually and group);
- development of composition.

In Year 7, all students take part in the **English National Opera's programme 'Finish This...'**, where students compose some music and are entered into a national competition. As part of the programme, an opera singer comes into school to work with students and perform their work in a recording. These recordings are then submitted into the national competition and the winning compositions have their work animated and showcased online. Here is our [2025 winning entry](#).

Key Stage 4

Students in Year 10 and 11 are assessed for GCSE using the Eduqas syllabus, which focuses on testing appraising skills, performance and composition skills across a range of musical styles.

GCSE Music is assessed by:

- Appraising: 40%
- Performance: 30%
- Composition: 30%

The **Appraising** part of the syllabus is organised by Eduqas into four Areas of Study (AoS):

- AoS1: Musical Forms and Devices
- AoS2: Music for Ensemble
- AoS3: Film Music
- AoS4: Popular Music

However, the Townsend Scheme of Work for Appraising is arranged differently and is split into the musical elements, whilst referring to all Areas of Study: Dynamics, Rhythm, Tempo, Structure, Melodic devices, Instrumentation, Texture and Harmony, which are taught throughout Year 10. At the start of Year 11, students are taught how to analyse the two-set works: Toto's Africa and Bach's Badinerie. Students then embark on a programme of structured practice of listening to music and appraising what they hear, from a range of eras and according to these elements of music, with a particular emphasis on describing how Film Music evokes feelings.

Students are assessed in a written paper at the end of Year 11, listening to 8 excerpts, and responding to questions worth 12 marks each, 96 marks in total.

Performance depends on the individual development of students' practical music skills, which could be in any discipline, but could be a natural continuation of the skills developed at Key Stage 3. All students are expected to have weekly vocal or instrumental lessons, to practise regularly at home, to be involved in a musical group at school and to take performance opportunities in school (see co-curricular activities below). Students are assessed by their accuracy, technical control, and their expression and interpretation. There are three levels of difficulty: easier than standard (ABRSM Grade 3 or below), standard (ABRSM Grade 4), more difficult than standard (ABRSM grade 5+). Students are required to perform one solo and one ensemble piece for assessment, totalling 4-6 minutes.

Descriptions of assessment standards for performance can be found from page 27 [here in the specification](#).

Composition is the culmination of a students' attention to music theory and their practical ability. Students build on the technological skills developed in Key Stage 3 and write musical compositions in response to stimuli. Compositions need to show a good understanding of the musical elements, along with creativity and originality. Students are required to compose two pieces, totalling 3-6 minutes, with one in response to a brief provided by Eduqas, such as, music to accompany a film set in space. Students must provide a composing log, audio files, and an annotated score or lead sheet for submission.

Descriptions of assessment standards for composition can be found from page 43 [here in the specification](#).

Part B: Music tuition, choirs and ensembles

There are many enrichment opportunities at Townsend with a programme that is ever-growing.

St Albans Music Service provide **vocal and instrumental lessons** on site during the school day and in the evenings. Students can take lessons in a range of instruments: voice, piano, guitar, drums, and a variety of brass, woodwind and stringed instruments. These lessons are subsidised if a student is on the GCSE course in Year 10 or 11, and could be individual, paired or group lessons. Students receiving Free School Meals can apply for partially funded lessons through Hertfordshire Music Service.

During **break and lunch sessions**, students are actively encouraged to rehearse together or individually in the dedicated music block. There are five rehearsal rooms in the main music blocks, and a further seven in the main school building. All practice rooms are well-equipped.

A **recording studio** is currently being developed in one of the practice rooms. Students are being trained in how to record themselves using professional equipment.

The **school choir** rehearses weekly, practising a variety of styles of vocal ensemble pieces, ranging from choral anthems to modern musical showstoppers. The choir performs at cathedral services (see below) and involves students from Year 7 to 13. Students with exceptional singing ability have the opportunity to perform as soloists, supported by the choir.

The **school show chorus** rehearse regularly when preparing for the next performance as we always put on a musical, therefore the quality of singing in the main chorus needs to be high: clear, well-projected and enthusiastic. The most recent performance of Matilda Jr had a very strong chorus with highly passionate and fearless performers. There are also a number of solo singing parts in each production and each student is carefully trained and guided in their preparation.

There is a **school band**, made up of GCSE students, who perform popular songs at events such as Sports Day and the school's 50th anniversary celebrations. Their confidence is growing and there will be many more performances to come, and more bands to be created.

Part C: Musical performances and experiences

There are multiple opportunities to showcase talent at Townsend, and as many students as possible are encouraged to take part.

Cathedral services: Four times a year, the whole school go to St Albans Cathedral for a service (Dedication in September, Christingle in December, Ash Wednesday in February/March and Ascension Day in May). On each occasion there are musical interludes provided by our students, ranging from solo instrumental performances to worship songs performed by the school choir, to the whole of Year 7 performing with a soloist from the upper school. From the choir stalls, the choir lead the singing of hymns with their harmonies and descants, amplified by an extra team of sound engineers to ensure their sound carries through the cathedral when singing with the organ.

In the last year there has been a significant improvement in the quality of the sound and lighting equipment in our school hall and this has enabled an overall much improved level of performance. A student tech team has been well established and is continually training younger students to continue to assist to a high level in all school events.

School Show: There is an annual school show, which is a musical, and takes place normally in the Summer Term, but will move to the end of the Spring Term for 2026. Previous productions include Matilda Jr, Little Shop of Horrors, Oliver Jr, Beauty and the Beast, and School of Rock. Open auditions are held in the Autumn Term and all students are invited to audition. Parts are cast to students from all year groups, including main parts to younger students, as well as older students, depending on the needs of the musical. Where there are multiple students available to take a main role, there may be double casting, so that all have the opportunity to perform and shine.

School Talent Show: This takes place usually in the Spring Term but will move to the Summer Term for 2026. Open auditions are held and a wide variety of performers from all year groups are invited to take part, including singers (solos/duets/trios), bands, gymnasts, actors, poets and dancers.

Termly evening recitals: Every term, all students who are studying Music at GCSE take part in an evening recital, building their individual and group performance skills in a more intimate atmosphere, in a small room with cafe-style tables and chairs. It is an incredibly supportive atmosphere for performers of all abilities.

Further performance opportunities:

At every annual **Celebration Assembly** for each year group, there are student performers, either singing or playing an instrumental to the whole of their year group with parents.

Townsend takes part in the **Hertfordshire Schools Gala**, which takes place at the Royal Albert Hall in London every two years. Members of the choir join a mass choir of 1000 students and experience the most wonderful of performance opportunities in this prestigious venue.

‘Live event’ opportunities:

GCSE students have the opportunity to attend a **live orchestral performance**. Previously we have been to the Royal Festival Hall for a live introduction to the orchestra and some teaching on Appraising music.

Every year we run a couple of trips to the **theatre in the West End**. These trips are often to see a musical and take place in the evenings. Previous show trips include The Lion King and Wicked.

In the future

In the coming year we plan to make further improvements to our musical provision:

Development of a worship band: Our school chapel was opened in May 2025 and we are bringing students together to form a worship band that can lead student-led prayer and praise sessions in our chapel, and potentially in our cathedral services.

Performances during Collective Worship: Three times per week there are collective worship assemblies for combined year groups. We will be looking to have live, student-led performances whilst students enter and leave the hall.

Choir tour to Belgium: As a continuation in our development of the school choir, we plan to run a choir tour to Belgium in May 2026, with three public performances, including one at the Menin Gate, Ypres, as part of the daily remembrance service.

Further information

Townsend is home to the **St Albans Music Service**, who operate a wide range of lessons and ensembles every weekday evening and on Saturdays. Their programme of activities can be found [here](#).