



Music Development Plan 2026/27

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2026/7
Date this summary was published	September 2026
Date this summary will be reviewed	September 2027
Name of the school music lead	Mr L Chan
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Miss N Welch
Name of local music hub	Hertfordshire Music Service

This is a summary of how our school delivers Music education to students across three areas - curriculum music, co-curricular provision and musical experiences – and what changes we are planning for future years. This information is to help students and parents/carers understand what our school offers and who we work with to support our students' music education.

Part A: Curriculum Music

The Music curriculum at Ashlyns focuses on the key areas of Performing, Composing and Listening and Appraising. The curriculum is broad and varied across Key Stages 3, 4 and 5.

Key Stage 3

Music at Key Stage 3 comprises 1 lesson per week, taught in form groups in Years 7 and 8 and in mixed groups in Year 9, with topics being studied in a modular style throughout the year. Formative assessment takes place through listening activities, preliminary performances and practice compositions, with close guidance and feedback from the classroom teacher. Concepts introduced at primary level are solidified and developed further in Year 7, then revisited across Years 8 and 9 with increasing technical demand. Summative assessment for each module takes place in the form of a final performance or composition.

In Year 7, students' prior musical knowledge and experience is assessed and strengthened through topics on note value and rhythm and the pentatonic scale. These concepts are then taken further in the summer term through minimalist music. All three of these topics are composition-based using the Flat.io notation software. On keyboards, students engage with foundational harmony and keyboard technique with medieval music. These skills are taken further through topics on classical music and sea shanties, and all three keyboard topics are assessed

via paired performance. Students are directed to sing the keyboard pieces they are learning to enable them to internalise the music more effectively.

In Years 8 and 9, musical genres and traditions around the world are studied in greater depth, including topics on Cuban salsa, Indonesian gamelan, Indian classical music, Caribbean calypso and Jamaican ska, rocksteady and reggae. Students learn about the origins of modern popular music from its roots in the blues and across a variety of twentieth-century genres from rock 'n' roll to hip hop. A wider variety of instruments are used, with djembe drums, xylophones, ukuleles and a range of unpitched percussion being utilised in group performances. Year 9 students are also introduced to Soundtrap, a full digital audio workstation in which they compose EDM and film music. In the Year 9 options topic, the specifics of audio engineering is explored as students learn how to mix and balance raw multitracks.

Key Stage 4

Music at Key Stage 4 is an option and follows the OCR GCSE course. A link to the specification can be found [here](#). Music is allocated 5 hours per fortnight of lesson time.

The GCSE curriculum develops upon the three core areas of Performing, Composing and Listening and Appraising established at Key Stage 3. Area of Study 1, My Music, is worth 60% of the final grade and is entirely based on practical coursework. This consists of one solo and one ensemble performance (30% of the final grade) alongside one free choice composition and one composition to an OCR set brief (30% of the final grade). The exam (40% of the final grade) is based on four other Areas of Study: Rhythms of the World; The Concerto Through Time; Film and Video Game Music; and Conventions of Pop. Revision resources, bespoke knowledge guides, past papers and technical exercises are all freely available to students through our GCSE Revision Site, made specifically for Ashlyns students.

Students are guided through their performances with regular preliminary performance assessments, allowing the teacher to gain a detailed understanding of a student's individual ability, strengths and areas for development. Our GCSE students have regular access to any of our seven practice rooms and Live Room for rock bands, with the expectation that practising their instrument(s) becomes a regular feature of their independent study.

Compositions are completed in lesson time and in Session 6 after school. Students are given regular 1:1 feedback and guidance on each aspect of the composition process, whether that is through traditional notation software or on a digital audio workstation such as Logic Pro. Students are encouraged to compose for instruments with which they are familiar in any genre of their choosing. We introduce students to a variety of wider listening from which they can take inspiration and learn about stylistic conventions.

Key Stage 5

Key Stage 5 follows the EDUQAS A Level Specification, linked [here](#).

Music is allocated 8 hours per fortnight of lesson time, and students have 2 hours of timetabled Directed Study.

The course follows the same outline of Performing, Composing and Listening and Appraising. At A Level, students have the option to specialise in either performance or composition based on their strongest discipline, which affects the quantity and weighting of each element of coursework.

Both of these areas encourage significantly greater ambition. Students are directed to push the limits of their performing and composing capabilities with a high level of technical awareness.

The exam is based on three Areas of Study: Musical Theatre, Into the Twentieth Century and The Development of the Symphony. This involves rigorous analyses of set works, more complex melodic dictation and longer-form written responses, including an essay on a particular aspect of symphonic writing. Much like the GCSE, Ashlyns students have access to our A Level Music Revision Site, with past papers and mark schemes, exam guides and comprehensive analysis videos of the set works, made by Ashlyns teachers.

Accessibility

Accessibility and inclusion is at the heart of our music curriculum. We believe that every student should be able to freely access music and be granted the ability to take their musical ambitions further. We assess the individual needs of students within our department and adjust support as necessary to allow all students equitable access to our music curriculum in KS3, 4 & 5.

To ensure that every student can participate in performance topics, we draw upon a range of adapted resources (such as visual aids for sheet music), whilst using our own musical expertise to provide students with an appropriate role in the ensemble based on their ability. In composition topics, detailed video guides allow students to revisit key concepts and enable them to work at their own pace. Our composing software allows us to listen to, edit and provide feedback on any student's work instantly.

Part B: Extra-curricular music

Instrumental/vocal tuition is provided by the Hertfordshire Music Service, offering peripatetic lessons in all orchestral instruments, guitar and bass, singing and piano/keyboard. Prices are established by the HMS. Students taking GCSE music are given a £20 discount and students studying A Level music receive 30 minutes free tuition per week. There is additional provision for Pupil Premium students to allow any student the chance to learn an instrument, regardless of their economic situation.

At the Music Department, we pride ourselves on a rich variety of extra-curricular opportunities. This includes:

- The Ashlyns School Orchestra
- The Ashlyns School Choir
- Senior Choir (for Key Stage 4 and above)
- Funk and Soul Band
- The Mix Sessions (focused on DJ-ing)
- ASPA Crew (for learning the basics of live audio and staging)

This year we are introducing a number of student-run groups, including a wind ensemble and a percussion group.

Part C: Musical Experiences

For many years Ashlyns has had a regular programme of concerts throughout the year, including:

- Autumn, Winter and Spring Chill concerts
- The Christmas Carol Concert
- House Music (a series of lunchtime concerts in aid of the Handel House charity)
- The St Peter's Church recital (a new concert for 2026 and an event we plan on including as part of our regular yearly calendar)
- The Summer Showcase (previously the Summer Concert)
- A range of school events including Open Evening, awards evenings and our wonderful Senior Citizens' Tea Afternoons

We have also previously hosted and taken part in special events including school productions and music tours.

Our Learning Ambassadors for Music have the opportunity to teach djembe drumming to primary school students in the Berkhamsted area. This is a fantastic way for Ashlyns students to develop their leadership skills in the wider community.

In the future

In the current academic year we are launching ASPA - Ashlyns School Performing Arts - with the aim of unifying and boosting performing arts across the school. We plan on working more closely with the Drama Department to assist in their excellent productions, particularly in managing live sound. For students who prefer to stay out of the spotlight, our newly-formed ASPA Crew will afford more opportunities for behind-the-scenes work.

An exciting new opportunity for students in 2026 will be ASPA Dance. Three new dance groups - contemporary/lyrical, jazz and musical theatre, commercial/street - will be available for students of all ages and abilities. We plan on making these groups as student-led as possible, allowing for even more leadership opportunities for our performers. We have teachers from a variety of subjects who are also trained dancers, and they will oversee and guide our students in forming their routines. ASPA Dance will make use of the Dance Studio in the Sports Hall, and will have a dedicated slot in the Summer Showcase at the end of the year. We also hope to add one more dance showcase in the winter months. ASPA Dance will also be able to collaborate with some of our music groups, particularly our Funk and Soul Band, who can provide live musical accompaniment to their routines.

We also plan to introduce some more informal performance opportunities to students in the form of lunchtime concerts, making use of our new live audio equipment. As well as allowing a more accessible avenue for students who wish to perform but who are not used to a formal concert setting, we also hope this will increase the prevalence of music around the school and showcase the fantastic talent of our student cohort.