# Music development plan summary: The Sydney Russell School

## Overview

| Detail | Information |
|---|---|
| Academic year that this summary covers | 2026/27 |
| Date this summary was published | 30th September 2026 |
| Date this summary will be reviewed | 30th September 2027 |
| Name of the school music lead | Mr M Mitchell |
| Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different) | N/A |
| Name of local music hub | Barking & Dagenham Community Music Service |
| Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place) | Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST) |

## Part A: Curriculum music

This is about what we teach in lesson time, how much time is spent teaching music and any music qualifications or awards that pupils can achieve.

At The Sydney Russell School, students in all Key Stages have access to a high-quality music curriculum delivered by specialist music teachers. Students receive approximately one hour of curriculum music per week throughout Key Stages 1 to 3. At Key Stage 4, GCSE Music students receive three hours of classroom music tuition per week, and where A Level Music is running, students receive five hours of curriculum music tuition per week.

The curriculum is delivered by curriculum music specialists and is designed as a carefully sequenced spiral curriculum. It builds progressively on students' musical knowledge, understanding and skills, ensuring that learning is revisited and developed over time. The curriculum has been informed by the Model Music Curriculum and is ambitious in its design, allowing all students to make strong musical progress regardless of their starting point.

**Primary Music (Key Stages 1 and 2)**

Music learning begins in the primary phase through a curriculum that places strong emphasis on singing, musical literacy, creativity and performance. Students develop their understanding of pitch and rhythm through Kodály-inspired approaches, helping to establish strong foundations in musicianship from an early age.

Throughout the primary curriculum, students engage in a broad range of musical experiences including:

- Singing and vocal development
- Composition through improvisation and structured composing activities
- Music literacy development
- Ensemble performance skills
- World music traditions including Samba and Gamelan
- Listening and appraising activities
- Practical instrumental performance

In Year 4, all students learn the PBuzz, developing music reading, ensemble and performance skills. In Year 5, every student participates in whole-class instrumental teaching, learning an orchestral instrument as part of their curriculum music provision. Students are then given the opportunity to continue developing these skills through small-group instrumental tuition in Year 6.

**Secondary Music (Key Stage 3)**

In Year 7, all students participate in the MiSST (Music in Secondary Schools Trust) Programme. Through this unique partnership, every student is provided with an orchestral instrument as part of their curriculum music lessons. Students learn either the trumpet, flute, clarinet or violin and receive weekly whole-class instrumental tuition supported by specialist MiSST tutors alongside curriculum music staff.

During the programme, students develop instrumental technique, music literacy, ensemble skills and performance confidence. At the end of Year 7, students are invited to continue learning their instrument as Music Scholars. Students who take up this opportunity can retain the use of their instrument from Year 8 onwards, attend additional ensembles and receive further tuition.

In Year 8, students build upon the musicianship and notation skills developed through the MiSST programme by applying them to keyboard performance. Students then study a range of practical and theoretical topics including:

- Keyboard Skills
- Samba
- Blues
- Band Skills and Ensemble Performance

In Year 9, students further develop their understanding through units including:

- West African Drumming
- Minimalism
- Chord Sequence & Melody Composition
- Film Music

Across Key Stage 3, students continue to develop the three key strands of performing, composing and appraising while gaining experience of a diverse range of musical styles, traditions and cultures.

**Key Stage 4**

Students may choose to study Edexcel GCSE Music in Years 10 and 11. The course develops students' skills as performers, composers and listeners through a range of practical and academic musical experiences. Students complete assessed performances, original compositions and study a range of set works and wider listening topics.

GCSE Music remains a popular option choice and students achieve strong outcomes through a combination of classroom learning, practical music-making and extra-curricular enrichment opportunities. The school's GCSE Music grades have been consistently above the national average for some years now.

**Key Stage 5**

A Level Music is offered as part of the Sixth Form curriculum. Students develop advanced skills in performance, composition, analysis and musical understanding, preparing them for higher education pathways, conservatoire study and careers within the creative industries.

**Inclusion**

The music curriculum is fully inclusive and accessible to all students. Adaptations are made where appropriate to support students with SEND and additional needs, ensuring every student can participate meaningfully in performing, composing and listening activities. Our ARP receives one hour of music a week, delivered by a specialist music teacher.

The department works closely with Barking and Dagenham Community Music Service and Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST) to enhance curriculum provision through instrumental tuition, instrument loans, ensemble opportunities and performance experiences.

## Part B: Co-curricular music

This is about opportunities for pupils to sing and play music, outside of lesson time, including choirs, ensembles and bands, and how pupils can make progress in music beyond the core curriculum.

The Sydney Russell School offers an extensive and inclusive co-curricular music programme which is available to students across all year groups. The programme is designed to complement the curriculum, support musical progression and provide regular opportunities for students to develop their performance skills, confidence and enjoyment of music.

All school music ensembles are provided free of charge and are led by specialist music staff. Rehearsals take place before school, during form time and after school to ensure students can access opportunities at different points throughout the week.

The school's ensemble provision includes:

- Whole School Choir
- Boys' Barbershop Choir

- Chamber Choir
- Symphony Orchestra
- Clarinet Ensemble
- Flute Ensemble
- Brass Band
- Junior String Ensemble
- Senior String Ensemble
- Percussion Ensemble
- Pop and Rock Bands

Students are encouraged to participate in one or more ensembles, with many progressing through the various groups as their musical skills develop. The ensemble programme enables students to develop their technical ability, musicianship, teamwork and leadership skills while fostering a strong musical community across the school.

The Music Department is supported by a team of specialist peripatetic music teachers who contribute to ensemble rehearsals, curriculum lessons and instrumental tuition. Some teachers are employed directly by the school, while others work in partnership with the Barking and Dagenham Community Music Service.

Over 120 students currently receive instrumental or vocal tuition through the school's peripatetic programme. Tuition is available on a wide range of instruments, including:

- Piano
- Guitar
- Drums
- Strings
- Brass
- Woodwind
- Voice

Instrumental lessons are provided free of charge for students who are eligible for Pupil Premium funding and for students studying GCSE Music or A Level Music. Students in Years 7 to 9 who access additional tuition contribute through a subsidised parental contribution.

Students are able to rehearse independently before school, during break times and after school using the department's practice rooms, which operate through a fair booking system. Many students also create and lead their own bands and informal ensembles, promoting musical independence and encouraging friendships across different year groups.

Through our partnership with the Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST), students who continue learning their orchestral instruments beyond Year 7 can access additional ensemble opportunities and musical development pathways as part of the school's Music Scholar programme.

The school is committed to ensuring that financial circumstances do not prevent participation, and the vast majority of co-curricular music opportunities are available free of charge to students.

## Part C: Musical experiences

This is about all the other musical events and opportunities that we organise, such as singing in assembly, concerts and shows, and trips to professional concerts.

The Sydney Russell School provides a wide range of musical experiences to enrich students' musical education beyond regular curriculum lessons and ensemble rehearsals. These experiences are designed to raise aspirations, broaden musical horizons and enable students to engage with professional musicians, high-quality performances and collaborative projects.

The school stages a large-scale musical production each year, involving students from across multiple year groups. Students participate as performers, musicians, technical crew and production assistants, developing their skills through an extended rehearsal process and public performances.

Students also have regular opportunities to perform throughout the academic year. These include:

- Two major Music Showcase Concerts each year
- Fringe Festival performances in the Autumn Term
- GlastNOTbury Festival performances in the Summer Term
- School celebration events and special occasions
- Community performances and collaborative concerts
- 3 Album releases each year

Through our partnership with the Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST), students access a range of additional enrichment opportunities free of charge. These include:

- MiSST Saturday Music School in central London
- Large-scale orchestral performances
- Massed ensemble events with students from partner schools
- Annual residential music courses
- Workshops and masterclasses led by music professionals

Students regularly take part in collaborative music projects with other schools and organisations, allowing them to perform in larger ensembles and experience music-making on a wider scale.

The department has established partnerships with a range of prestigious arts organisations. Students have opportunities to participate in programmes delivered by organisations such as the Royal Academy of Music Junior Musical Theatre programme. A number of students attend specialist Saturday provision to further develop their musical theatre and performance skills.

Throughout the year, professional musicians and ensembles visit the school to deliver performances, workshops and masterclasses. Previous and upcoming projects have included collaborations with professional military bands, orchestral musicians and composers, providing students with first-hand experience of careers and pathways within the music profession.

Students also participate in composition projects with professional composers. Through initiatives such as the We Compose project, students work alongside industry professionals to create original compositions which are then rehearsed and performed by professional musicians.

The majority of enrichment opportunities, workshops, concerts, residentials and partnership activities are provided free of charge. Where there is a cost to families, this is usually limited to occasional theatre visits and concert trips. For example, students have the opportunity to attend Royal Opera House schools' matinee performances, where heavily discounted education tickets are available through the school and a parental contribution is requested.

Through this rich programme of performances, partnerships, workshops, projects and cultural experiences, students are given regular opportunities to engage with music beyond the classroom and develop as confident, well-rounded musicians.

## In the future

This is about what the school is planning for subsequent years.

The Sydney Russell School is currently in a very strong position and is proud to be recognised as a lead school within the East London Music Alliance. We remain committed to sustaining our ambitious, inclusive and high-quality music provision across the curriculum, co-curricular programme and wider musical experiences.

Over the coming years, our priority is to maintain and further strengthen the opportunities already available to students, ensuring that every young person continues to have access to excellent music education, high-quality ensemble experiences and specialist instrumental tuition.

As a lead school for music, we also aim to further develop partnerships with local schools, music organisations and community groups, sharing expertise and supporting the growth of music education across the wider area. We will continue to explore opportunities for collaboration, joint performances and professional development that benefit both students and staff.

In addition, we will seek to increase the number of meaningful musical encounters available to students, particularly those linked to careers within the creative and cultural industries. This will include strengthening connections with professional musicians, composers, performers, educators and arts organisations, enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse pathways available within the music profession.

Through these developments, we aim to ensure that as many young people as possible can access, participate in and succeed through high-quality music-making, both within The Sydney Russell School and across the wider community.