

The Drama Curriculum

The primary intention of the drama curriculum is to give all students the opportunity to engage with practical theatrical learning, key terminology and extensive performance skills. Students are introduced to a wide repertoire of practitioners, styles and genres of theatre and the curriculum is supported by a wealth of extra-curricular enrichment. Secondary to this, the drama curriculum also focusses on the development of skills deemed desirable in further education and employment; problem solving, team work, public speaking and the confidence to be creative.

There is a long-standing programme of extra-curricular opportunities including drama clubs, theatre trips, musical theatre performances and workshops offered to all students. These opportunities are all-inclusive and cater for students in the examination programmes and those outside of it.

KS3

Students engage with three schemes of learning across the three terms. Each lesson provides staff with loosely structured activities that can be easily cherry-picked for each individual tutor group; wherein teachers use their specialist knowledge to complete these adaptations. At the end of each scheme of learning students are formally assessed on their ability to create, perform and respond.

In the winter term the drama curriculum shares cross curricular links with Geography. Students look at the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in drama, while learning about volcanos in their geography lessons. Lessons use dramatic techniques such as tableaux, flashbacks and improvised scenes to develop knowledge of Roman history, explore status, social purpose and culture as well as look at the physics of the eruption through narration, the use of set and props, and soundscapes.

In the spring term, the drama curriculum shares cross curricular links with English. This unit also gives students a more dedicated drama GCSE experience, and introduces them to what GCSE drama may be like. This coincides with the beginning of the year 9 options process and parents evening. As of 2022, students study *DNA by Dennis Kelly*, they look at extracts from the script, explore key themes through 'off-text improvisation' and hot seating activities, and begin to work with higher level thinking skills by justifying sub-text and evaluating contextual purpose. They learn about character motivation, and how this informs acting and performance skills.

In the summer term, the drama curriculum shares cross curricular links with History. Students study the American 1920's.

Extra-curricular

Teachers and sixth form students run 'Drama Stars'. The club is designed to bring students from year 8 and year 9 together, giving them a more inclusive experience. The club acts as a transition project as well as a successful performing arts club. In the winter term students undergo weekly workshops that are designed to build confidence, teambuilding and creativity. Students learn through games and short weekly activities that are often stand-alone sessions. In the spring term students begin to develop a showcase evening, and work on a longer project. The 6th form leaders choose the project (in 2020 students began *The Fairytale Courtroom* and this year, 2022 students are devising a Titanic themed Whodunnit). In the summer term students work towards *The Limelight Production*.

6th form student leaders and mentors also have the opportunity to partake in rehearsals and workshops in feeder schools. Department links with St Osmunds and DMS have led to students supporting in rehearsals for *The Lion King* and running workshops on *The Boy in The Striped Pj's*.

KS4

Year 10

Students primary focus in year 10 is developing skills in order to prepare them for the devising sections of work. Therefore, students spend the opening term of year 10 developing skills, an awareness of genre and style, and building the basic learning achieved in year 9.

When conducting this unit of work in the summer term, students are introduced to two or three practitioners (usually Brecht, Stanislavski and Frantic Assembly), and are given a level of personal choice over who to continue to study. Groups are mixed ability and are composed of students with this similar interest.

In addition to this student are introduced to their study of Component 3; Interpreting Theatre (40% of qualification, examined assessment). In preparation for year 11, students introduced to their set text. In September 2023 the set text is changing to *Find Me by Olwen Wymark*. In addition to creating, performing and responding; the scheme of work explores the taboo around mental health, and provides students with many opportunities for PSHCE learning links.

Year 11

In the final GCSE year, students develop a more complete understanding of the Component 3; Interpreting Theatre. In addition to learning required for the set text, students prepare for the Section B. Students are encouraged to visit the theatre with staff, and the National Theatre Collection is used in all classrooms while we are permitted to use recorded theatre for this aspect. In recent years students have studied a vast range of theatre and most students have two performances prepared. Past theatre trips include; *Twelfth Night*, *Midsummer Nights Dream*, *The Woman in Black*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, *Our House*, *Frankenstein*. Students are invited to join trips to Poole Lighthouse, Southampton Mayflower Theatre, Salisbury Playhouse and Bath Theatre Royal.

Students practical focus is the Component 2; Performing from a Text. Staff ensure that text choices suit the students desired/favoured genre or style and where possible students across the year group do not study the same text. Students explore the context of the text and prepare for performance work that is to an audience of parents and staff. In recent years texts that have been prepared include; *Shakers*, *Bouncers*, *Our Boys*, *Dumb Waiter*, *Macbeth*, *Girls like That*, *Effie's Burning*, *Mother Figure*, *Playhouse Creatures*.

Extra-curricular

'Radio Club', a performance company of year 10 and 11 students who prepare performances using their vocal skills. This development of voice work for performance is indicative for the success of Component 2 where students have to bring complex text to life. The club prepare stories for KS1 and KS2 students in first schools across DASP.

'Acting Up Rep Company', a performance company open to Year 11 and 12 students. In the winter term students take part in workshops that develop their understanding of theatre outside of the curriculum offerings. In the spring term students prepare Theatre in Education performances and workshops. which (in partnership with DMS) are shown to Year 8 and Year 9 students. The club is disbanded for the summer term when students in year 11 turn to examination preparation/study leave and students in year 12 become part of the 6th Form Rep Company (see below).

KS5

A-Level

The theatre studies A-level course builds on the GCSE curriculum, it invites students to better acknowledge the links between theory and practice and encourages students to be bold and daring in all forms of performance. Similar in structure to the GCSE, 6th form students spend the first year of the course team building and confidence building. They are exposed to different styles and forms including Total Theatre, Shakespearian Theatre and begin to make more detailed connections between audience, director and actor. As part of the subject content for Component 1; Drama and Theatre, students explore themes of romance, deception and honour in *Much Ado About Nothing* and existentialism, Capitalism and oppression in *Metamorphosis*.

Although students perform almost every lesson, there are two major performance elements in the course. Component 2; Creating Original Drama students devise their own work using a practitioner as a main influence. Students are given a choice of three practitioners, which change yearly based on the students experience and preferences. In the last few years student choices have included; *Frantic Assembly*, *Kneehigh Theatre*, *Alecky Blythe*, *Complicite Theatre*, *David Mamet* and *Artaud*. Students compose their start point based on a theme, and have explored elements such as grief, mental illness, sexual deviance and totalitarianism. Students perform this work to an audience, and this experience is delivered in a manner that encourage students to think of themselves as separate production companies who must consider elements outside of acting and performing. For example, students are taught how to apply technical cues to their work.

In year 13, while building examination technique for Component 1, students complete Component 3; Making Theatre. This module requires students to complete three performances demonstrating different theoretical influences. Students, again, have a choice of practitioner and in recent years the department have used; *Deborah Warner*, *John Godber*, *Headlong Theatre* and *DV8 Theatre*. Students explore a range of texts suitable for their practitioner. Each of the texts are interesting in context from either a historical or social area and some examples include; *Saved by Edward Bond*, *The Glass Menagerie* by *Tennessee Williams*, and *Medea* by *Euripides*. Students, guided by staff, are encouraged to research their own texts for performance.

Professional Pathway

The skill building in this course allows students to better develop an ability to shape a performance, students are taught simple skills such as building and editing music tracks, the correct breathing technique for vocal work, but also academic skills such as Harvard Referencing.

Unit 1 requires students to build a hypothetical profile for post-18. They must respond to an advertisement and prepare interview skills. In addition to the requirements for learning, students are given the opportunity to have a headshot taken, create a showreel and prepare audition pieces.

Unit 2 offers students the understanding of building a production. Students must write a hypothetical proposal for a large-scale community event. In order to better prepare students for this, they practice the process by organising a year 8 workshop, DASP Literacy performances and World in Dorset Day workshops. Students also take production roles in *The Limelight Production*. Students, through these experiences, learn funding and budgeting skills, they learn organisational skills and understand how to put together health and safety documents.

In Unit 3, students must demonstrate an understanding of performing arts culture. They are given a statement and must produce a write up and two performances that show 'answer' to the statement.

In addition to the requirements for learning, the students explore the history of theatre and the history of musical theatre. They begin to understand times of theatrical censorship and how political mood changes the tone of theatrical work.

Both Unit 8 and Unit 4 are primarily practical units, where students study repertoire and create a series of performances. As part of this learning, students are encouraged to behave like production companies. They must consider the set, costume, lighting (etc) for the work alongside the performance elements. In recent years students have studied a vast range of practitioners, chosen based on the skills of the class. These practitioners have included specialist dance, drama and music practitioners as well as musical theatre or combined arts practitioners. For example; *Steven Sondheim, Splendid, Jody Sperling, William Shakespeare, The Beatles, and Bob Fosse.*

Extra-curricular

In addition to the 'Acting Up Rep Company' (see above), we have a Year 13 Rep Company started in 2021. The students form a production company and are treated as if they are undergraduate students. They perform adaptations of classical work. Students learn stage management, technical and design skills as well as all having performance roles.

There is also a Wednesday morning audition club for year 12 and year 13 students. The club runs from 8am and is designed to teach students how to successfully audition for University, National Youth Theatre and any other pursuits. During these classes' students learn discipline, how to manage unseen texts, how to perfect a speech for a panel and how to interview well. The club's early start is a topic of conversation, opening students to the realisation that should they be successful applicants their university day is likely to start even earlier and run even longer. This teaches students how to 'have a brand'.