

Music development plan summary: St Thomas the Apostle School and Sixth Form College

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2026-2027
Date this summary was published	September 2026
Date this summary will be reviewed	September 2027
Name of the school music lead	Mrs C McKnight
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Mr S Parratt
Name of local music hub	Southwark
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	Trinity Laban Restore the Music Modulo, Orchestras for All

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

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.

Every student in Key Stage 3 at St Thomas the Apostle School receives a weekly timetabled music lesson. This is taught in classes that are broadly ability-based, allowing the teacher to cater to and challenge all. The department is experienced and have deep expertise in a number of curriculum areas. It is acknowledged that with students arriving at STAC from over 60 primary schools, prior experience, knowledge and skills in music will vary. However, the Key Stage 3 curriculum is informed by the model music curriculum (March 2021) and aims to give students as broad a possible experience without sacrificing the need for deep knowledge and understanding. Students have the opportunity to learn instruments in a whole-class setting, including Latin percussion, djembe drums and keyboard technique. Students make use of the latest technology to compose music in varying styles, including Afrobeats, Minimalism

and EDM. Resourcing is excellent, with every student having access to their own workstation with the latest Apple Mac software (Logic Pro X), fully updated in 2025.

Beyond Key Stage 3, there are two pathways available for students to take. GCSE Music is a route which allows students to continue as STAC Music Scholars into Key Stage 4, with highly subsidised 1:1 lessons. Through these lessons, students are encouraged to take performance exams which (in the higher grades) also award UCAS points for favourable University entry. Vocational Music is a course which specialises in either performing or composing using technology and is a popular route for students. Results from both courses in summer 2026 showed exceptional progress, with a number of students achieving Grade 9 or Level 2 Distinction. All students receiving tuition are expected to contribute to and benefit from an ensemble.

At Key Stage 5, students have progressed to courses internally and externally. In STAC Sixth Form there is the option to take A Level Music, and for those wishing to be involved more informally there is a Sixth Form Choir, a Jazz Band and the opportunity to join any of the music clubs, including our annual school musical. Sixth form students often take a leading role in the department, assisting with ensembles and mentoring younger students.

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 STAC Music Scholars programme allows students to continue instrumental/vocal tuition they may have received in primary school, and invites students who have not previously had the opportunity to apply. We work with a talented team of 12 specialist teachers who teach a range of instruments and styles from band and contemporary to classical. Our lessons are heavily subsidised by the school so represent quality teaching at a discounted price to families.

Beyond individual tuition all Key Stage 3 students have the opportunity to join Gospel Choir. The 'Band project' gives every Year 7 student the opportunity to learn a band instrument of their choice (electric guitar, bass guitar, drums, vocals or keys) as part of a small group tuition project. They will then be able to compete in our 'Battle of the Bands' in July which is open to all year groups and a very popular event. Students from every year group can also opt in to the annual school production which involves both performance and technical roles.

There are larger ensemble opportunities for every instrumentalist (STAC scholar) such as Big Band, Orchestra and String Orchestra. The year culminates in the 'STAC Music

Scholar Recitals' concerts; a programme of 6 small concerts that allow each student the chance to perform as a soloist.

These experiences beyond the classroom consolidate and extend learning effectively, and give students the 360 degree experience a music education should by developing interpersonal skills, communication and independence. In addition to music staff, students see staff from across the school involve themselves in the department.

Students have access at lunchtime, before and after school to a large, modern suite of practice spaces, equipped with pianos, drum kits and band instruments. There are always staff on hand to assist, but equally students are encouraged to make music independently.

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.

At STAC we provide opportunities to perform throughout the school calendar. Our big events are our Christmas Carol Service, Summer concert and yearly school musical production, both which feature all year groups. We also provide music for every event in school, from art shows to charities week, meaning that many students will have a platform to play. Any student can enter Battle of the Bands which pits our musicians against each other in a contest and allows them to be creative with their performance.

As a Catholic faith school, we have regular masses that feature all school singing and solo or group performances, culminating in the Christmas Carol service. Daily assemblies either feature a solo or group performer, or music composed by students.

Our Gospel choir regularly undertakes external performances and we have been welcomed in venues in major European cities when we go 'on tour'. We regularly perform for charity and primary schools.

There are strong links with charity Restore the Music and the outstanding services they provide, such as a masterclass at Steinway Hall for the piano scholars. We also work directly with Modulo, Orchestras for all, to provide opportunities for large group music making.

We organise regular concert trips for different year groups, from year 7 to 6th formers most recently to the Royal Albert Hall and Cadogan Hall.

In the future

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

Our aim is provide as much inclusive practical music for as many students as possible, with Band project developing this aim. New ensembles are planned for the future such as Steel Pans. Our curriculum is under constant review so it remains relevant and challenging to all students.

We plan to celebrate and challenge our instrumental students (music scholars) with extra opportunities through the school year.

Further information (optional)

We work closely with the following partners: Trinity Laban / The Multi-story orchestra / Odyssey Orchestra / Southwark Music service / Restore the Music / Kinetika Bloco / Modulo, Orchestras for all.