

Music development plan summary: Ely College

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2026-27
Date this summary was published	September 2026
Date this summary will be reviewed	September 2027
Name of the school music lead	Kate Arnold
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music (if different)	Josh Blunt
Name of local music hub	Cambridgeshire Music
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	

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.

KS3 Music:

Pupils receive one lesson per week for music in the curriculum.

Year 7 topics include: Voice and Musicals, Hip Hop and Rap, Keyboard Skills 1, Rhythm 1, Ukulele Skills and Pentatonic Composition.

Year 8 topics include: Hamilton, Rhythm 2, Music from Around the World, Keyboards 2, Songwriting and EDM.

These units are designed to provide students with a range of practical and compositional skill, supported with key terminology, that is in accordance with the National Curriculum and is built sequentially to ensure that students can access music effectively at KS4. Students learn the keyboard, ukulele, percussion such as djembe drums and how to use music technology software.

KS4 Music:

Pupils receive four lessons a fortnight in Year 9 and five lessons in Year 10 and Year 11. The curriculum is designed sequentially to build skills required in Year 11. Year 9 particularly is used as a platform to explore composition and music technology in a way that upskills students to help them achieve success in NEA composition coursework later in the course.

Year 9 topics include: Musical Elements, Music Through the Decades, Basslines, Chords and Riffs, Melodic Development, Free Choice Composition, Music Through the Centuries.

These schemes are designed to provide students with an opportunity to embed and rehearse key terminology that is essential for progress in Year 10 and Year 11, give a broad understanding of the history of music and how styles have developed and to build competence using software to compose music. Melodic development is a particular focus due to the need to show the development of musical ideas in NEA coursework, something we aim to encourage through a unit exploring how melodic motifs can be extended, altered and developed. These units also have integrated practical activities, such as a performance of a piece of music from each decade in 'Music Through the Decades' to improve students' ensemble and performance skills.

Year 10 topics include: Area of Study 5 (Conventions of Pop), Area of Study 4 (Film Music, Free Choice Composition, Area of Study 2 (Concerto Through Time), Free Choice Composition. In Year 10 the GCSE content is begun, and this helps to reinforce and rehearse the terminology and skills covered in Year 9 Music. Composition and performance skills are embedded throughout each unit, and also through draft submissions of NEA coursework.

Year 11 topics include: Area of Study 3 (Rhythms of the World), Set Brief Composition, Revision of all Areas of Study. In Year 11 we focus on the NEA coursework, using all the skills students have been building over Year 9 and 10 to complete composition and performance coursework. We also embed time to rehearse and retrieve information from all areas of study and to practice exam technique. Year 11 composition is supported by an after-school composition clinic, delivered by teaching staff to encourage their completion of NEA coursework to a high standard.

KS5 Music Tech:

Across the two-year course, students cover Components 1-4, focusing initially on learning the skills to work in Logic Pro X, the main software used for the course. Students practice their mixing and mastering skills and learn to record multi-tracked recordings in advance of their Component 1 coursework (a multi-track recording) in Year 13. Similarly, students use sampling, synthesis and mastering in Logic to rehearse the skills for their Component 2 coursework (a tech-based composition) in Year 13. Listening and analysis papers Component 3 and 4 are prepared for by developing listening skills and use of key terminology to describe the use of music

technology across many various styles of music, learning how the use of technology has changed from the 1950s to the present day.

Graded Music Exams:

All students have the opportunity to complete graded exams with peripatetic teachers should they wish to have lessons in school. We have over 200 students taking part in instrumental lessons at Ely College, supported by a fantastic team of peripatetic teachers, many of whom encourage our students to undertake instrumental grades.

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.

Music Tuition:

We have a team of nine visiting peripatetic teachers who cover: piano, electric guitar, bass guitar, classical guitar, voice, drums, brass, strings and woodwind. Over 200 students partake in instrumental lessons and many complete graded exams as part of this provision. The majority of this tuition happens on a one-to-one basis, with some group lessons for younger students learning guitar, brass or woodwind instruments. We have regularly run small-group trial lesson schemes through our peripatetic teachers for students who are looking to learn a new instrument, particularly encouraging uptake of orchestral instruments such as brass or string instruments. Participation in these starter sessions is funded by the music department to give students an opportunity to experience playing an instrument and to discover whether this is something they might like to continue in the future. Hiring instruments for this has been made possible through Cambridgeshire Music, who are able to provide instrument loans to schools which the department can fund. The instrumental starter lessons have been an effective method of increasing instrumental uptake. We have also been able to secure funding for many Pupil Premium students who have been interested in having music lessons, particularly supporting those who are taking music as a GCSE option to facilitate their success in the performance components of the course.

Extra-curricular Ensembles:

We run many extra-curricular ensembles that provide opportunities for students to engage with music outside the classroom and take part in concert opportunities both in and out of school. Many groups are led by Ely College staff: Chamber Choir, Junior Band, School Choir; and some are led by peripatetic teachers who specialise in the

instrument: Guitar Group, String Ensemble and Brass Ensemble. These ensembles are open to students across all year groups and the range of ensembles available caters from beginners through to highly experienced players. All our ensembles have many opportunities to perform throughout the year, including two whole-school concerts, the Ely Schools Music Festival, the Meridian Trust Arts Festival, Ely Arts Festival, our Carol Service at Ely Cathedral and many more. Further extra-curricular opportunities are available to our students through our partnership with Cambridgeshire Music, such as the Saturday music centre and the beginner's music centre on a Tuesday evening, and these groups also perform throughout the year. Cambridgeshire Music also organise Open Mic nights, Folk Music workshops and many other ensemble opportunities that are students are encouraged to participate in. This year, Chamber Choir are engaging in multiple external activities because of their growing audience. This includes an evening concert at St Peter's Church in Ely, a trip to New College Oxford to sing evensong joint with the choir there, and a trip to Cadogan Hall in London to perform as part of a concert led by a local composer, Susannah Self.

Music Outside the Curriculum:

In addition to staff-led extra-curricular ensembles, students are encouraged to independently explore their music making within the department. This is facilitated through the booking of practice rooms at lunchtimes and after school, which sees many students forming bands together and rehearsing weekly. Many of these groups sign up to perform in our music department concerts, which take place twice a year and provide an opportunity for students to showcase their performances. Students also choose to book practice rooms individually or in pairs for instrumental practice and to enjoy making music at lunchtime.

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.

Concert Opportunities:

Students have many opportunities to perform throughout the year including:

- Two concerts held at school (one for ensembles in November and one for ensembles and soloists in May) that are themed e.g. Musicals, Film music, 80s music, Music from Around the World. Sign up is available to all students.

- Ely Schools Music Festival – an opportunity for our ensembles to showcase their playing in the community. Brass ensemble and String ensemble took part in 2025.
- Choral evensong opportunities for Chamber Choir. Chamber Choir sung evensong at Peterhouse College Cambridge in November 2024 and Ely Cathedral in June 2025. The choir are performed a lunchtime concert at Ely Cathedral in March 2026 and will do again in 2027. The choir will also perform at St. Peter's Church Ely, Cadogan Hall in London and New College Oxford.
- Whole-school annual carol service at Ely Cathedral. Chamber Choir and School Choir perform and Year 7 students are invited to perform a carol at the event.
- Community performances for Ely Events. Big Band performed at the Ely Cathedral Christmas Fari 2025. Guitar Group perform annually at in Ely Market Square for Foodie Friday in June as part of the Ely Arts Festival. Chamber Choir performed as part of the Gabrielli Roar project in November 2024. Chamber Choir have previously performed at the Ely Hero Awards and at a local care home. Big Band took part in the Ely Arts Festival Junior Showcase in June 2026.
- Chamber Choir often perform an additional carol service at Great St. Mary's Church in Cambridge for the Addenbrooke's Kidney Patients Association. This began in 2024 and we have been invited back to perform in December 2025.
- School Choir have been invited in December 2026 to perform as part of Prime Brass' Christmas Concert, which has the theme of Christmas music from around the world.
- Ely Arts Festival. Students can perform in the choir as part of the final night of the festival. There is also an open mic night that many of our students signed up for.
- Meridian Trust Arts Festival. Our singers and instrumentalists have been involved annually in the Meridian Trust arts festival, performing alongside schools across the trust.
- Year 11 music students have previously taken their instruments to our trust primary schools to do assemblies for the students there, showcasing their instruments and playing a piece for them.
- Chamber Choir are due to perform in the school celebration assemblies for the first time in December 2025. They have been invited to do this again in December 2026.

Music Trips:

We also value opportunities for students to experience hearing live music outside of school and have previously run the following trips:

- Trips to musicals, e.g. Year 8 trip to Hamilton on the West End.

- KS5 trips to instrumental concert, e.g. Year 13 trip to see the Aurora orchestra play Beethoven Symphony No. 3 at the Apex in Bury St. Edmunds and Marriage of Figaro opera at Theatre Royal in Norwich.
- KS4 trips to instrumental concerts linked to the curriculum, e.g. Year 9-11 trip to see a Film Music concert at Ely Cathedral, Y10-11 trip to hear Baroque music in Trinity College Chapel.
- Chamber Choir trip to Kings College Carol Service rehearsal, which is happening again in December 2026.
- Musical experiences have also happened in the form of visiting musicians organised by the Trust, such as workshop days. These have included Indian Classical Music and Baroque musicians and have been available to KS4 GCSE students and KS5 students.

Sign up for these trips has been voluntary. Pupil Premium students are supported in attending these trips through funding.

In the future

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

Future Curriculum Plans:

We have strengthened the Year 9 curriculum for 2026-27, which will now be implemented. This will involve approaching vocabulary in lots of different ways to rehearse and retrieve, including lots of work around using the vocabulary in relation to a listening example, supported with sentence frameworks where students might need additional support.

We are also looking to further increase the amount of composition opportunities through the KS3 curriculum to strengthen students' skills at KS4. This is the most challenging element of the GCSE course for most students, so exploring this further and embedding the skills earlier in the curriculum explicitly will likely help to increase students' confidence when composing.

In order to make the composition element of the GCSE course more accessible, we are looking to trial new strategies for students to understand how to create a musically stylish piece. This will involve trialling an 'ideas board' for students and staff to collaborate on what they like about pre-existing music and where influences can be incorporated into new compositions.

Homework is being further embedded at KS4 with the use of 'ZigZag' resources to provide students with an opportunity to rehearse exam style questions consistently throughout the year. This is with a view to strengthening exam technique and the writing style of long-answer questions.

Future Extra-curricular Plans:

We are currently aiming to expand our ensembles to include a wider range of our students and provide something for all, from beginner players to advanced players. This will be targeted through the Year 7 opportunity at the Carol Service as a first step, with a view to build in another opportunity during the year.

Future Plans for Musical Experiences:

We would like to integrate more frequent concert experiences for our students, particularly at KS4. It is highly valuable for students to see live performances of a wide variety of styles, particularly to support with the identification of musical instruments if students have not experienced playing orchestral music themselves.