

Case study:

South Wilts Grammar School



A secondary school whose thriving music department has an impressive array of co-curricular music activities

Music Cluster: Salisbury and Wilton

South Wilts Grammar School is a selective grammar school in Salisbury for pupils aged 11 to 18. Originally a girls' school, it began admitting boys into the sixth form in 2020. In 2011 the school became an academy in a single-academy trust. There are currently 1148 pupils on roll.

The music department is led by Head of Music Julian Fagan-King and supported by two other music specialists: Amy McGuinness (Assistant Headteacher) and Helen Timperley, as well as a Music Administrator, Alexandra Raworth.

How is this school addressing the 7 key features of high-quality music provision outlined in the National Plan for Music Education?

1 Timetabled curriculum music of at least one hour each week of the school year for key stages 1–3

As part of South Wilts Grammar School's commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum, all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have a weekly curriculum music lesson lasting 75 minutes. This teaching is shared by the Head of Music and two other specialist teachers and follows a bespoke curriculum that supports the progression of skills through the exploration of a variety of musical styles, genres and traditions.

The musical experiences of pupils before they start Year 7 vary hugely, with some already having achieved very high standards in vocal or instrumental learning. The curriculum teaching therefore is carefully differentiated to provide extra challenge for more accomplished musicians whilst still being robust and relevant for those with less musical experience.

2 Access to lessons across a range of instruments, and voice

South Wilts Grammar School has 19 peripatetic teachers who provide lessons in a wide range of disciplines: woodwind (flute, clarinet, oboe, saxophone, bassoon), brass (trumpet, cornet, French horn, trombone, tuba), strings (violin, viola, cello, double bass), guitar (including classical, acoustic, electric and bass), piano, drum-kit, and voice. The school has recently expanded the range of contemporary instruments and styles on offer, which has increased both the number of pupils taking vocal or instrumental lessons and the number opting to study music at GCSE.



Peripatetic teachers work as self-employed staff and some are Wiltshire Music Connect Associates. Pupils have weekly 30-minute lessons during the school day on a rotating timetable. Parents pay for these lessons, with Pupil Premium funding used to subsidise lessons for those who are eligible.

Beginners follow a broad vocal or instrumental curriculum before being encouraged to consider a specialism at an appropriate stage. For example, after a year or two of singing lessons they can decide whether to focus on classical singing, pop, or musical theatre. The supportive culture created within the Music Department means that the peripatetic team embraces this approach, even when it involves passing a pupil on to another colleague in order to allow them to pursue their interests.

3 A school choir and/or vocal ensemble; and

4 A school ensemble/band/group

South Wilts Grammar School provides three choirs: a Junior Choir for Years 7 and 8, a Senior Choir for Years 9-13, and an A Cappella Choir for Years 10 to 13. There is also an enrichment choir for the sixth form that is a non-performing choir, focusing purely on wellbeing and enjoyment.

Through careful planning and consideration of progression routes the school also aims to offer instrumental ensembles for all ages, abilities, and styles. The Orchestra is for pupils of all instruments and abilities, with bespoke arrangements being created to support beginners. Once pupils reach Grade 3 standard they branch off into Wind Band (woodwind, brass and percussion), Chamber Orchestra (strings), Jazz Band (trumpet, trombone, saxophone or clarinet), or the Guitar Ensemble. There are also a variety of smaller chamber ensembles and rock and pop bands.

Rehearsals are mainly held during lunchtimes and sometimes after school. Staff from the Music Department lead ensembles around their teaching commitments, but in order to create more opportunities than their limited time would allow, peripatetic teachers are also employed to lead some of the ensembles. In addition, the school promotes student-led ensembles, with the Music Department assisting pupils in finding others of a similar age and ability in order to create new opportunities to make music together.

Ensembles led by school staff are free of charge to pupils, with a small charge being made for ensembles that are run by peripatetic staff to cover costs. As with vocal and instrumental lessons, Pupil Premium is used to subsidise ensemble fees for those pupils who are eligible. There is a clear policy that pupils can try ensembles without committing, and uptake is high.

The Music Department is committed to continually reviewing and developing the ensemble provision. Currently plans are in progress to begin a Baroque ensemble, as well as to use peripatetic staff to offer some direction and support to the rock and pop bands.



5 Space for rehearsals and individual practice

South Wilts Grammar School has a music block with two main classrooms, one of which has been converted into a music technology suite. There are also seven practice rooms, each with an upright piano, and two ensemble rooms that students can book. The hall and small hall are also bookable and provide valuable spaces for performing.

6 A termly school performance

South Wilts Grammar School provides a range of performance opportunities for pupils at every level. All ensembles (including those that are student-led) perform in formal concerts in the school hall in the autumn and spring, plus a 'Summer Soirée' which is an outdoor event with a less formal, festival-style atmosphere. These concerts also feature solo instrumental and vocal performances.

The peripatetic teachers put on mini concerts in school to showcase their pupils at the start of every academic year. Additional performance opportunities have been developed outside of the school, such as a performance for pianists at Arundells in Cathedral Close.

As well as concerts, the Music Department provides the music for services and school events. One of the ensembles performs at Speech Day, the choirs perform in the school's Carol Service, and the A Cappella Choir sings Evensong in the cathedral.

7 Opportunity to enjoy live performance at least once a year

The school organises trips to see live performances that are related to the GCSE or A Level syllabus. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has performed at South Wilts Grammar School with other schools attending as well, and they also access live stream performances. In addition, with a thriving culture of performance within the school pupils have regular opportunities to listen to each other.

However, this is an area that the school would like to develop further, as trips can often be costly and difficult to fit into a busy school calendar.

What support does this school access from Wiltshire Music Connect?

- Staff from the school attend Salisbury & Wilton Music Cluster meetings
 - Staff from the school attend Wiltshire Music Connect's CPD sessions
 - Wiltshire Music Connect Associates provide music tuition at the school
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What can other schools take away from this case study?

Creative approaches to staffing can maximise ensemble opportunities

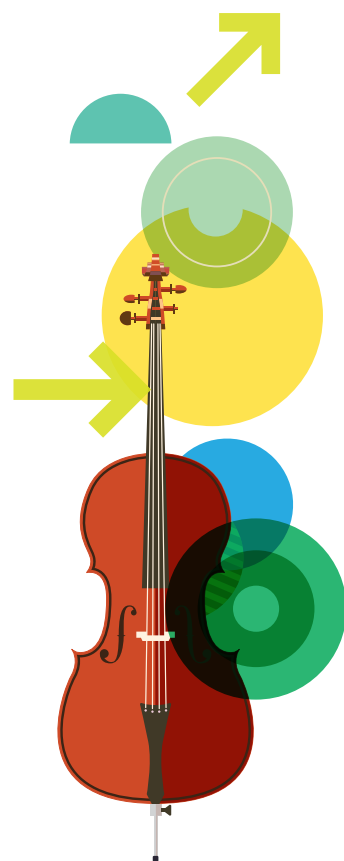
- Could you use peripatetic teachers to lead ensembles, with parents paying a small fee?
- Could pupil-led ensembles be an option? (Although this example is a secondary school, this could also work with older primary pupils. If pupils are leading the musical collaboration themselves then any adult supervision would not need to involve a music specialist.)

Enjoying live performances doesn't have to be expensive

- Could you overcome transport and financial barriers by joining forces with other nearby schools?
- Could you access live-stream performances online?

Planning for a range of styles, genres and traditions in peripatetic provision can boost numbers and support progress

- Is there scope for pupils to enjoy a broad range of styles, genres and traditions as part of your peripatetic lesson provision?
- Are instrumental and vocal pupils encouraged to consider their interests and goals, and supported in pursuing these?



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