



Music at Castle School

Overview and Development Plan (2024–2026)

Ref. The power of music to change lives: a national plan for music education

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Vision

At Castle School, we believe every child and young person, regardless of need, disability, communication profile, or prior experience—has the right to meaningful access to high-quality music education. Music is a powerful tool for communication, self-expression, emotional regulation, and confidence-building, and our aim is for all learners to experience it fully, creatively, and joyfully.

Our curriculum is inclusive, ambitious, and sequential. It is designed to reflect pupils' age, stage, interests, and needs, and is delivered through approaches that prioritise sensory accessibility, personalised learning, and genuine musical engagement. Staff work collaboratively to ensure that pupils' strengths, preferences, and talents are at the heart of planning and delivery.

We are committed to providing clear pathways for pupils with specific musical interests or abilities, supporting them to progress—whether towards further study, community participation, or professional opportunities.

Curriculum Intent

At Castle School, our intent is for every child and young person to have meaningful, joyful, and personalised access to high-quality music education. Music is used to develop communication, self-expression, regulation, cultural understanding, and personal identity.

Implementation

Music is delivered through specialist-led sessions, multisensory approaches, adaptive and digital instruments, and close collaboration between therapists, teachers and musicians. Provision is tailored to pathway needs and includes whole-school musical experiences, enrichment clubs, digital composition and community performances.

Impact

Pupils develop increased communication, confidence, emotional regulation, creativity and musical understanding. Progress is captured through observations, videos, personalised goals and Evidence for Learning. Pupils participate more fully in school life and have access to diverse musical opportunities beyond the classroom.

Overview

Part A: Curriculum Music

Early Years & Key Stage 1 (Fields Site)

- Daily musical experiences through singing, sensory exploration, and creative movement.
- Weekly Celebration Assembly - everyone singing/ signing together
- Music embedded into communication, routine, and expressive arts activities.

Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 3 (Main Site)

- Weekly specialist-led sessions adapted for pre-formal, semi-formal, and formal learners.
- Use of multisensory approaches, accessible instruments, and assistive technologies.
- Curriculum aligned with the National Plan for Music Education and developmental frameworks for SEND.
- Opportunities to explore listening, performing, and creating in personalised ways.

Key Stage 4 & Sixth Form -Semi Formal Groups

- Weekly inclusive music sessions shaped around independence, preference, and developing identity.
- Opportunities for accreditation within the life and living skills units
- Tailored provision for pupils demonstrating particular aptitude or musical interest.

Part B: Cross-Curricular Music

Cross-School Features

- Close collaboration between specialist staff, class teachers, therapists, and visiting musicians to personalise learning.
- Sensory-aware performances and whole-school musical experiences.
- Consistent use of adaptive and digital instruments to maximise access and engagement.

Choir

- Open to all year groups. Rehearses weekly and performs at school celebrations, community events, and regional opportunities.
- Fully inclusive through signing, AAC integration, and sensory adaptation.
- Culminates in Better Together which is a collaboration with local mainstream schools

Creative Arts Group

- For formal learners in Key Stage 3 and 4.
- Offers choice between singing, dance, and creative arts to support autonomy and artistic identity.

Digital Music Opportunities

- Integrated into computing for KS2 emerging formal and KS3 formal learners.
- Pupils explore composition through accessible digital platforms and apps.

Lunchtime & Enrichment Clubs

These groups build technical skills, social communication, and enjoyment.

Clubs include:

- Recorder
- Drumming
- Keyboards
- Sixth Form Band

Part C: Musical Experiences

Pupils benefit from a rich programme of internal and external musical and performing arts experiences, designed to inspire and broaden cultural capital while meeting sensory and communication needs.

- Experiences include:
- Wonder Week with external professional artists
- Choir performances at school and community events
- Visiting dance groups and arts organisations
- Art Now collaboration with Kettles Yard which includes a sound scape
- “I Am Drums” project in partnership with The Junction
- RSC First Encounters performances

These opportunities allow pupils to experience high-quality arts provision, develop confidence, and explore new creative pathways.

Further Information

The Music Education Hub provides targeted support for pupils experiencing challenges or barriers to participation, including therapeutic interventions, inclusive ensembles, and personalised opportunities for enrichment.

Assessment of Musical Progress

Progress in music is assessed through:

- Engagement and responsiveness
- Creative intention and exploration
- Communication through sound, gesture or AAC
- Technical development on adapted or digital instruments
- Independence in musical tasks
- Personalised and pathway-appropriate learning goals
- Evidence collected through photos, videos and observations on Evidence for Learning

Assessment supports planning, ensures ambition, and informs reviews and EHCP outcomes.

Parent & Carer Information

Parents and carers are encouraged to participate in performances, community events and celebrations. Families can discuss their child's musical interests and needs with the music teacher or class team and can view musical learning through Evidence for Learning and school events.

Music Across our Pathways

Pre-Formal Pathway (Sensory/Experiential)

- Multisensory exploration of sound, vibration and music
- Use of objects of reference, resonance boards, sensory stories
- Sound–cause–effect experiences using switches and digital instruments
- Focus on anticipation, enjoyment, readiness and co-active participation

Semi-Formal Pathway (Emerging Musical Understanding)

- Structured routines using songs, call-and-response and simple rhythms
- Use of visuals, AAC and signing to support musical interaction
- Exploring instruments, tempo, dynamics and patterned movement
- Building turn-taking, regulation and group participation

Formal Pathway (Developing Musicianship & Skills)

- More formal teaching of rhythm, pitch, structure and performance
- Composition using apps and digital tools
- Playing tuned and untuned percussion with increasing independence
- Understanding musical elements and responding to different genres
- Ensemble work, performances and creative projects

Sixth Form (Preparation for Adulthood Through Music)

- Music for independence, self-expression and wellbeing
- Digital composition and music technology
- Performance skills, event participation and community music experiences
- Music for regulation, confidence and communication
- Opportunities to pursue personalised musical interest areas

Overall progression:

Sensory → Interactive → Structured → Expressive → Independent

Adaptive & Specialist Music Equipment Used at Castle School

Castle School uses a wide range of adaptive, accessible and digital music technologies so that all learners, including pupils with complex physical, sensory and communication needs can participate and meaningfully experience music.

Digital & Accessible Instruments

- Skoog (accessible cube instrument for switch/pressure interaction)
- Soundbeam (movement-to-sound technology)
- Beamz (laser beam interactive music system)
- iPad music apps, including:
 - GarageBand
 - ThumbJam
 - Bloom / Trope
 - Keezy
 - Music Maker Jam
- Makey Makey adapted switches and conductive surfaces
- BIGmack / LITTLEmack switches for vocal/beat triggering
- Switch-activated musical toys & instruments
- Loop pedals and simple DJ controllers

Traditional & Tuned/Untuned Instruments

- Glockenspiels and chime bars
- Handbells and boomwhackers
- Drums, djembes, cajóns
- Ocean drums, rain sticks, sensory shakers
- Ukuleles and keyboards

Sensory Music Resources

- Resonance boards
- Vibrating speakers
- Light-and-sound sensory equipment
- Tactile sound objects
- Sensory dens for music regulation

This mixture allows pupils across all pathways to access music at a level appropriate to their sensory, communication and motor profile.

Our Music Partners & Community Links

Castle School works closely with a range of external partners, music hubs and arts organisations to enrich our offer:

Cambridgeshire Music

- Curriculum support
- Specialist tutors
- Performance opportunities
- CPD for staff

Music of Life

- Specialist musicians delivering sessions for complex needs
- Adaptive performance experiences
- Co-produced creative projects

Kettle's Yard (University of Cambridge)

- Art–music crossover workshops
- Creative sensory installations
- Community exhibitions and events

The Junction (Cambridge Arts Venue)

- Live performance experiences
- Youth arts projects
- Participation in inclusive arts festivals

Other Links

- BBC Ten Pieces
- Local community choirs
- SEND-friendly concerts and theatre experiences
- Castle's internal Wonder Week, school choir and music workshops

These partnerships ensure that pupils experience **rich, diverse, accessible and meaningful musical opportunities** beyond the classroom, enhancing cultural capital and participation.

Key Priorities for 2025–2026

1. Accessibility & Inclusion

- Expand the use of adaptive and digital instruments (e.g., switches, touch-sensitive devices, iPad-based tools).
- Enhance sensory-friendly environments and choice-led participation.

2. Staff Development

- Provide ongoing CPD in:
 - Inclusive and multisensory pedagogy
 - Makaton and signed songs
 - Trauma-informed practice and therapy using music as a medium.
 - Using developmental frameworks to track musical engagement and progress

3. Curriculum Mapping

- Strengthen and clarify the curriculum offer for each pathway.
- Ensure progression is clear, ambitious, and aligned with national guidance.

4. Pupil Voice

- Increase pupil involvement in shaping musical activities through accessible feedback tools (e.g., AAC, visuals, sensory cues).
- Consider establishing a Music Ambassadors group to co-design events.

5. Community Partnerships

- Deepen collaboration with Cambridgeshire Music Hub, disability arts organisations, and visiting professional musicians.
- Expand opportunities for accredited learning and community participation.

- Extend partnership with the Music of Life foundation

6. Assessment & Progress Tracking

- Develop a system that recognises progress through:
 - Engagement
 - Creative intention
 - Communication
 - Musical independence
 - Technical development

Use a combination of observation, videos, and personalised targets to document achievement via Evidence for Learning

7. Instrumental and vocal lessons

- Explore opportunities for developing individual lessons and tutoring using the music hub and Music for Life foundation to support this