

TreeHouse School music development plan

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2024-2025
Date this summary was published	01/09/2024
Date this summary will be reviewed	31/08/2025
Name of the school music lead	Patxi del Amo
Name of local music hub	Haringey Music Service
Name of other partner music education organisations	Music 4 Autism, Haringey Shed, Aurora Orchestra, STEP INTO DANCE, WeJam, Groundswell Arts, Live Music Now.

TreeHouse is a school for autistic pupils aged 4-19. Our Quality-of-Life curriculum is geared at meeting their specific needs and harnessing independence while promoting wellbeing and social participation. Music, with its specific tools and rewards, is right at the centre of that journey, and we share that responsibility with a broad range of artistic partners from our wider community, as well as our local Music Hub. We also engage with other local special school music departments, identify and access high quality CPD opportunities and keep abreast of research in our field.

Pupils at TreeHouse school access high-quality music making, both in the context of their curricular music provision and as part of the vibrant co-curricular opportunities that are made available to them. In these lessons, students have scope to learn, create and share their music in a broad selection of genres and media that aims to reflect our school community's extraordinary diversity and cultural capital. This starts right from the EYFS and informs our practice throughout a young person's school career; Music at TreeHouse is a long-distance run and, over time, a carefully sequenced curricular offer supports pupils to develop a voice, harness the skills to use it autonomously and forge a link with music that will vertebrate their leisure, sense of identity and life-long learning.

The school's musical culture is an inclusive one; everyone can access the expert teaching necessary to acquire the tools that will enable them to maximise their musical talents. In practice, that means a steadfast commitment to removing barriers to learning and accessing the arts, especially for those under-represented in the arts and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our end-of-term performances allow our young people to share their learning with parents/carers and the rest of the school community.

Part A: Curriculum music

Our curriculum offer in music is deliberately broad, ensuring that our pupils – all of whom experience the access barriers associated with complex autism – can thrive as musicians and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to participate meaningfully in community arts. Ours is a skills-based curriculum, where learning environments are proposed to pupils so they take incremental steps within the specific areas of pulse, rhythm, pitch, improvisation, expressive elements, interactivity, music literacy, listening and applied musicianship. Pupils are assessed regularly; barriers and strategies are identified and targets are set ambitiously.

Every pupil from KS1 to KS4 has a one-hour-long group music lesson every week of the academic year. This lesson is taught by a specialist music teacher with the autism knowledge and the subject-specific skills to support them in this learning journey. The primary and secondary curriculum is organised in a three-year rotation that ensures an ambitious coverage as well as the opportunities to revisit and build on prior learning. We are passionate about ensuring we have smooth transitions between phases so that learning is well-sequenced and we can all aim for the best possible outcomes.

We are currently reviewing the 6th Form curricular offer (see *In the Future*, further down). Our KS5 pupils also enjoy a one-hour-long dedicated group music lesson every week of the academic year taught by a specialist. We take into account their age-specific requirements, routes into adulthood as well as the links with Awards and Certificates in Music Development, a nationally recognised set of qualifications developed by Trinity College London in partnership with Sounds of Intent.

Part B: Co-curricular music

Our pupils experience significant access barriers (financial, cultural and cognitive) into the arts, and we endeavour to facilitate this engagement through a broad range of co-curricular experiences. As we are highly specialist provision, rather than a community school, our catchment is geographically large, and the transport needs of our pupils further limit the appropriateness of any provision scheduled before or after school. For that reason (and as part of the school day), we offer every pupil the following range of co-curricular enrichment activities to engage with:

- A 60' Performing Arts session led by two autism-specialist Haringey Shed practitioners for one term per academic year
- A weekly 30' Dance Club session with a STEP INTO DANCE practitioner
- A 30' Indian Music workshop with a practitioner, ten times per academic year

These opportunities create the spaces for our young people to generalise learning done in lessons by applying skills to new learning environments that more closely resemble community arts, thus making even more progress. Our co-curricular offer has wellbeing and creativity at its heart; our pupils relish the chance to play and sing, to perform alongside peers and to create within the performing arts, all with a keen sense of self validation, meaningful connection to others and pride in one's own work.

Part C: Musical experiences

Every young person has the opportunity to perform at a school show at least once a year and to attend a professional concert, show or event either at school or in the community at least once a term. Events are always free to pupils and are funded directly from our departmental budget or (where necessary) through especially raised funds. Wherever possible, these events include neurodivergent artists who can provide our pupils with visible, aspirational role models. Events planned for this academic year include:

- Three concerts brought to our school by our Music 4 Autism partners
- Participation in a 6-week residency by digital music experts from WeJam
- Participation in an 8-week songwriting residency by Groundswell Arts
- Three trips to the cinema, theatre or a West-End musical
- One in-house sensory concert each by Aurora Orchestra and Live Music Now

In the future

As part of our growth journey, we are keen to develop our digital music-making offer so we can reach more young people and do so in more ways. We aim to afford our KS5 cohort the tools to be part of the musical narrative of their own generation. We are raising funds to acquire a suite of adaptive digital instruments that will become a vehicle for our 6th Formers to learn, create and share their music in a hands-on way that resonates with their wider musical experiences and tastes.

On the quality-assurance front, we remain committed to embedding a rigorous review cycle that helps us monitor progress and participation and quickly edit or replace any schemes of work that are not meeting the needs, strengths and aspirations of our pupils.

In the context of our Artsmark accreditation journey, we are developing in-house training for our support staff, as well as CPD/mentoring for the specialist team that will support us in articulating a curricular offer in music that engages our pre-formal pupils well, meets their needs and has their wellbeing at its centre. This ranges from trauma-informed practice to circus skills, and from assessment in Drama to songwriting for the curriculum.