



Dear Parents and Carers,

## **An Introduction to Music at Borlase**

Musical life at Sir William Borlase is thriving thanks to our talented and committed students and staff. We aim to provide a wide range of opportunities within and outside of the timetabled curriculum. Some preliminary detail of what is available is given in this letter.

### **Curricular Music**

All KS3 students receive an hour's lesson per week. The emphasis is on creative practical music making, with plenty of opportunity for group and individual composition, and ICT using our recently refurbished computer suite. The current Year 7 programme includes a musical skills induction unit focusing on the Elements of Music through Film and Video Game Music, as well as Chords, African Drumming, Minimalism and Song-writing. Singing is a key part of our curriculum and we also ensure that students are taught the basics of musical notation. A high proportion of our students (currently around a third of the year group) opt to take their studies further to GCSE Music, and beyond to A Level Music and university. I am proud of our excellent results record in all exam courses, and our most recent GCSE cohort achieved within the top 3% of grades for schools nationally with an average grade of an '8', or A\*. We are also very fortunate to have the learning support of a Performing Arts Technician.

### **Extra-Curricular Music**

We run a broad and inclusive extra-curricular programme. Some musical groups are focused specifically on developing our younger students, but entry to the senior groups is based on ability, not age: we encourage experienced younger musicians to join the senior ensembles and learn from and alongside older students. Our ensembles are directed by the excellent Music staff at Borlase and by specialist visiting musicians. Senior students also have a crucial role in directing groups. We alternately stage a large junior or senior musical each year to high acclaim; recent productions include *Anything Goes*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Oklahoma*. We are currently undertaking a production of *Wind in the Willows* with over 90 students in Y7-9. Technical Theatre Clubs are also very popular. The following ensembles currently rehearse on a weekly basis:

#### Choral

- Cambiata (Y7-9, boys)
- Forte e Fiero (Y7-9, girls)
- Youth Voices (Y7-9, mixed)
- Cantorum (Y10-13, mixed)
- Gospel Choir (Y10-13, girls)
- Chapel Choir (Y10-13, girls)
- Madriguys (boys, lower 'broken' voices)
- Octet (senior vocal group, mixed)

### Instrumental

Symphony Orchestra  
Senior String Orchestra  
Junior Orchestra  
Concert Band  
Jazz Orchestra  
Jazz Band  
Rock Club  
String Quartet  
Saxophone Ensemble  
Flute Choir  
Clarinet Collective  
Brass Ensemble

### Other

Music Technology/Film Club  
Technical Theatre Club

In addition, many students in all years take the initiative to start their own bands and smaller ensembles. Our rehearsal spaces are very rarely empty of students making music together. Our larger School ensembles perform at concerts and other events throughout the year, including the Autumn Concert, Senior and Junior Summer Concerts, annual Christmas Carol Services at All Saints' Church and school Musical Productions. Many of our ensembles take part in specially-arranged master class workshops and perform and compete at local and national events. Solo and chamber musicians perform in our Autumn and Spring Chamber Concerts, and compete in the triennial Inter-House Music Competition, together with the whole-house choir contest! Contemporary and rock musicians perform in the annual 'Rocktober!' evening as well as our own outdoor event Summer Unplugged. Our rock music scene is currently flourishing: recently, rock bands from Y10 to Y13 competed in the finals of both the Bucks Battle of the Bands and Marlow Battle of the Bands competitions and have performed at a number of local events.

For further information about the Music Department - including our Peripatetic Music Service - please see our [department section on the school website](#); our [school YouTube channel](#) also includes many examples of our recent work.

We look forward to welcoming your son or daughter in September for what we hope will be the beginning of an exciting and challenging musical life at Sir William Borlase's Grammar School. I look forward to meeting you over the coming years.

Yours faithfully,

Mr S Miall  
Director of Performing Arts & Music; Associate Assistant Head