Music development plan summary:

Dixons Middleton Academy

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2026-2027
Date this summary was published	October 2026
Date this summary will be reviewed	October 2027
Name of the school music lead	Matthew Hayes
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music	Claire Narayanan
Name of local music hub	Rochdale Music Service
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership is in place)	Dixons Academies Trust - Director of Music, Tamsin Rafnsson

This is a summary of how our school delivers music education to all our students 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 students and parents or carers understand what our school offers and who we work with to support our students' music education.

Part A: curriculum music

Key Stage 3 music

Students in Key Stage 3 receive one timetabled lesson of whole-class music per week. This lesson takes place in a specialised music classroom with the students' form group.

Our Key Stage 3 curriculum is informed by, but not directly modelled on, recent department for education publications, including the model music curriculum (2021), the national plan for music education (2022), the music research review (2021), and the national curriculum for secondary music education (2013). While these documents provide valuable guidance and best practice, our approach prioritises flexibility and responsiveness to the unique needs of our learners and school context. By considering these frameworks rather than emulating them, we ensure a curriculum that is inclusive, innovative, and culturally diverse, while maintaining breadth, balance, and creativity beyond a one-size-fits-all model.

The Key Stage 3 Music curriculum allows students to develop skills across a range of different instruments, all with unique playing techniques – voice, keyboard, ukulele, percussion, and DJ decks. Students will also have regular opportunities to compose with keyboards and percussion. Each year, students will complete practical tasks as either a whole-class activity, small group work, paired work, or individually.

During Key Stage 3, students are assessed continuously during practical work which is most of their lessons. Once per term there is a listening and knowledge assessment, based on prior learning and unfamiliar music in a style that has been studied recently. Combined, these results are compared against previous years (baseline for year 7) to determine the progress of the student.

Key Stage 4

Music students who have opted to continue music into Key Stage 4 will be timetabled approximately three times per week in Years 10 and 11, including masterclasses in Year 11. We currently offer Eduqas GCSE Music; however, our music team are also familiar with the OCR GCSE specification and Pearson BTEC tech award in music practice should either of these be a better fit for a particular cohort.

Homework and independent learning

Homework is set according to school policy on Classcharts and Teams. Students in Key Stage 3 will be provided with a knowledge organiser (paper and digital) of a recent scheme of work. There will also be a question task based on the knowledge organiser to allow students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding. Students in Key Stage 4 will receive more homework, part of which will be an ongoing expectation that they practice their instrument(s) as per the guidance of their tutors.

Additional qualifications

For students who take instrumental tuition with us, our tutors offer a variety of accredited instrument exam boards, primarily ABRSM and Rockschool (RSL). On occasion, Trinity College London music qualifications are also offered where appropriate.

Part B: extra-curricular music

This is about opportunities for students to sing and play music, outside of lesson time, including choirs, ensembles and bands, and how students can make progress in music beyond the core curriculum.

Instrument tuition

All students are eligible for instrument tuition from the moment they start with us. Instrument lessons are subsidised (approximately 65%) by the school meaning the cost is £55 for approximately 4 hours of tuition (1 term) per instrument. We may be able to subsidise further for eligible students. Please get in touch to discuss. Students are welcome to learn more than one instrument; however, places are limited and depend on the availability of staff. With exception of drums, which is delivered by an independent tutor, all tuition is provided by visiting tutors from Rochdale Music Service.

Ensembles

All our after-school ensembles are free to join; however, they are typically unsuitable for absolute beginners. Any student wishing to join one should speak with a member of the music department or the member of staff running the ensemble before joining.

Music leaders

The school's main ensemble is the “music leaders”. Music leaders is a group of approximately 20 students who have applied and auditioned for the different roles. Auditions for new members are typically held around May each year and are open to Years 7 - 10. Music leaders is divided into two groups:

Band (12 students)

The school’s main music ensemble. The band learn repertoire and perform at various events such as open evening and the music festival. They also represent the school at external events.

Technicians (four students)

These students are the only students allowed to set up and run tech (lights, sound, special effects) at the school shows and festivals. Training is given prior to auditions to interested students.

Guitar group

Students who take guitar, ukulele, or bass guitar lessons may be invited to join the guitar group. This is held after school on Thursdays during what would normally be period 6, and is led by our guitar tutor, Mr Woodworth, from Rochdale Music Service. This is a paid activity.

School band

Primarily targeted at Key Stage 3 students, this ensemble provides students with the opportunity to develop their ensemble skills. This feeds into the music leader band.

Vocal group

During the autumn term, members focus on learning carols for the annual Carol Service in December. In the spring and summer terms, the group prepares repertoire for the Summer Music Festival, with additional opportunities considered throughout the year, including performances within the local community.

Bands and solo rehearsals

Some students wish to form bands, and this is encouraged. Space, equipment, and time for these bands to rehearse can be discussed when the room isn’t typically in use. Students who wish to rehearse their instrument as a soloist may do so, most often on Monday/Friday lunchtimes in MU1.

School musical cast

Students can audition for singing roles in our annual musical productions. Singing rehearsals take place once per week in MU1. Acting rehearsals take place in D1. Information surrounding this is typically posted at the bottom of the LRB.

Part C: musical events and experiences

Throughout the year, students will have multiple opportunities to perform to an audience beyond their classmates. The musical highlight of the year is Dixons Middleton music fest. Our music leaders host an outdoor music festival during the summer, featuring a wide range of musical performances from our students, including soloists, small groups, large ensembles, and the occasional DJ! The students run everything from sound equipment, lighting and special effects, tuck shops, poster design, tickets, and more. All proceeds from the event are used to fund subsequent festivals, and update equipment for the music department. Our music hub also holds an annual festival of performing arts, which our students are welcome to attend. Each entry for this festival has a fee. They also host other free-to perform opportunities which we often get involved with. Our school musical takes place over two evenings in the late summer, and features students acting, singing, and dancing through a fully licensed musical. For more information, please contact our head of drama. In Summer 2026 one of our bands performed at the trust wide Collaboration Concert held at St George's Hall in Bradford – we hope that performing in this concert will become another of our annual events.

In the future

We are always looking to improve the experiences of our young musicians, and to that end we are considering how the following could positively impact our students, and fit into our school's busy schedule:

- regular performances in assemblies
- GCSE music visits to Bridgewater Hall
- visits to a local recording studio
- tours of a popular concert venue such as Manchester Academy
- taking our ensembles on tour to other schools across the community and/or academy trust to showcase our musicians and watch others perform