

Music development Plan 2025-2026:

Fir Vale Academy, Sheffield

Lead Secondary School for Music in Sheffield, 2025-2026

Music Mark of Recognition for Ambition and Quality in Music Education, 2025-2026

South Yorkshire Modulo Music, 2025-2026

Music at Fir Vale – Our Vision & Values

We are situated within a vibrant community where music plays a large role in the upbringing and cultures of our local families. This informs our teaching and learning, allowing us to build on the existing musical experiences of our students.

Stepping into Fir Vale Academy, you are greeted in our foyer by our grand piano, which has accommodated performances and events over the last few years. You will see displays and notices on our big screens advertising our strong peripatetic provisions, invites for extracurricular opportunities, and notices for upcoming musical events. Making your way through to our Performing Arts department, you will meet the 2025 Music Ambassadors and see our Fir Vale Stars showcasing the performances they have produced over recent years.

We have been widely recognised for our consistent dedication and passion for music education; we are incredibly proud to have been selected as Lead Secondary School for Music in Sheffield, have been awarded the Music Mark of Recognition for Ambition & Quality in Music Education, and be the leading Modulo Music school in Sheffield this year.

Through quality-first teaching, we aim to create highly skilled, enthusiastic, and creative musicians. Our curriculum intentions cement our school values to provide a solid foundation for musical learning.

Opportunity – To provide every student with the opportunity to experience music, to develop their musical skills and understanding, and to pursue a career in the performing arts.

Togetherness – To encourage students to celebrate, engage with, and support each other's learning.

Achievement – To ensure clear and consistent methods for celebrating achievements of all kinds. Each student is guided by aspirational teachers with professional industry experience, and learners are motivated to achieve highly through goal setting, peer review, and a challenging curriculum. Student success is celebrated at every level to encourage progression.

Kindness – To allow students to support each other through collaboration, performance opportunities, and peer review.

Respect – To provide our students with the opportunity to experience and appreciate music outside of their own cultures.

Determination – To allow our learners to develop perseverance and determination through an ambitious and challenging curriculum.

Music at Fir Vale Academy equips our learners with the skills and passion needed for life-long musical learning, motivated by a core ethos; Music education should be engaging and accessible for all, regardless of social or economic circumstance. To facilitate this, we offer fully funded instrumental lessons for all students at KS3 and KS4 Music. The students of Fir Vale are what makes our school so unique and special, and we recognise and celebrate every individual as an individual. We are committed to the development of every student, regardless of ability, and our enthusiasm and passion for music is what drives our departments success.

We define success several ways. At Fir Vale Academy, we strive to:

- Make strong musical progress, performing with fluency and accuracy.
- Rehearse and perform with increasing independence and confidence.
- Understand and apply key music knowledge, including using key musical terminology in a range of languages.
- Create a culture of inclusion, determination, and ambition.
- Develop a lifelong appreciation and understanding of music.

We can evidence our successes over the last few years with our ever-growing and thriving peripatetic department, improved level 2 outcomes at KS4, improved attendance and strong engagement with extra-curricular and peripatetic programmes, and a growing and diversifying uptake in Music at KS4, including strong SEN and EAL provisions. Students enjoy lessons and speak positively about Music as a subject.

To ensure relevant progress in Music, we use student voice, most recently through our ambassador programme, to meet the needs and ambitions of our learners.

Overview

Detail	Information
Academic year that this summary covers	2025-2026
Date this summary was published	September 3 rd 2025
Date this summary will be reviewed	August 31 st 2026
Name of the school music lead	Juliette Gibson- Koch
Name of the school performing arts faculty lead	Elizabeth Swift
Name of school leadership team member with responsibility for music	Dominic Bould
Name of local music hub	Sheffield Music Service
Name of other music education organisation(s) (if partnership in place)	N/A

This document outlines how our school delivers music education to all our pupils 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 pupils and parents or carers understand what our school offers and who we work with to support our pupils' music education.

Feature of Music Leadership within school	Stage of Development	Delivery & Development
Music has a distinct budget for funding of musical activities/equipment	Established	Budget is reviewed yearly and managed by Subject Lead. A separate budget is considered for Peripatetic Music which ensures all learners can access free instrument lessons.
Staff development/training in music is identified, planned for, funded and supported	Established	Staff attend weekly school-wide CPD. Subject Lead and Faculty proactively seek out opportunities for growth and development. This is fully funded by Fir Vale Academy.
School works alongside the Music Hub to support and build on existing provision	Established	We are proudly partnered with Sheffield Music Service to improve and develop our provision. Fir Vale Academy was awarded Lead Secondary School for Music in Sheffield 2025-2026.
School monitors, celebrates and communicates success in music	In Development	Fir Vale Academy actively shares music success via our online social platforms and school website. News and achievements are shared in the Fir Vale Academy newsletter, and Sheffield Music Service regularly shares our work with their tutors and leaders on their channels. We are working to engage with local press and news channels to positively market music at Fir Vale Academy.
If applicable, school is aware of the person with music lead responsibility at trust level and the Trust Music Development Plan	Established	Music Lead for Northern Schools in United Learning (MAT) – James McAvoy-Stevenson Head of Performing Arts in United Learning (MAT) - Catherine Barker
School has a music progression strategy as part of their SMDP which considers opportunities for pupils to pursue music beyond the core curriculum, and how they can be supported to access those.	In Development	Our SMDP is reviewed and reflected upon prior to each academic year but also undergoes scrutiny through the year to ensure we are accountable for our development. We have highlighted the areas for development to ensure quality-first teaching and that we are providing an impressive co-curricular offering. Having now been taken over by a multi-academy trust, we are in the process of redefining our strategy for progression, so it is in line with United Learning trust.
School liaises with feeder secondary school(s) to determine whether the KS2 curriculum is adequately preparing pupils for future learning and so that secondary school is aware of what pupils will have already learnt	In Development	We host transition events for Y5 and Y6 learners considering attending Fir Academy for secondary education. Last year we had 32 feeder institutions, of which we hosted and/or visited our 5 largest providers for our current Y7 cohort. Prior to this academic year, we worked with the Sheffield Music Service to conduct research into the KS2 curriculum, to forge clearer progression into our KS3 curriculum. Stemming from this research, we were able to provide our Y6 transition students with summer music tasks and deliver resources to our primary providers to support classroom teaching at KS2. This is an ongoing project in

		partnership with Mosborough Primary School, Sheffield. Students at Fir Vale have visited several of our feeder primaries over the last 2 years to run events and workshops to help us strengthen those connections. We are currently working closely with Lead Primary School for Music in Sheffield to establish and strengthen the relationship between all our feeder schools and Fir Vale Academy. Our first established project this year, in response to changes to the NC, will be to work with local KS2 providers to create a consistent strategy for teaching notation. Fir Vale Academy will be leading the CPD on this strategy in 2026.
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This is about what we teach in lesson time, how much time is spent teaching music and any music qualifications or awards that pupils can achieve. Further information on the school curriculum can be found on our school website.

At Fir Vale Academy, we deliver a broad and diverse curriculum that engages students from a variety of backgrounds. Our curriculum is informed by the Model Music Curriculum, our multi-academy trust, United Learning, and is reflective of the to the demands and opportunities of the ever-growing landscape of 21st-century music. For example, we utilise digital music-making, explore genre fusion and musical entrepreneurship, to prepare them for a career in the industry. Our ambitious curriculum is led by an aspirational Subject Lead who confidently demonstrates musical and technical skills and upholds the high expectations of our faculty . Working alongside is a second Teacher of Music who together with the Subject Lead builds positive relationships with learners, and creates safe, inclusive, and inspirational learning environments.

As students transition through our school, learning is reconsolidated by interweaving strands of musical learning but also, with strands of learning from subjects such as English, History, Drama, and Science, for a multi-contextual approach to musicianship. Using small building blocks, with a firm focus on recall and reflection, students have a solid foundation on which to learn and to thrive. From student voice opportunities across the last year, students have described their learning as meaningful and engaging; in lessons, students are given time to think and work independently, collaborate on ideas, create new relationships with like-minded students, develop deeper understandings of existing knowledge, construct more complex views of music and the wider world, and gain greater confidence and capacity to lead their own learning. We regularly engage with whole-class feedback opportunities and student voice in ambassador meetings to gain a clearer understanding of student experiences.

The KS3 curriculum builds upon their KS2 understanding of the musical elements, notation, genre, performance and composition skills, and musical literacy. Our curriculum helps to develop our learners not just into confident performers, composers, and listeners, but also skilled improvisers, open-minded collaborators, and creative entrepreneurs. Students will also develop transferrable skills that are key to their wider learning; leadership, confidence, teamwork, decision making, and problem-solving. Students learn how to competently play a range of instruments, sing, and compose music with increasing accuracy, control, expression, fluency, and technique. They develop their musical literacy, exploring how to read and write different form of notations for a range of instruments and styles.

The needs of our learners are at the core of our curriculum design. As a shared school vision, our musical pathways revisit and reconsolidate learning, to ensure every student can access their learning and thrive in it. Knowledge and skills are consolidated by practical and contextual application, offering our students the opportunity to develop their musicianship in real-life situations, appropriately preparing them for higher education and a career in music. Throughout KS3 and KS4, there is a focus on healthy musicianship and nurturing the ‘whole musician’. An emphasis is placed on music for mental health, and the well-being and safety of all our learners is at the heart of our ethos. Each voice is valued and listened to.

Our classes are mixed ability, which teaches students tolerance, leadership, and understanding, and pushes lower-level students to grow academically. Through pair work and small-group activities, learners share diverse perspectives, tackle more complex tasks, and learn to delegate roles and responsibilities, all supporting their literacy and oracy development.

We build upon the cultural capital of our students by creating contextual learning experiences, exposing them to different musical languages and traditions from across the world. The historical and social contexts of genres are explored in detail, creating a journey of genre through time. Our curriculum acknowledges and explores the music of the surrounding communities and the cultures of our learners, which is vibrant and everchanging. There has been an increase in classroom and co-curricular engagement over the last year, evidenced by our improving outcomes,

particularly within the Roma cohort in Music. We believe it is important for students to see their own interests and culture reflected in their learning, to give them a sense of belonging. It is incredibly important to us that our learners understand why, and how, their curriculum is relevant to the world around them. Within the curriculum, we explore the components that are important to the musical history of Sheffield and Britain, exploring British values and the importance of the performing arts to the UK.

Assessments are designed to offer students an opportunity to celebrate their success and define their own pathways to progress. We maintain open conversations with students and parents to ensure each learner feels supported and challenged in their musical learning. Students are assessed on a variety of skills and knowledge, in both individual and group contexts. This includes performances, formal written and listening assessments, presentations, research tasks, and compositions, to ensure the whole musician is developed equally.

Summary – Music Curriculum

Feature of High-Quality Music Education	Stage of Development	Delivery & Development
Timetabled curriculum of one hour each week of the school year for key stage 3	Established	Music classes taught in sets, following core subject sets. We consider these to still be mixed ability in terms of musical competency, though the literacy and language level of each class are generally more balanced.
Timetabled curriculum of 5 hours per fortnight for key stage 4	Established	Mixed ability classes. We currently have the largest KS4 Music cohort in our trust, and in Sheffield. We currently offer GCSE Music at KS4.
The curriculum explores a broad and diverse range of music genres and styles	Established	In response to our diverse community, learners explore a variety of musical genres and styles, such as Roma music and music from Pakistan and Asia.
Group instrumental teaching programmes in class time	Established	Students engage with whole-class modelling and ensemble music-making each lesson. Students are expected to participate in independent rehearsal and performance each lesson. Each half term is centred around a different instrument. Every student engages with whole-class vocal tuition every year.
Composition and digital music-making	Established	Every student has access to IT, drum and rhythm machines, and a range of MIDI instruments. Our curriculum explores a range of musical notation and composition software to support creativity and composition skills.
Accessible resources and equipment	In Development	Classrooms are fully equipped with class sets of drums, guitars, xylophones, and keyboards. Further instruments are provided for ensemble work, such as samba kit and African percussion. To improve our resources, we are awaiting structural improvements to our teaching spaces to allow for more effective teaching and accessible equipment.
A safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environment	Established	Teaching and learning environments are thoughtfully cared for and designed to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Lesson materials and resources are well planned and organised, following a structured and meaningful curriculum.
The curriculum meets the needs of SEN or EAL learners.	Established	Lesson materials and resources are differentiated to support those with SEND needs or those who are EAL. Whole-school literacy strategies are implemented to support EAL learners. Teaching is differentiated and reactive, allowing staff to adapt to the needs of the classroom in action. Students are referred or sign-posted to relevant interventions, such as the Hearing or Visually Impaired department, the SEN team, or the Literacy Hub. Teachers within Music have undertaken additional qualification in understanding and supporting the diverse needs of the classroom. In Music specifically, techniques and strategies have been drawn from the Orff Schulwerk Method, Dalcroze Eurhythmics, and The Suzuki Method to improve engagement and attainment for SEN and EAL

		learners. Fir Vale Academy is working closely with Seven Hills SEN School in Sheffield, to share and improve strategies.
School has a Music Development Plan that captures the curricular and co-curricular offer and set outs how it will be funded.'	Established	This will be reviewed prior to each academic year and published in line with guidance.

Part B: Co-curricular music

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

Students are encouraged to engage with further learning through thoughtfully considered homework tasks which extend the learning achieved in the classroom, a broad range of extra-curricular clubs, and stretch activities within lessons to ensure all students are adequately challenged. Enrichment activities at Fir Vale are effective and purposeful.

Alongside our curricular music lessons, students can engage with weekly instrumental tuition, which is fully funded by Fir Vale Academy. We currently offer instrumental tuition 1-1, or in pairs/trios. These lessons are provided by Sheffield Music Service, but also by a thoughtfully selected group of external peripatetic teachers. Currently, 15.23% of our learners take at least one instrumental lesson. Further information on our peripatetic provision can be found by contacting Fir Vale Academy directly.

Fir Vale Academy has a broad offering of extra-curricular clubs, including Composition Club, KS4 Club, Choir, and Band. Students are also encouraged to use our facilities to rehearse and create music. These clubs are open to all students, no sign up or audition is required. We also allow learners to use our rehearsal spaces after school every day, and ensure these are fully equipped, engaging and accessible spaces.

We also ensure learners experience a wide variety of performance opportunities, musical events, trips, and workshops. We are proudly partnered with Sheffield Music Hub to improve our musical provision and increase the musical opportunities available to our students. Students can participate in events such as steel pan workshops, DJ masterclasses, Gospel Day, Samba in The Sun, and a range of orchestras, ensembles, and choirs across the city. Our most notable yearly event is World Music Week, in which hundreds of students participate in workshops and events across school to explore and celebrate new styles of music. We also provide opportunities for students to perform in a professional capacity across Sheffield, such as Mary Street Live and at Victoria Hall. As part of a trust-wide project, Fir Vale Academy recently performed at The Royal Opera House in London, and The Bridgewater Hall in Manchester.

We aim to further the reach of their musical education into the community by inviting Roma performers for school events and taking our students on trips to perform in the local area, such as care homes and primary schools to support transitions between KS2 and KS3.

We proudly celebrate the progress and achievements of our learners through bi-annual school showcases, and offer weekly performance opportunities to our Music Ambassadors, including the chance to perform in assembly, host their own lunchtime concerts, and participate in school events.

We also offer all learners the opportunity to undertake an additional graded music qualification with ABRSM, Trinity, and Rock School. These examinations are funded by Fir Vale Academy to ensure every learner can engage with deepening their musical experiences and education.



Summary – Music Co-Curricular

Feature of High-Quality Music Education	Stage of Development	Delivery & Development
Access to lessons across a range of instruments, and voice	Established	Over 140 students take peripatetic instrument lessons during school time. These are fully funded for all learners. Peripatetic lessons are a requirement for learners taking music at KS4. We currently offer lessons in piano, drums, saxophone, guitar, bass guitar, DJ, and music production. Our plans for peripatetic development include increasing numbers of uptake and offering brass and violin lessons.
A school choir and/or vocal ensemble	Established	Students can attend weekly choir ensemble after school.
A school ensemble/band/group	Established	Students can attend weekly band ensemble after school.
Space for rehearsals and individual practice	In Development	We currently offer a number of rehearsal spaces for in-class and co-curricular use. Students are encouraged to use these spaces after school every day and during breaks/lunches. We have three practice rooms that are equipped with instruments and resources to support independent practice. Our Music Ambassador students demonstrate great leadership in maintaining the presentation and working order of these rooms. Our plans for development include creating more spaces and making our current spaces more accessible and accommodating for larger ensembles, practical, and engaging.
A termly school performance	Established	Students perform a number of times throughout the term, both in school and outside of school. This includes, assemblies, lunchtime performances, school showcases, trips, internal music events, and school-wide events, such as parents evenings and open evenings.
Opportunity to enjoy live performance at least once a year	Established	Students engage with live performance multiple times a year from a variety of sources. This includes visiting professionals and trips to local and nationwide shows.
School has a Music Development Plan that captures the curricular and co-curricular offer and set outs how it will be funded.'	Established	This will be reviewed prior to each academic year and published in line with guidance.

Part C: Musical experiences

This is about all the other musical events and opportunities that we organise, such as singing in assembly, concerts and shows, and trips to professional concerts.

Some of our past musical experiences includes:

- World Music Week – a week-long event of workshops and performances across school
- Gospel Day
- Workshop with the ETO
- Create & Sing with The Royal Opera House
- Steel Pan Saturday – Saturday school
- Visit musicians from Taiwan (in partnership with Sheffield Music Service)
- Samba in The Sun
- Winter and Summer Showcase
- Classical Music Night
- Presentation Evening
- Songwriting Workshop with Lucien Moon
- Barnsley College trip – KS5 transitions
- Transition day KS2-KS3
- Fir Vale Rap Battle
- Languages through Music – Spanish
- Roma Talent Event

Upcoming music experiences includes:

- Mary street Live – live performance opportunity
- Abbey Grange Carols at Christmas
- International Women's Day Choir
- Stories of Sound – Mixing reading and music!
- Trip to a musical
- Gospel Day 2026
- Sheffield College Trip – KS5 transitions
- Fir Vale Rap Battle 2026
- World Music Week 2026
- Winter and Summer Showcase
- Barnsley College trip – KS5 transitions
- Roma Talent Event – Roma Heritage Week
- Recording at Red Tape Studios
- Oasis Fir Vale Fayre

Feature of High-Quality Music Education	Stage of Development	Delivery & Development
Whole-school singing	Development pending	Students participate in whole-class singing, but we are looking at extending this to year groups for performances.
Internal events – one every term	Established	We hosted over 25 internal events last academic year. This year we are targeting for the same amount.
Trips to live performances - external	Established	Twice a year, within the city and nationwide
Music Ambassador programme	Established	We launched our bronze award in September 2025.
Musical celebrations	Established	Students perform at Culture Day, Remembrance Day, International Women's Day, Christmas, Eid, and many more events!
Instrument loan	In Development	We are working with Sheffield Music Service and other facilities to allow learners to loan instruments to support home study.
External Graded Exams	In Development	We are currently working with a small number of students to take an external graded exam with providers like ABRSM, Rock School and Trinity College. Our aim is to achieve 20 pass grades over the next 12 months. These are fully funded by Fir Vale Academy.

This is about what the school is planning for subsequent years.

Music will continue to be at the forefront of education at Fir Vale Academy, as we continuously demonstrate the importance and value of music education in national curriculum and the wider world.

Area for Development	Information	Timescale
Improving facilities and resources	Transforming music classrooms into fully-functioning performing and recording spaces, including adding a stage, upgrading instruments, and creating workstations with IT, recording, and MIDI capabilities. Upgrading the Theatre with new lighting and a sprung floor.	Within 12 months
Improving Level 2 Outcomes	To improve KS4 outcomes, we now offer Eudqas GCSE Music. This is in line with our trust's offerings and will give us more support and consistency in content delivery, moderation, and intervention strategies.	Within 12 months
Creating more rehearsal spaces	Creating pop-up rehearsal pods for independent practice. Timetabling co-curricular lessons to best utilise space and resources.	12 months
Improving and supporting home-learning	Lending learner's instruments and equipment to facilitate at-home rehearsals. Creating an online learning and homework platform to reduce barriers to learning, such as attendance.	12 months
Stronger pathways from KS2 through to KS5	Working with feeder schools to review and reflect upon curriculum to ensure more meaningful learning at KS3. Working with higher education providers to create clear and achievable pathways for learners looking to engage with music post-16.	12 months
Expanding co-curricular offerings	Further the reach of peripatetic lessons by offering brass, voice, or violin lessons.	6 months
Attendance	Ensure lessons are engaging, practical, and meaningful, and respond to the needs of all learners. Create links within the local community to engage parents and carers with music at Fir Vale.	6 months

Fir Vale Academy works closely with Sheffield Music Service and has been selected as the Lead Secondary School for Music in Sheffield for the academic year 2025-2026.

Fir Vale academy has been awarded the Music Mark of Recognition for Ambition and Quality in Music Education for 2025-2026.

Fir Vale Academy has also been selected as a Modulo music school for 2025-2026.

As part of United Learning, Music at Fir Vale Academy is supported by a trust-wide development plan.

For more information regarding music at Fir Vale Academy, please contact Juliette Gibson-Koch, Subject Lead for Music at jkoch@firvale.com.