

Drama

Curriculum Statement



Intent

The Drama department's intent is three-fold:

1. To provide students with the transferable skills in teamwork, presentation and creativity that will give them the confidence and competence to succeed in life (courage).
2. Develop excellent dramatic skills and knowledge, both in performance and in theatrical design, allowing students to create thought-provoking and entertaining performances (intellect).
3. Give all students a meaningful cultural experience through theatre visits, watching upper school performances and theatre from other countries (empathy).

The key aim is for pupils, working in groups as well as individually, to implement their ongoing skill acquisition (intellect) in order to achieve ambitious dramatic intentions (empathy). We endeavour to create schemes of work that explore relevant modern social issues, classic and modern texts and provide an outlet for students to express themselves outside the confines of written work.

Implementation

a) Content & Skills

The curriculum at KS3 is designed to provide pupils with a wide variety of theatrical experiences; both in terms of the texts and themes covered, but also in terms of the nature of the dramatic intentions they are required to achieve. This covers topics as varied as Shakespearean verse, exploring how to effectively dramatise Anne Frank's diary, adapting African and Asian folk tales for a European theatre style and devising their own plays to address issues and themes in their modern life.

Basic performance skills are taught first in year 7, giving students the tools to create interesting Drama in the future but also skills they can apply in any oral presentation. Year 8 is much more focused on group/ ensemble acting skills as well as building on existing skills picked up in year 7. Year 9 is structured with longer projects, giving the students the base to work out which skills to apply to specific performances and work as a team to achieve shared goals.

At KS4 the delivery of the curriculum is sequenced to meet the needs of the different units, but so that the learning from each unit can feed into the units that follow. Initially focused on characterisation, this then leads directly into the study of a set text for the exam (Blood Brothers), this can be mostly explored practically and feeds any Non Exam Assessment

(NEA) performance work they can later undertake. The department aims to complete unit 2 before the end of year 10.

The advantage of the structure of IB Theatre is that the content is open to the interests of the teacher and the students. Therefore, the start of year 12 is an exploration of Modern Theatre Practices and theorists - this provides them a base for nearly all of their assessments. Each assessed task is then undertaken systematically, using lesson time to develop creative ideas and also to reflect on the tasks afterwards.

b) Learning environment

The department has a fully functioning theatre with modern lighting, sound and projection systems. This allows teachers to create a formal performance space, making the work more exciting for the pupils. There is an emphasis on respect and feeling safe, allowing every student to feel comfortable performing. Conversely, the practical nature of the subject creates an openness and opportunity for students who struggle to reach their full potential in written work.

At KS4 and KS5, the smaller groups are again made to feel very safe and a caring and supportive environment is fostered, allowing students to be brave in their performance work and open when asking for help.

c) Assessment & Feedback

There is a great deal of peer assessment and oral teacher feedback in Drama which is difficult to formally record at KS3, therefore pupils undertake at least 4 pieces of work that are both self and teacher assessed, containing an evaluation form and areas for improvement which are clearly identified. The assessment criteria is designed to build towards GCSE, with the exact wording from the AQA course used in KS3, building, in year, from 3 (of the 5 in the full gcse course) assessment criteria for performance, to the full 5 in year 9.

KS4 and 5 work is generally ongoing over several lessons and constantly orally assessed by teacher and peers in most lessons This, again, is hard to record but the student is able to immediately respond to this feedback. Having high standards on practical work has underpinned the department's successful results for years. All written work is handed in via google classroom and the rubrics on classroom are used to give precise feedback and clearly show where the student can improve their learning.

Written NEA is undertaken largely in lesson time, allowing teachers to apply the immediate feedback approach taken in practical work.

d) Monitoring

Monitoring takes place through Google forms and Google classroom. Work is generally marked online at KS4 and KS5, and work is often shared between staff to support one another.

Staff in Drama are constantly in each other's lessons and sharing good ideas, all are also very open to new ideas.

Impact

Results at IB are consistently excellent, with not a single student receiving lower than a 5 in IB Theatre or lower than a 4 in Literature and Performance. 3 students in the last 5 years have gained places on professional theatre training courses, which are statistically harder to gain than a place at Oxbridge. Students taking GCSE Drama are well prepared for the demands of the IB as they have experience and skill in presentations. 9 of the last 12 senior prefects have been GCSE Drama students.

The Drama Department has also consistently provided those in the 'tail' of the year group for attainment to gain one of their stronger GCSE results to support their entry to post 16 institutions; only 2 students in the last 14 years have not gained a passing grade.

Impact is very evident in public and exam performances, where students show an extremely high level of performance, engagement with the text and the needs of the audience; confidence and pride of teaching and learning are instilled in the pupils.

Cultural, historical and sociological knowledge is also broadened by the subject, through understanding the settings and contexts of plays studied as well as the world theatre studied through the IB course.

COVID Catch Up

Through altering schemes of work and the order lessons took place, the department did not suffer a great deal of loss of learning in terms of covering the curriculum. In fact, through remote learning, the department was able to diversify how they teach theatre, using streamed theatre performances and focusing on design skills, rather than acting. This has really advanced the students' knowledge base and this learning is being integrated into 'normal' classroom-based lessons.

We feel that young people have missed the opportunity, in life and across the whole school to explore and develop their communication, teamwork and empathy skills. We feel that in many ways, the department's role in 'filling knowledge gaps' is not within our own curriculum but in giving a forum to develop these 'soft' skills which students have been unable to use while remote learning and social distancing.