



Studying Level 3 Music at Birchwood College

The BTEC Subsidiary Diploma in Music (Performing)

Single option worth 1 A Level

6 Units over 2 years

All units are linked to performing

The BTEC Diploma in Music

Double option worth 2 A Levels

The 6 Sub Dip units + 6 more over 2 years

The extra units allow you to study the subject in more depth and will widen your general skillset for any future pathway

Preparing for Music in College

The best thing you can do in the weeks and months prior to starting college is to set up a regular and effective practice regime. I am sure you are all performing in some way at home, but ask yourself – is it proper practice or am I just singing songs / playing tunes? Am I getting better? With all this time on your hands, you should be the most prepared year 12 group we have had! Here are the tasks I would have you do in the first week – so get ahead. Type your work and save as **you will use this**, it is not a job just to keep you busy.

1 Skills Audit

Complete two columns that reflect your performing technique as it is now:

Strengths	Weaknesses

Aspects of technique that might be a strength or a weakness for you:

Singers:

- Pitching – can you stay in tune?
- Range of your voice (can you get high/low, or would you like to widen your range?)
- Projection (does your voice have power/ would you like to have more power?)

- Harmony work – do you pick them up easily? Do you remember your part once taught?
- Can you manage the more difficult middle and lower harmonies (high is easier to hear)
- Breath control (can you sustain long phrases / do you run out of breath?)
- Boys – falsetto (is it strong?)
- Girls – how is the transition from your chest to head voice?
- Diction – are your lyrics delivered clearly?
- Phrasing – do you shape your lyrics to tell the story

Piano/Keys

- Chord repertoire – do you know more than the basic major and minor (eg 7s /maj7s /sus4)
- Piano pedalling – is it reliable or do you forget to pedal and blur what you are playing?
- Chord vamping – both keyboardists and piano players will need to be able to play chord progressions with the bass note in octaves in the LH and the rest of the chord notes in a convenient inversion in the RH. These should be performed in a variety of vamping styles (like the chords I put in musescore for your composing)
- Melodic work – how well can you manage RH melodies?
- Fluency – can you ‘keep going’ even if you mess up? This is an essential skill for ensembles next year

Guitar

- Chord repertoire – do you know more than the basic major and minor (eg 7s /maj7s /sus4)
- Chord progressions – how well can you play a set of chords to a song in a variety of strumming / picking patterns
- Fluency – can you ‘keep going’ even if you mess up? This is an essential skill for ensembles next year
- Melodic work – how well can you manage riffs or solos?

Bass (if anyone has one)

- How well do you understand the role of the bass guitar? (If you see a chord chart could you play a bass part from it?)
- Root – 5th . Do you know how to find the 5th of the chord to produce a root/5th bassline? (For example if the chord progression was a bar each of D /// A /// D /// G ///, the bass playing a root/5th bassline would play :
DADA AEAE DADA GDGD
- Walking Bass – We will be performing 50s music in the first term and anyone playing bass will need to be able to play rock n Roll basslines – can you do this? So for example a bar of C would involve playing CEGA CAGE (rising and falling).

Drums

- Can you maintain a steady beat?
- Do you know a variety of beats?
- Can you play complex fills?
- Can you get back to the beat after a fill without dropping time?
- Are you sensitive as a band player with your dynamics?

2 Set Yourself Targets

Look at your weakness column and let that inform you as to what your areas for technique improvement are. **Set at least 3 targets** for the next few months. Once we are back, the footage from the gigs we do will be the evidence that you have improved. Include:

- What the target is specifically
- Why you want to improve that aspect of technique
- State whether you think the target is short, medium or long term.
- How you will meet the target - Research how you will improve – there are loads of warm ups and exercises for singers and instrumentalists on YouTube. Once you have found something that you think will help put the link into your document.

Set out each of your 3 targets like this:

An example of a singer's target

T1: Extend my upper range beyond G. This will help me access songs that I currently struggle with as they go too high for my voice.

I think this will be a medium-term target as I will be doing exercises to help improve my higher range which will take a few months to work. I expect to see a definite improvement by our 2nd gig in February.

To help me reach this target I will use exercise 3 (track 3) and exercise 5 (track 5) on my warm up CD and I have also found these on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=temMd2x6ErE> As the exercises get progressively higher, it will strengthen and help to develop my upper range.

An example for a bass player:

T1. My first target is to improve my finger dexterity. and I will improve this by practicing scales and “Spider” exercises at home. This exercise is done by playing this repeated lick on the bass and will be made more challenging by increasing the speed of which it is played at. It will be challenging as it will require me to work and focus on my finger positioning and the movement to play this will be quite advanced and taxing.

E—1—————4——
A—2—————3——
D—3——2——
G—4—1——

This will be a long term exercise and will require it to be practiced consistently to maintain the ability. To further advance and develop this it will be in combination with the analysis and review of finger positions of other iconic bass players e.g. Flea (The Red Hot Chilli Peppers), Mark King (Level 42)

and Rob Trujillo (Metallica) Some of these bassists are players who use the slap and funk technique so will also aid my improvement with that target as well.

I hope to see my result in a few months' time and expect to see a significant improvement in the ease of playing certain songs and also my ability to teach myself more complex songs will increase as well so I can learn advanced songs in less time. This will also make it easier for me to play my bass at live events like gigs resulting in a better performance.

An example of a guitarist's target

T1 - Improve Scale Repertoire to help me manage improvised solos more effectively. This will be a medium term goal, which should show results by half way through year 12. I will improve this by doing multiple exercises to enhance my technique. Here are some examples of the exercises I will be doing to improve my technique:

(<http://www.guitarhabits.com/the-5-pentatonic-scale-shapes-you-must-know/>)

PENTATONIC SCALE POSITION #1 / E SHAPE:

```
E:-----5-8-5-----|
B:-----5-8-----8-5-----|
G:-----5-7-----7-5-----|
D:-----5-7-----7-5-----|
A:-----5-7-----7-5-----|
E:-5-8-----8-5-----|
```

PENTATONIC SCALE POSITION #2 / D SHAPE:

```
E:-----8-10-8-----|
B:-----8-10-----10-8-----|
G:-----7-9-----9-7-----|
D:-----7-10-----10-7-----|
A:-----7-10-----10-7-----|
E:-8-10-----10-8-----|
```

PENTATONIC SCALE POSITION #3 / C SHAPE:

```
E:-----10-12-10-----|
B:-----10-13-----13-10-----|
G:-----9-12-----12-9-----|
D:-----10-12-----12-10-----|
A:-----10-12-----12-10-----|
E:-10-12-----12-10-----|
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An example of a piano / keys player's target

T1 Improve my finger dexterity, so that I can play more complex and fast paced melodies in my RH.

I think this is a long term target as I will need to gradually increase the difficulty over time. I expect to see a definite improvement by the end of year 12.

Apart from the usual scales and arpeggios that I start my practice with, I have found several more exercises on pianopig.com https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETuU6_86Kal to help me achieve my target.

Example of a drummer's target

T1

Improve my ability to fit in fills in time

I expect this will be a long term target for me because I struggle with hand eye co-ordination meaning that I struggle to keep the timing of the beat of a song after I have completed a fill. I hope I will have improved significantly by the end of year 12.

To help me achieve this, I obviously need to use a metronome as I experiment with going from beat – fill – beat. Also I have found that studying the sticking in detail before I try and play a fill will help me connect back to the main beat with more success.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_ByKy505ns (timing)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqUITaQ3M8g> (timing and note spacing)

See next page for task 3

3 A Typical Practice Routine

You need to show that you understand that little and often rather than infrequent long practice sessions are more beneficial.

Complete your own practice regime, making sure you cover all your targets over the week.

Day and target to focus on	Warm up exercise	The section of a piece I will focus on	Outcome I want to achieve

See next page for examples

If you play and sing, or play more than one instrument you can have targets that are a mixture

Day and target worked on	Warm up / Exercise Which of the exercises you have mentioned above have you warmed up with?	Focus What piece and which section have you concentrated on?	Outcome What do you want to have achieved?
Monday T1	I use exercise 3 as it helps me to extend my vocal range beyond a G.	I am doing stupid cupid by Connie Francis which in the chorus has a flip note which is higher than a G therefore, it helps me to achieve my target.	I want to sound more confident and secure when doing higher notes.
Tuesday T2	I used exercise 5 as it helps with breath control which allows me to have more controlled dynamics when singing.	I am singing the middle harmony in tears on my pillow which involves dynamic control during the second verse.	I want to have more control over my dynamics when singing a song as it allows it to be more interesting.
Wednesday T3	I do some scales on keyboard and piano and spend 10 minutes on pianopig.com before I perform to help my dexterity.	I am playing a sequence on the keyboard in see you later alligator which accompanies the trumpet.	I want to use more complicated chord progressions and patterns when performing so I have a more varied and interesting performance.
Thursday T1	I do a variety of exercises such as exercise 3 which help me to sing above a G.	I am singing the high harmony in que sara sara which encourages me to sing notes which are above a G.	I want to be able to extend my vocal range, so I can sing a variety of low, middle and high harmonies when accompanying people.
Friday T3	I do some scales on keyboard and piano and spend 10 minutes on pianopig.com before I perform to help my dexterity.	I am playing the piano for our original 50's song which involves me learning new accompaniment patterns as it needs to be in a 50's style.	I want to be able to have a variety of accompaniment patterns for the next gig.
Saturday T1T2T3	I do all of the vocal exercises on the CD we have been given including articulation exercise 3 & 5.	I want to make sure that I can perform all my harmonies and vocals on my own without having to rely on others.	I want to be able to perform all my harmonies confidently and independently.
Sunday	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day