MUSIC

Exam board: EDEXCEL

Assessment Method: 60% coursework, 40% examination

Length of exams: 1½ hours

The music GCSE is a for students who enjoy listening to music, as well as composing and performing it. There are different routes through this course, which means that it is open to students from all backgrounds – students taught privately on an instrument, self-taught or with no instrumental skills at all. It is broad in scope, with an enjoyable mix of practical and theoretical elements. Because there is more time for the subject each week, you will find that you have the time to develop your ideas in much greater depth, and your own style will start to emerge.

Performing
For this part of the course, students prepare two performances – one as a soloist (a piece in which your instrument is in the foreground), and one as part of an ensemble. Pieces can be in any style, and can even be pieces you have written yourself. If you're more interested in technology than a conventional instrument, you can make a submission as a producer and sound engineer, rather than as instrumentalist. This option is a popular one and allows students who don't play an instrument well to achieve high grades.

Composing
For this part of the course, students compose two pieces based on some of the music they have heard during the course. Students are able to set their own briefs, which means that there is a good deal of freedom in terms of style. You use the technology we have at college to create and present your compositions. College music students have produced some fantastic compositions over time, and this can be a really enjoyable part of the course.

Listening
Students learn about a number of pieces from a range of different styles and periods, and the exam is entirely focussed on these set works. The exam features short answer questions and a short essay. An important feature of the GCSE is the development of a musical vocabulary, so we spend time working on that during the course.