



Drama Curriculum Summary

Drama at St John's is a fully inclusive subject. We work tirelessly to give every child the opportunity to develop their creative, interpersonal and performance skills. The foundations are laid in the early years and built on year by year, with each stage linking to the last, so that children develop these skills tangibly through storytelling and playmaking. They learn to present themselves, their ideas and to work with others. The subject is fun and unpressured, and every child wants to be in every play, and they are in one every year.

Children learn that drama is a safe place. Trust is taught early, so that everyone can express themselves without judgement. Children's ideas are sought and used so that they are at the coalface of invention from the start of their journey at the school to the end of it.

The suspension of disbelief is at the heart of drama curriculum where children are taught to make the audience believe in the story and the characters.

The Drama programme builds to a crescendo of performance opportunities in the final year, where pupils create three potted Shakespeare plays, the Passion Play, and a cross-curricular play in Latin. We collaborate with the Art Department for set-making and DT for props, while Music and Dance are at the heart of almost every production.

Kindergarten (KG)

Key skills

- Develop the imagination and create imaginative stories through role-play
- Use drama to express thoughts and feelings, grow in confidence and develop speaking and listening
- Pretend to be somewhere else or something other than yourself, and freeze in character
- Mime with expression and feeling

Production:

A Nativity Play with songs, produced by the Drama and Music teachers.

Transition 1 (T1)

Key skills

- Use language and action to explore and convey situations, characters and emotions
- Project the voice; rehearse ideas and perform for others
- Watch the work of others and wait your turn in a disciplined way
- Follow instructions creatively, using high, middle and low positions when freezing in character

Production:

A Christmas Play with songs, produced by the Drama and Music teachers.

Transition 2 (T2)

Key skills

- Create and sustain roles individually and with others
- Work as a team, making quick creative decisions and saying 'yes' to others' ideas

- Use face, body and voice to build character and express feeling, including non-verbal communication
- Project the voice with expression; share the lead
- Find a space independently, alone or in a group
- Understand trust, others' feelings, and your role within a story

Production:

A home-grown play with songs, inspired by a well-known story and shaped by the children's own ideas. Produced by the Drama and Music teachers.

Form 1

Key skills

- Freeze in character with focused gaze and physical discipline
- Use body, face and voice to express feeling
- Make words clear; learn and perform lines
- Multi-task and think ahead in role; use performance space and audience awareness

Production:

A homegrown year-group play with songs. Produced by the Drama, Music and Dance teachers.

Form 2

Key skills

- Develop improvisation through the senses, and mime that makes something real in an empty space
- Work as a team, listening and responding without words, in pairs or as a whole class
- Project the voice and deliver lines with confidence and feeling
- Stay in character even when not speaking
- Accept and build in a creative situation

Production:

A year-group play, or a selection of poems, short plays and devised pieces inspired by the Form 2 curriculum. Produced by the Drama, Music and Dance teachers.

Form 3

Key skills

- Tell a story creatively, and engage an audience through positioning and 'cheating out'
- React to external stimuli; believe in the narrative and the character's journey
- Understand that comedy requires seriousness, and the meaning of slapstick and melodrama
- Listen while in role, staying present
- Develop stagecraft, including naming the areas of the stage

Production:

A musical performed by the whole year group on the Hinsley Hall stage, with some after-school rehearsals alongside Drama and Music lessons. Produced by the Drama, Music and Dance teachers.

Form 4

Key skills

- Play status, and help build the status of other characters through body language and attitude
- Express intention and motivation through movement; follow stage directions and understand blocking

- Project the voice with expression, feeling and sensitivity, reacting to others on stage
- Develop physical and spatial awareness
- Understand the value of getting 'off the book' early, and the journey of learning lines

Production:

A play performed by the whole year group, sometimes in the round or on the Hinsley Hall stage, with regular after-school rehearsals alongside Drama lessons. Produced by the Drama Department.

Form 5

Key skills

- Understand and use dramatic tension and status play
- Play a character's subtext and hidden objectives, reading between the lines
- Develop character through physical, emotional and vocal expression, and understand how it fits the wider story
- Accept and build spontaneously; show thinking when in character
- Work on your part independently between rehearsals
- Understand the difference between archetype and stereotype, and build character through archetype
- Understand 'non-acting' – the acting that doesn't look like acting

Production:

A major school production (musical or play) involving the year group, built towards two performances in Hinsley Hall. A signature event in the Drama calendar, rehearsed after school in club time. Produced by the Drama, Music and Dance teachers. The set created and painting in Art Lessons and props in DT lessons.

Form 6

Key skills

- Consolidate and use all the skills built to this point
- Be taken seriously as a young performer, and take risks in performance
- Perform Shakespearean language with confidence and understanding
- Understand the effect of words on others, and the circles of concentration
- Use the suspension of disbelief and dramatic irony
- Show empathy towards others
- Explore themes of hope, betrayal, friendship, denial, love, belief and trust

Productions:

Every Sixth Former takes part in the annual Passion Play at the end of Lent term, rehearsed in Drama lessons with an after-school club for principal parts.

In collaboration with the Classics Department, we produce a five-minute Latin play for the annual Ludi Scaenici festival at Perse Upper, written by the children and involving up to 20 Sixth Formers.

The final Drama event is three potted Shakespeare plays. Produced by the Drama Department

Some Sixth Formers are also prepared for Drama Scholarships offered by Senior Schools.

Contribution to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Drama develops SMSC in a wide range of ways, including:

- Developing creativity, imagination, perseverance, collaborative working and risk-taking
- Developing self-expression and confidence
- Teaching children to listen to one another and work as a team

- Building empathy and understanding of each other
- Exploring moral and spiritual themes, such as through the Passion Play
- Performing and exploring plays and poems from around the world
- Understanding how an actor engages with the audience
- Developing understanding of how face, body and tone communicate feeling
- Encouraging critical discussion in response to drama

Outreach

The Head of Department offers Drama lessons and production support to local primary schools on a weekly basis.