

## Drama Curriculum Summary

Drama, when taught as a subject of play, is a fun and exciting way for children to learn about themselves, each other, their role within the team and their creative potential. Classroom Drama aims to teach, through role play, improvisational games and exercises, a core drama vocabulary which the children can actively use and understand within the context of a lesson or rehearsal. The subject is taught from the child's point of view and always looks to encourage, without forcing, children to express their ideas and opinions. Above all Drama as St John's aims to build the confidence and self-esteem of every child in the school.

At St John's we aim to give every child in the school at least one performance opportunity a year. The excitement and enthusiasm involved in putting on a production is a wonderful way of teaching them a range of essential creative, social and communication skills. We believe that plays should be produced, as much as possible, by the children and that their creative input is as vital to the process as it is the end result. At the top end of the school, the children have the opportunity not only to perform on stage but to be involved in a production as backstage helpers, make-up artists, set painters and prop makers. For children who show a particular interest in the more technical areas of stage production there are also opportunities to be involved in lighting and sound, design and operation. The school has state of the art lighting and sound equipment so the children can develop their skills in these areas to a high standard.

Drama is a subject that brings every child in each year group together as a team, working towards the goal of producing exciting, spontaneous and imaginative productions.

### **Kindergarten (KG)**

Key Skills include:

- Develop the imagination and create imaginative stories through role-play.
- Use Drama to assist them to express their thoughts and feelings, to grow in confidence and to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Pretend to be somewhere else or something other than yourself.
- Be able to 'freeze' in character.
- Listen to others and work together as a small group, saying 'Yes' to the ideas of others.
- Mirror each other, sharing the lead.
- React to the teacher in role.
- Know what miming is.
- Use the voice in different ways.
- Turn a prop into different things.

Production:

A Nativity Play with songs. This show is produced by the Drama and Music teachers.

### **Transition 1 (T1)**

Key Skills include:

- Use ears and eyes to communicate with others on stage.
- Use language and actions to explore and convey situations, characters and emotions.
- Listen and respond to others on stage.
- Work as a team to make decisions in a small group.
- Project the voice.
- Rehearse their ideas and perform for others.

- Watch the creative work of others and wait your turn in a disciplined way.
- Follow instructions in a creative way.
- Use high, middle low positions when freezing in character.
- Understand what a cue line is.

Production:

A Christmas Play with songs. This event is produced by the Drama and Music teachers.

### **Transition 2 (T2)**

Key skills include:

- Create and sustain roles individually and when working with others.
- Comment constructively on drama they have watched or in which they have taken part to inform their own learning.
- Listen and respond to others on stage imaginatively and with confidence to take risks.
- Work as a team to make decisions in a group or individually by making quick creative decisions, saying 'Yes' to the creative ideas of others.
- Understand how to use the face, body and voice in creating a character and expressing feelings.
- Understand what non-verbal communication means.
- Project the voice with expression.
- Share the lead in a creative situation.
- Be able to find a space independently, on your own or as part of a group.
- Work with any children in the group.
- React to a sound cue in a creative situation.
- Understand what trust means in a creative situation.
- Understand the feelings of others.

Production:

A home grown play with songs, inspired by the ideas of the children. This event is produced by the Drama and Music teachers.

### **Form 1**

Key Skills include:

- Be able to freeze in character and to be aware of the performance space.
- Look, listen and react to others on stage.
- Be able to mime with expression and feelings.
- Use the body, face and voice to express feelings and understand how drama copies life.
- Make words clear.
- Learn and perform lines in a play, reading poetry with expression and delivering their performance confidently.
- Understand the importance of using punctuation when expressing yourself.
- Work as a team and understand the role of trust in a performance.
- Use gesture as a means of adding expression and enhancing the narrative.
- Understand how you give and take creative information.
- Be able to multi-task when in role.
- Think ahead in performance.
- Develop poise in performance.

Production:

A year group play with songs or a selection of poems, short plays and devised pieces inspired by a theme. This event is produced by the Drama and Music teachers.

### **Form 2**

Key Skills covered:

- Show feelings in regards to objects, places and characters.
- Create suspense in performance.

- Develop the emotional response to dramatic situations.
- Understand how to create atmosphere in a play.
- Develop improvisation techniques through the use of the senses.
- Work as a team, listening and responding to each other without words and as part of a large group or whole class.
- Develop mime techniques and be able to make something real in an empty space.
- Add imaginative detail to creative work.
- Explore the role of change in drama.
- Understand and participate in the 'staging' of a performance.
- Project the voice and deliver lines with confidence, expression and feeling.
- Learn lines and cues early in the process so you can find freedom of expression in performance.
- Stay in character even when the role is not talking.
- Create an instant character.
- Accept and build in a creative situation.
- Be able to create a cliff-hanger.
- Understand that objects, places and people have status.
- Be switched on and ready.
- Create symmetry in performance.
- Understand the power of pausing when expressing with words.

**Production:**

A year group play or a selection of poems, short plays and devised pieces inspired by the Form 2 curriculum. This event is produced by the Drama teachers.

**Form 3**

Key skills include:

- Develop the ability to tell a story creatively.
- Understand how to engage an audience, positioning the body and cheating the performance out.
- Develop imaginative and creative responses, building up the history of a character being played.
- Understand how to create suspense and tension in a performance, including the use of exaggeration.
- Present a scene in different styles as a group.
- Understand and use 'misunderstanding' and parody to create comedy.
- Look to make words come alive and 'off the page'.
- React to a range of external stimuli.
- Believe in the narrative and the journey of the character.
- Be able to project a stage whisper.
- Get into character and 'energize' before entering the stage/performance space.
- Understand that playing comedy requires being serious.
- Understand the meaning of slapstick.
- Be able to be melodramatic.
- Listen properly when in role
- Develop a growing understanding of stagecraft.
- Be able to name the areas of the stage.

**Production:**

A musical play performed by the whole year group on the stage of Hinsley Hall. This production has some after school rehearsals as well as being put together in Drama and Music lessons. This production is produced by the Drama and Music teachers.

**Form 4**

Key skills include:

- Understand the role of 'give and take' when in role.
- Play the status of a character and help create the status of other characters, through body language and attitude.
- Express intention and motivation through movement.

- Follow stage directions.
- Understand the term 'stage blocking'.
- Project the voice and deliver lines with expression, feeling and sensitivity, reacting to the other performers on stage.
- Develop a higher level of physical and spatial awareness on stage.
- Understand and be able to use the 'dramatic pause'.
- Develop imaginative and creative responses through physical gesture, exaggeration and parody.
- Understand the difference between an archetype and a stereotype and create a character through the use of the archetypes.
- Understand the term 'non acting' and be able to do it.
- Have an awareness of self and be able to play, in broad terms, the alto ego.
- Understand that if you see it and feel it so will your audience.
- Understand that acting is seeing it, feeling it for the first time.
- Be able to lift your eyes off the page when sight reading.
- Be able to hear a downward inflection.
- Be able to change the style of the scene spontaneously.
- Understand that a direction is an instruction with the use of imagination.
- Understand that the earlier you get 'off the book' the more freedom you will find in performance.
- Understand the journey of learning lines.
- Think as the character thinks.

**Production:**

A play performed by the whole year group. It is sometimes performed in the round or on the stage of Hinsley Hall. This production has regular after school rehearsals as well as being put together in Drama lessons. This production is produced by the Drama Department.

**Form 5**

Key skills include:

- Understand and use dramatic tension.
- Understand and use status play.
- Play a character's sub text – the inner life of the character.
- Play a character objective even though it might be hidden from other roles.
- Develop a performance by reading between the lines.
- Develop the imaginative interpretation and performance of 'character' through physical, emotional and vocal expression and through understanding how their character fits into the story as a whole and how we learn about our real lives through storytelling.
- Explore how the body can show emotional responses to conflict.
- Understand positioning to enable the performance of a realistic and safe fight scene.
- Understand how to give a good account of yourself at the audition stage of the process.
- Accept and build spontaneously.
- Show thinking when in character.
- Build up the background of a character.
- Create a history of shared experiences with other roles.
- See things from the character's point of view.
- Enter the performance space knowing where you have come from.
- Improvise within the rehearsal process.
- Give your character a secret within the story.
- Be able to suspend the audience's disbelief.
- Understand the power of suggestion.
- Work on your part between rehearsals, independently from the director.

**Production:**

A major school production (of a musical or a play) involving the majority of the year group. This show is an extensive, fun and exciting process that builds towards two performances on the stage in Hinsley Hall. It is a signature event in the annual Drama calendar and is rehearsed after the school day in club times and on

Saturday morning after games. This production is produced by the Drama, Music and Dance teachers. For those children not wanting to be on stage there are opportunities to be involved as part of the technical team or backstage, assisting with stage management, props or the school wardrobe. Senior Schools are invited to this show.

## **Form 6**

Key skills:

- Consolidate and be able to use all the skills listed above.
- Be taken seriously as a young performer.
- Take risks in performance.
- Perform Shakespearean language with confidence and understanding.
- Understand the effect of words on others.
- Understand the circles of concentration.
- Use mindfulness in the preparation of performance and during it.
- Be able to let go emotionally with other performers, without relying on the 'safety' of the story line.
- Show empathy towards others.
- Be able to act with your back facing the audience, having rehearsed to do so.
- Understand what method acting is.
- Understand and be able to use dramatic irony to heighten the watching experience of the audience.
- Explore the issues of hope, betrayal, friendship, denial, love, belief and trust.
- Understand the importance of actors in the role of society.

Productions:

The school takes part in the nationwide Shakespeare Schools Festival. This involves up to 32 children performing at a local professional theatre (The Mumford) a 30 minute potted Shakespeare. The festival takes place across the country in November and involves over 1400 schools. This play rehearses in club time and is produced by the Drama and Music teachers. For more information on the festival please look at the SSF website <http://www.ssf.uk.com>.

Every child who would like to does a reading at our Service in Preparation for Christmas in St John's College chapel in the Michaelmas term. The choristers have an opportunity to read in the chapel at other times of the year.

At the end of the Lent term every child in the Sixth Form takes part in our annual Passion Play. This is rehearsed in Drama lessons and, for principal parts, in an after school club time.

In the Summer term the English department produce a Poetry Night, where the children's own poems are presented together with some class choral poems. The Drama department is involved in staging this event.

In collaboration with the Classics Department we produce a 5 minute play in Latin, which is performed as part of the annual Latin Play festival (Ludi Scaenici) which takes place at Perse Upper. This play is written by the children and involves up to 20 members of the sixth form.

The final Drama event in this extensive Form 6 programme is to perform two potted Shakespeare Plays. They are usually performed in the garden of Senior House. Every child in the year is encouraged to perform or be part of the production team. It is a fitting end to their Drama Journey at St John's. Many members of the audience come back year after year to watch the plays and this includes representatives from the Senior schools that the children are moving onto. This final drama event is produced by the Drama, Music and Dance teachers.

In addition to the above some children in the sixth form are prepared for Drama Scholarships, which are offered by a few of the Senior schools.

### **Contribution to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

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

- Developing creativity including imagination, perseverance, collaborative working, and risk-taking.
- Developing self-expression and confidence.
- Helping groups of children to know how to listen to one another and work as a team.
- Building empathy and an 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 the understanding of how the face, body and tone communicate feelings.
- Encouraging critical discussion in response to drama.
- A vehicle to explore deep questions and the meaning of life.