



MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL

MUSIC AWARDS (13+)

With its collegiate connections, MCS has a long tradition of nurturing musicians and music-making of a very high standard. Music is regarded as an important aspect of the school's life. Whether or not they are specialist musicians, large numbers of pupils are involved in some way in the Music Department's activities.

Whilst at MCS, pupils have been members of the National Youth Orchestra, National Children's Orchestra, National Youth Choirs of Great Britain, National Youth Music Theatre, Pro Corda and have distinguished themselves in the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition.

The Director of Music leads a team of five full-time teaching staff including the Head of Instrumental Music, an Assistant Director of Music, two teachers of music, an accompanist and performance coach, an administrator, an intern, and forty-three visiting instrumental teachers. Academic music is very strong: over the past three years virtually all candidates have achieved an A* or A at GCSE and A level. Pupils regularly proceed to Oxford and Cambridge and other leading universities to read music, and many have been awarded choral or organ scholarships.

The Senior School has two symphony orchestras, two jazz bands, a wind band, two string orchestras, three choirs, close harmony groups and numerous chamber ensembles, including string quartets, piano trios, guitar, 'cello, wind, brass and percussion ensembles.

There are many concerts held during the course of the school year. There are regular formal and informal concerts showcasing both ensemble and solo items. Concerts are given each year in SJE Arts, The Sheldonian Theatre, Magdalen College Chapel and in various other venues across the city. In March, the Sheldonian Concert features the work of the Symphony Orchestra, Choral Society and MCS Chorus. In 2023, the Symphony Orchestra, choirs and whole school performed a Coronation Concert in Birmingham Symphony Hall. The school year ends with an Arts Festival which includes the atmospheric Madrigals on the River sung from punts moored at the end of School Field.

Music Scholars are important members of the school and will be leaders to other pupils. We expect them not only to play to a high standard, but to set an example to others. They should be committed to performing regularly in the department's ensembles as well as performing solos in the chamber concerts. In return we will seek to stretch and stimulate them to achieve their goals.

How to apply

MCS offers a number of music awards to boys entering the Lower Fourth Form (Year 9) at age 13. Candidates must be under the age of 14 on 1st September in the year of entry. We advise that candidates should be at least Grade 6 standard, ideally having achieved **Grade 6 Distinction** on the practical exam for one or more instruments as the **minimum** for application for the scholarship.

Music Scholarships carry with them free tuition in one instrument (currently worth £1,431 p.a. including VAT). Awards of free tuition are also made to other deserving candidates. Additional sums may be available on completion of a means-tested bursary form.

Candidates are judged as much upon musical potential as they are upon attainment. Each is perceived as a unique individual, and a specific musical profile is not a prerequisite to success in the auditions.

Music Scholarship auditions for boys entering the Lower Fourth Form in September 2026 will take place from Monday 26th to Wednesday 28th January 2026. The closing date for entries is Friday 5th December 2025.

At the audition, which will last about 40 minutes, candidates will be required to perform:

- **one prepared piece on each of the instruments** that the candidate plays (including voice if applicable). When choosing a piece, it is always better to choose a piece the candidate knows well and which shows his musicality, rather than attempt a harder piece which is less comfortably known. If the candidate is only offering one instrument then two contrasting pieces should be performed. The school will provide an accompanist for the candidates if required and there will be time to rehearse before the audition.
- sight-reading on the main instrument
- a short piece of unaccompanied sight-singing
- aural tests (melody and rhythm recall, interval pitching and recognition)
- viva voce questions to assess pupils' knowledge of musical theory and to discuss their interests.

Magdalen College School subscribes to a voluntary code of practice with other Oxfordshire-based schools which means that if your son has already accepted a Music Award of any kind at another senior school, he cannot attempt our Music Awards auditions without the written permission of that school.

Parents can contact the Director of Music at any time to discuss their child's potential as a candidate. An informal pre-scholarship interview in the Michaelmas term can sometimes be a useful way for the pupil and his parents to assess the pupil's suitability for a scholarship if he does not have the minimum grade requirement. If you require any further information, please contact the Director of Music, Jon Cullen jcullen@mcsoxford.org.

