

INQUIRY INTO MUSIC EDUCATION IN VICTORIAN SCHOOLS

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Kew High School

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KEW HIGH SCHOOL

Kew High School is a public co-educational school situated in Melbourne's inner east. There is an enrolment of over 1000 students. Kew High School exudes a quality learning culture. There is a solid sense of purpose and vision for learning with enthusiastic and engaged students, focused and determined leadership, and a highly professional and talented staff.

MUSIC EDUCATION AT KEW HIGH SCHOOL

Kew High School offers a comprehensive and varied music curriculum. Student participation in the music program forms a large part of the culture at school. The program is staffed by 3 Classroom Music teachers, and 13 specialist Instrumental Music teachers.

CLASSROOM MUSIC

Music subjects are offered to students from Year 7 to Year 12. This encompasses general Music classes, Music Technology electives, and VCE Music Subjects: VCE Group Performance, VCE Solo Performance, and VCE Music Investigations.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Instrumental Music tuition is offered as an elective to all students. Currently, Kew High School has over 120 eager students enrolled in the Instrumental Music program (>12% total student body), and over 200 students involved in the Instrumental Music Bands and Ensembles program (>20% total student body).

Tuition is available for the following instruments:

- Brass
- Woodwind
- Strings
- Percussion
- Strings
- Chinese Instruments
- Guitar (Classical Guitar, Acoustic Guitar, Electric Guitar)
- Bass (Double Bass, Electric Bass)
- Drum-kit
- African Percussion
- Latin / Brazilian Percussion
- Voice
- Piano

ENSEMBLES and BANDS

There is a rich diversity amongst the Ensembles at Kew High School. Currently, the following Ensembles are directed by the music staff:

- Symphony Orchestra
- String Orchestra
- Choir
- Guitar Ensemble
- Advanced Guitar Ensemble
- Jazz Band
- Chinese Music Ensemble
- African Drumming Ensemble
- Percussion Ensemble
- Training Stage Band
- Intermediate Stage Band
- Senior Concert Band
- Swing Band

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING MUSIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

(1) Benefits to society and to individual students wanting to pursue music as a career;

A focus of the music program at Kew High School is to engage and challenge all students through exciting, interesting, and diverse curriculum. We strive to make the experience of learning about music, or learning a musical instrument a positive experience. We aim to provide frequent high level performance opportunities for students, and to prepare individual students for successful auditions into relevant music courses on offer at tertiary institutions. This is informed by the school's ethos of 'Aspire, Strive, Achieve'. The music program also aims to make links to the wider community through performances at public events.

Notable performance opportunities for the students in 2012 included:

- CHINESE MUSIC ENSEMBLE – Performances at 'BMW Edge', as well as a tour of China in 2006. They are currently on tour, performing in Adelaide and Perth.
- ADVANCED GUITAR ENSEMBLE – Performance before the keynote speaker at the 'State-Wide Instrumental Teachers PD Day' – Darebin Arts Centre Dec 2012
- SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA – Annual performance at the 'Dallas Brooks Hall' – Presentation Night
- JAZZ BAND, SWING BAND – Annual concert at the 'Bennet's Lane' Jazz Club (Melbourne's premier Jazz Venue), and 'Spencers Live' Jazz Club.
- CHOIR – Performances at 'Spencers Live' Jazz Club.
- KEW CONCERT BANDS – Annual Performances at the 'Kew Festival' parade.
- STRING ORCHESTRA – Performances at 'Federation Square', 'Royal Melbourne Hospital Well-Being Festival', 'Official Opening of the Legal Year' at the Supreme Court, Performances at local Nursing Homes.

Most of the music staff are actively involved in the music industry. They participate through regular gigs and performances, music composition, music recording, music production, and membership of various bodies – AES (Audio Engineering Society), Melbourne Jazz Co-Op, Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra ect..

Many of the music staff perform regularly in leading venues across Melbourne, and some staff tour nationally and internationally. Many staff use their industry ties to forge links to the greater music community, and tertiary institutions. These were some of the outcomes in 2012:

- The Jazz Band works in conjunction with the Melbourne Jazz Co-op. This affords aspiring student Jazz Musicians the opportunity to meet established Jazz artists, access to performances, master-classes, and performance opportunities at leading Jazz venues. This also enables students to familiarise themselves with the unique audition requirements for entry into the Jazz Performance courses on offer in Melbourne.
- The Guitar Ensemble program works in conjunction with the VCA Classical Guitar Department. Annual Workshops and Master-Classes give students an insight into the world of Guitar studies at a Tertiary level. Participation in the Guitar program has given students the opportunity to meet lectures, tertiary students, and gain an insight into what they need to do to successfully audition for entry into these programs.
- Ties to the ABC have allowed the Music Technology class a visit to the world class recording facilities at the ABC in Southbank.

(3) Benefits to student academic performance as a result of music education.

The year 12 VCE results in 2012 showed that students enrolled in Music and Arts subjects achieved higher than average (across the school, and state mean) results in their VCE subjects.

Our experiences with the music students at Kew High School have been consistent with much of the research conducted in relation to the positive effects of learning a musical instrument.

CURRENT PROVISION OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN VICTORIA

(4) Music education provided through specific funding for music education

Kew High School belongs to the Eastern Metropolitan Region. The EMR provides some funding to pay for the allocation of Instrumental Music staff in schools. The funding provided is less than 40% of the required amount.

(5) Music education provided through non-specific funding

The School Council and Principal Class at Kew High School are very supportive of the music program. They make up the shortfall in funding to ensure that there are enough staff available to teach Instrumental Music in the school. Therefore, the music faculty is able to provide a comprehensive music program. Many schools would not be able to provide adequate levels of funding to their music programs.

(6) Music education provided through parent contribution

A levy of \$450 per year and an Instrument hire fee of \$100 per year is issued to students who enrol in Instrumental Music lessons. These contributions enable the school to service and repair its inventory of musical instruments. This also enables the school to purchase new instruments, consumables (strings, reeds), sheet music, and assists in the provision of transport to move the students and equipment to various performances and related excursions. We are very fortunate to be afforded this level of parent contributions. Many schools would not be able to expect similar contributions from parents, and as such, they would not be able to provide adequate resources for programs such as ours.

FUTURE OPTIMUM PROVISION OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN VICTORIA

The main issues that our school faces in relation to delivering our program are a lack of funding for staff and facilities, as well as a limited budget for resourcing both Classroom and Instrumental Music programs.

Currently, there is a greater demand for Instrumental Music tuition than our capacity to supply it. Many students are placed on waiting lists. The effects of this are that the Instrumental Music teachers are forced to teach students in large groups. This is not ideal in the middle years. It impacts severely on the learning outcomes of senior students, particularly those that participate in the VCE Music Solo Performance subject.

Our capacity would need to increase by 40% to 50% to afford a place to every student that wishes to partake in Instrumental Music, and also ensure that student group sizes are not detrimentally high in the middle and senior years.

(11) Optimum balance of music specific funding, non-music specific funding, and parent contribution.

Improvements can be made in relation to funding arrangements.

- More external funding for Instrumental Teaching staff is required. The percentage of funding that comes from the EMR is not adequate. Ideally, funding for these teaching staff should be 100% of what is required, or at least a large majority of the cost. Furthermore, the funding allocation for the provision of Instrumental Music staffing in schools should grow in-line with student participation.
- Funding could be allocated towards Classroom Music programs, with the aim of strengthening the use of ICT and cutting edge Music Technology in classrooms.

CONCLUSION

Music education is central to the culture and programs of Kew HS. Our programs and assemblies are built around enrichment and challenge through student performance and participation. It is vital that the government supports the funding of Classroom and Instrumental Music in an age when students need to build on their strengths and develop the capabilities to move into the future- the ability to work in teams, co-operate, collaborate, accept responsibility, plan, prepare, and be creative.