



**Chetham's**

**Admissions Policy**  
2025

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## Introduction

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Chetham's School of Music is a specialist Music School at the heart of the City of Manchester. Admission for all students is based upon an audition which tests candidates' ability, aptitude and potential to develop a talent and passion for music.

**Chetham's is committed to equality and diversity:**

**Access**

Improve accessibility, reduce barriers, and challenge perceptions for audiences, visitors, staff and students.

**People**

Promoting a positive and harmonious working and creative environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and are valued for who they are, as they are.

**Culture**

Embrace and celebrate the richness of society striving to reflect it. Where inequality exists recognise and reduce it.

## Entry requirements

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Chetham's welcomes applications from young musicians for both boarding and day places for girls and boys aged 8 – 18. The first stage in applying to Chetham's School of Music is to complete an application form - enclosed within the prospectus, or available to download from Chetham's website at [www.chethams.com](http://www.chethams.com). Chetham's welcomes applications throughout the academic year, but we strongly advise you to apply early, ideally before Christmas.

It is essential that parents and guardians are honest throughout the process of application and admission so that the School can assess carefully our ability to meet your child's needs.

## Areas of study

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Chetham's welcomes applications for principal study of all western classical and jazz instruments, and classical voice. Please note that drum kit is not offered as a sole first study but as one element of the broader study of Percussion which includes a range of tuned and untuned percussion.

We also welcome applications for composition as either principal or second study. First study composers should also be able to offer a good level of proficiency on a second study instrument.

## Other requirements

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There is an expectation that all students applying for sixth form (year 12) entry will have passed GCSE Music (or equivalent) and ABRSM Grade 5 Theory (or equivalent). Given the already vibrant programme that sixth form entails, we strongly advise that this expectation is met, in order to avoid the need to attend 'catch-up' theory classes. All students are required to study A-level Music and be suited to other A-level study. We expect sixth form students to be on track for GCSE passes and be able to study at this advanced level.

The level of scholarly academic language, aptitude and work rate for academic study is essential. We advise all applicants to be involved in a wide range of musical activities, for example: singing in a school or local choir; composition; playing in an orchestra, band or ensemble. Applicants must also have good behaviour, honesty, be trustworthy and have a good attendance record at their previous educational establishment; references and reports will be requested in advance.

## Pre-application advice auditions

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These are informal and informative sessions and are available normally for musicians aged 7 - 16 who would like professional feedback on their current musical level and potential or general advice (please see the section on Accessibility regarding SEND access). Please note that we do not usually provide accompanists for pre-application advice auditions.

## What are we looking for?

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We look for the following qualities:

- **Musicianship**  
Your ability to deal fluently with practical music issues. This may include questions on key, rhythm, dynamics and other aspects of interpretation.
- **Aural awareness**  
Your ability to understand, identify and respond to musical sounds and patterns. This will include ear (aural) tests, mainly through singing, and pitching intervals, short melodies, answering phrases, rhythms and simple chord recognition.
- **Creativity/musicality**  
What we look for primarily is natural musical spontaneity and potential.
- **Technique**  
Your instrumental skills, including awareness of quality of sound, intonation and rhythmic precision. You will also be asked to play scales at the appropriate level.
- **Musical literacy**  
Your ability to sight-read and to understand and discuss music – we may ask you about your audition programme.
- **Musical personality/potential**  
We highly value these qualities. We are looking for your strength of personality, teamwork, dedication, enthusiasm, individuality and musical potential.
- **Response**  
With all of the above we are looking for potential and musical 'instinct'
- **Community**  
Can you adapt and become part of our community, honouring the principles of being ready and wanting to learn, showing respect to all around you and making wise and safe choices. Good behaviour, attitude and work ethic are important.
- **Work rate**  
Do you want to work hard and achieve showing independence and resilience, although academic achievement isn't part of the audition it is essential you work well and try your best in all areas of your studies.

## How do I apply?

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A complete application should include the following:

1. The application form: this can be downloaded from our website [chethamsschoolofmusic.com/admissions/applications](https://chethamsschoolofmusic.com/admissions/applications) or posted to you on request. It should be signed by the applicant's current Headteacher or if that is not possible, an email acknowledgment from the Headteacher to be forwarded to us, confirming their awareness of the application.
2. We will need to see your school reports and a reference from your current school. We will ask for information regarding ability, SEND, EAL, Safeguarding, Behaviour and general commitment to School. Please ensure that they are aware of your application before we contact them. Copies of any relevant exam certificates, festival awards etc. It is essential that application forms are filled in fully as possible, as a place may be withdrawn if information is deliberately omitted or inaccurate.
3. References from instrumental tutors, which should provide background information about your: suitability; attitude to, and aptitude for, learning and practice. The Tutor Reference Form can be downloaded from our website: [chethamsschoolofmusic.com/admissions/applications](https://chethamsschoolofmusic.com/admissions/applications).
4. References from your child's school are an essential part of our considerations.
5. If you have not already been seen / heard by, and received feedback from, the relevant Head of Instrumental Department, please include with your application YouTube links to video recordings of:
  - at least 2 pieces on your principal study instrument
  - at least one piece on any other instrument(s) if applicable<sup>1</sup>
  - scales/arpeggios on the principal study that reflect the level of repertoire presented

Please begin the video(s) with a short introduction including the applicant talking about:

- a) themselves
- b) the pieces they are going to present

If you are applying to study composition, your application should include at least two written examples of your work. These may be handwritten or produced with Sibelius or similar programmes, and must be submitted as pdf files.

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<sup>1</sup> NB. a second study instrument is NOT a requirement for entry, particularly for pianists. When the principal instrumental study is not piano, and no second study instrument is offered on application, we would normally include piano lessons as a second study when we offer a place, as keyboard skills are essential to building a strong foundation for our students' musical development.

## What happens next?

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The completed application will be assessed initially by the appropriate Head(s) of Instrumental Department(s), who select those candidates they wish to put forward to the Joint Principal (TR) for main audition. During the assessment process you will discuss academic achievements, wider achievements and undertake a more general interview.

We may contact you to request an additional video recording, to arrange a 1:1 instrumental session or to interview you. Sometimes we will arrange for parents / guardians to have a conversation with the Joint Principal (NS) or

Head of Section as part of this process.

The outcome will be one of the following:

1. An offer of a place.
2. A place on the reserve list.
3. Feedback and an invitation to re-audition again in 1-2 years.
4. An email to inform you that the application has been unsuccessful.

There is no right to appeal the decision.

## Accepting your offer

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Once you have been offered a place, and paid your acceptance fee of £170 (+VAT), you will receive an acceptance pack and we will request some key information about you, to help us prepare for your arrival. We will send you some key information about the School

such as: term dates; full terms and conditions, and other details to help you plan your first days at the School. This will be contained in the Welcome Pack. You will also be asked to pay a returnable deposit of £340 (+VAT).

## Overseas applicants applying from abroad

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The normal school year in the UK runs from early September to early July.

If you live abroad and distance makes it difficult for you to visit Chetham's for an audition, we will accept a video recording of your playing, which should be submitted with a completed application form and other information about your educational and musical progress, including a reference from your principal study music teacher. Recordings should be recent but don't have to be accompanied if a pianist is unavailable. We will also arrange an online interview with you and your parents or guardian.

Although admission is primarily on musical potential and there are no academic entry tests, it is vital that you have a competent level of spoken and written English. All students study advanced level qualifications in English. You are required to take A-level Music and up to three other choices. Support is available for students whose first language is not English at an additional cost.

All overseas students must have an Educational Guardian in the UK throughout their time at the School.

## Applying to be a chorister

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Auditions for Manchester Cathedral Choristers are held throughout the year and applications are welcomed from girls and boys between the ages of 8-10. Choristers are educated as Day Students at Chetham's and also study one instrument at the School. They normally remain in the Cathedral Choir until the end of Year 8 when they can request a place at Chetham's as a singer, apply to audition as an instrumentalist if appropriate, or complete their secondary education elsewhere.

Potential choristers do not need any prior experience to audition for the Choir; we are looking for children who enjoy singing, being part of a close-knit team and who, with their parents, will commit to a demanding but immensely rewarding schedule. Choristers attend rehearsals in the cathedral each day and sing for the weekly round of services and other special events such as live radio broadcasts, CD recordings and touring within the UK, Europe and beyond. They are busy during many holiday periods and weekends; Christmas and Easter are especially busy periods and it is important that parents are aware of these considerations when applying for a choristership.

Choristers attend most lessons and practice sessions at school with the other students, and their daily rehearsals and services at the Cathedral are integrated into the School timetable. They have timetabled music lessons, as do the other students, and if they do not already play an instrument when they come to Chetham's they will be expected to learn the piano.

To enquire about choristerships, please contact the Cathedral in the first instance:

Telephone: +44(0)161 833 2220 Email: [christopher.stokes@manchestercathedral.org](mailto:christopher.stokes@manchestercathedral.org)

## Accessibility

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We welcome applications from students with diverse backgrounds, special needs or disabilities. It is true that our school buildings vary in age and accessibility but we will do all that we can to make reasonable adjustments in keeping with the *Equality Act 2010* and the *Children and Families Act 2014*.

The School needs to be aware of any known disability, learning issues, medical issues (both physical and mental) or special educational needs which may affect an applicant's ability to participate in the admissions procedure so they can take full advantage of the education provided at the School. Parents of an applicant who has any disability, learning differences or special educational needs or existing Access Arrangements for examinations

should disclose full details to the School at the point of application. If this is not done, we reserve the right to withdraw the place as we can only make an offer based on a full understanding of need and provision. Any further changes to circumstances should also be made known to the School as soon as possible during and after application.

The School will then be better able to assess those needs and consult with parents about the adjustments which can reasonably be made to ensure that the application / audition procedure is accessible for the applicant, and that the School can reduce any potential or perceived barriers for the applicant should an offer of a place be made.

## Your data

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Chetham's believes that privacy is a fundamental human right. Chetham's data storage systems are designed to minimise the amount of data collected, used and stored. The systems are also designed to keep your data as safe as possible. Any data you submit

in digital or physical form including video or audio recordings will be retained, secured and disposed of in accordance with the terms of our *Data Protection (Privacy) Policy and Notices*, which have regard to the *GDPR (2016)* and the *UK Data Protection Act (2018)*.