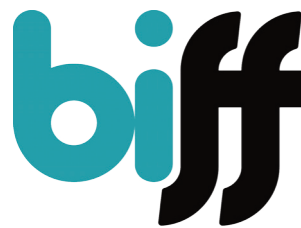


Blackburn Festival of Speech, Music and Dance

Music Syllabus 2026



PERFORM | EDUCATE | INSPIRE

Blackburn Festival is affiliated to
The British and International Federation of Festivals
for Music, Dance and Speech



www.blackburnfestival.com



Blackburn Festival of Speech Music and Dance



@blackburnfest

Registered Charity No: 222789

Festival Dates and Venue 2026

Dates

Saturday 25th April and Sunday 26th April

Closing date for entries: 27th February 2026

Venue

Westholme School

Meins Road, Blackburn BB2 6QU

Entries

Entry forms can be found on the website: www.blackburnfestival.com

You can submit the Microsoft form, or fill in the Excel sheet if you have multiple entries. Email the Excel sheet form to music.blackburnfestival@gmail.com

Once submitted please send appropriate payment for the total entry by BACs.

Fees

Solos 18 and under	£10 per class
Solo recitals classes 216, 243, 250 and 255	£12 per class
Duets	£15 per class
Instrumental Groups	£20 per class

Banking Details

Account name: Blackburn Speech, Music and Dance

Sort Code: 01-00-85 Account Number: 50165658

Please include name and discipline thus: Music - <name of performer or teacher/school> E.g. Music – Charlie Smith

The Music Secretaries: Suganya Reddy and Suzanne Lowe

music.blackburnfestival@gmail.com

Copies of music for the Accompanist must be sent at the time of entry

Blackburn Festival
15, The Drive
Brockhall Village
Blackburn
BB6 8BJ

They must be clearly labelled with the class, title, name and address of the

competitor, and must arrive by 6th March 2025

Use three small pieces of sellotape along the long edges to form one sheet of music.

Accompanists reserve the right not to play if music is not sent by the required time.

Festival Regulations

All entries must be sent to the relevant Secretary on or before the closing date.

The committee reserves the right to refuse any entry, to combine or withdraw any class deemed to have insufficient entries, or the divide any class with a large number of entries.

The Festival is open to individuals aged 18 and under

The order of competing in all classes will be decided by ballot and performers will be informed of class timings.

The starting times of the classes are approximate and classes may start before or after the times stated. Performers should arrive in good time for their classes.

In classes where special conditions are laid down, failure to observe said conditions will lead to disqualification.

Entry fees include the Adjudicator's remarks which will be available at the end of each

class or session. No entry fee will be returnable.

The Festival Committee shall have the power to decide all other matters connected with the conduct of the Festival not provided for in these regulations.

All communications must be addressed to the relevant Secretary.

Communications with the Adjudicator concerning any matter relating to the Festival by competitors, teachers or other interested parties prior to or during the competitions is prohibited.

Video recording, photography and audio recording during any performance is prohibited.

Any protest must be in writing, duly signed, stating the cause, and must be delivered to the Secretary on the day of the competition together with a fee of £5 which will be refunded if the protest is upheld.

Music Specific Regulations

Own Choice items must be stated on the entry form giving Title, Work, Composer and duration. Pieces should not be used in more than one class, and changes will not be permitted after the closing entry date 27th February 2026, otherwise performers will be disqualified.

Time limits should be strictly observed, over running will be penalised. The Adjudicator's report will be given but no mark or place.

Where an age limit is mentioned, the age must be reckoned as on the opening date of the Music Festival (25th April 2026). Performers may be asked to provide a Birth Certificate.

Age of a duet/trio/group is determined by the eldest performer

Backing tracks may be used for Pop classes, Musical Theatre and Disney classes. The official accompanist must be used for all other classes. A digital copy of the backing track should be emailed to the music secretaries by 6th March 2026.

Please note we do not have the facilities to play CDs.

Copies of music for the Accompanist must be sent at the time of entry to:

Blackburn Festival
15, The Drive
Brockhall Village
Blackburn
BB6 8BJ

They must be clearly labelled with the class, title, name and address of the competitor, and must arrive by 6th March 2026

Use three small pieces of sellotape along the long edges to form one sheet of music.

Accompanists reserve the right not to play if music is not sent by the required time.

BIFF: New Marking Scheme

The British and International Federation of Festivals have introduced a new marking scheme which was first used at the 2025 Festival, and will be used again in 2026.

The new marking scheme promotes BIFF's core values- Perform-Educate-Inspire.

The criteria used by adjudicators have been thoroughly revised and offer more positive feedback to the performer to build confidence and self-esteem.

MARKING BAND	DESCRIPTORS	CRITERIA
Developing 65-69	A performance demonstrating an awareness of technical skills, requiring more consistency & artistry.	An inconsistent performance with an overall need for accuracy and /or continuity and artistic development.
Progressing 70-74	A performance showing development of technique and/or communication and commitment.	A generally secure performance in notes and rhythm at a reasonable tempo but as yet with limited attention to detail, tonal qualities, and style.
Merit 75-79	A competent performance, showing some artistic awareness and/or technical ability.	Mostly fluent and accurate, with some awareness of tone and style, but requiring a sense of communication and performance.
Commended 80-84	A convincing performance technically & artistically, with increasing stylistic & communication skills.	Confident, with clear evidence of tonal and stylistic qualities and a developing awareness of communication and performance, although there may be moments of imprecision.
Honours 85-89	An excellent performance, demonstrating fluent technical and artistic skills with emerging individuality.	Assured and expressive, demonstrating a high level of technical security, imagination and stylistic insight and with a real sense of communication and performance, although small blemishes may be present.
Outstanding 90-94	An impressive performance technically and artistically, displaying spontaneity & clear individuality.	A stimulating, imaginative and persuasive performance, showing stylistic flair, interpretative insight, poise and unobtrusive technical command.
Exceptional 95+	A superlative performance, displaying exceptional artistic individuality	An astonishingly impressive performance displaying effortless technical control and superlative individuality in its artistry, and profound musical insight.

Music Prizes

We will be awarding a prize of £25 each to our most promising young musicians - one instrumentalist, one pianist and one vocalist.

A £75 prize will go to those winning the coveted title of

Blackburn Festival Young Instrumentalist of the Year

Blackburn Festival Young Pianist of the Year

Blackburn Festival Young Vocalist of the Year

Use of Recorded Music

We are affiliated to the British and International Federation of Festivals (BIFF) and participate in its group licence to cover payment of fees for the use of recorded music at its events. Performers using music from commercial recordings are advised they should seek permission to re-record from the record companies concerned as the Festival cannot take responsibility for this.

All performances using music from shows in current production are subject to copyright law. Songs from shows in current production may be sung as a concert item i.e. with no costume or movement without need for copyright permission. Where movement or costume are included in the performance, copyright permission is required and the Festival Committee accepts these entries on the basis that the appropriate copyright permission has been sought. Queries on this topic should be addressed to:

British and International Federation of Festivals, Festivals House, 198 Park Lane, Macclesfield SK11 6UD 01625 428297 info@federationoffestivals.org.uk

Piano Section

Piano Solos

An Own Choice piece to be taken from any current examination board.

200. Pre-grade 1

203. Grade 3

201. Grade 1

204. Own Choice Grade 1, 2 or 3
Time limit 3 minutes

202. Grade 2

206. Grade 4

208. Jazz – Grade 4 and over

207. Grade 5

209. Own Choice – Grade 4 or 5
Time limit 4 minutes

210. Grade 6

212. Grade 8

211. Grade 7.

213. Own Choice Grade 6 and above
Time limit 5 minutes

214. Own Choice of music by Chopin or Debussy
18 years and under
Time limit 6 minutes

215. Own Choice of 20th/21st Century music
18 years and under
Time limit 6 minutes

216. Piano Solo Recital Class
Own Choice of 2 or 3 contrasting pieces
18 years and under
Combined time limit not to exceed 15 minutes

Piano Duets

219. Year 8 and under
Own Choice
Time limit 2 minutes

220. Year 11 and under
Own Choice
Time limit 4 minutes

221. Year 13 and under
Own Choice
Time limit 5 minutes

Instrumental Section: Strings

Performers may enter twice in the same class but with a different instrument.

Guitar Solos

Electric

- 232. Electric Guitar Year 8 and under
- 233. Electric Guitar Year 11 and under
- 234. Electric Guitar Year 13 under

Classical

- 235. Classical Guitar Year 8 and under
- 236. Classical Guitar Year 11 and under
- 237. Classical Guitar Year 13 under

String Solos

- 238. Preparatory and Grade 1

Own Choice

Time limit 2 minutes

- 239. Grade 2 and 3

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

- 240. Grade 4 and 5

Own Choice

Time limit 5 minutes

- 241. Grade 6 and 7

Own Choice

Time limit 8 minutes

- 242. Grade 8 and above Solo Recital

Own Choice of 2 contrasting pieces

Combined time limit not to exceed 15 minutes

String Duets

- 243. String Duet Year 8 and under

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

- 244. String Duet Year 11 and under

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

- 245. String Duet Year 13 and under

Own Choice

Time limit 5 minutes

Instrumental Section: Brass

- 246. Preparatory and Grade 1

Own Choice

Time limit 2 minutes

- 247. Grade 2 and 3

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

- 248. Grade 4 and 5

Own Choice

Time limit 5 minutes

- 249. Grade 6 and 7

Own Choice

Time limit 8 minutes

- 250. Grade 8 and above Solo Recital

Own Choice of 2 contrasting pieces

Combined time limit not to exceed 15 minutes

Instrumental Section: Woodwind (excluding recorder)

251. Preparatory and Grade 1

Own Choice

Time limit 2 minutes

252. Grade 2 and 3

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

253. Grade 4 and 5

Own Choice

Time limit 5 minutes

254. Grade 6 and 7

Own Choice

Time limit 8 minutes

255. Grade 8 and above Solo Recital

Own Choice of 2 contrasting pieces

Combined time limit not to exceed 15 minutes

Instrumental Section: Recorder Recorder Solos

256. 9 years and under (Descant)

Own Choice

Time limit 2 minutes

257. 12 years and under (Descant or Treble)

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

258. 14 years and under (Descant or Treble)

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

259. 18 years and under (Descant or Treble)

Own Choice from any Grade 5 and above syllabus in current use

Time limit 5 minutes

Recorder Duets

260. 12 years and under

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

261. 12 years and over

Own Choice

Time Limit 4 minutes

Instrumental Groups: Trios, Quartets or Quintets

A minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 performers. May include any instrument.

Performers may enter more than once either by playing a different instrument or by playing with a different group/number of performers.

262. Year 8 and under

Own Choice

Time limit 3 minutes

264. Year 13 and under

Own Choice

Time limit 5 minutes

263. Year 11 and under

Own Choice

Time limit 5 minutes

Vocal

Junior Vocal

Time limit for all Junior vocal classes: 4 minutes

Classical

(excluding Pop, Folk, Musical Theatre and Disney)

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 270. Prep and Grade 1 | 273. Grade 6 and 7 |
| 271. Grade 2 and 3 | 274. Grade 8 and above |
| 272. Grade 4 and 5 | |

Folk Song

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 275. 12 years and under | 277. 16 years and under |
| 276. 14 years and under | 278. 18 years and under |

Musical Theatre

For Musical Theatre, either a backing track or the Festival accompanist may be used. If you plan to use the Festival accompanist please send your music to the Secretary by 19th December. If using a backing track, please send an electronic copy to the Music Secretaries. Please note, we no longer have the facilities to play CDs.

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|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 279. 12 years and under | 281. 16 years and under |
| 280. 14 years and under | 282. 18 years and under |

Pop Song

Backing tracks may be used in these classes. Please send an electronic copy to the Music Secretaries. Please note, we no longer have the facilities to play CDs

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 283. 12 years and under | 285. 16 years and under |
| 284. 14 years and under | 286. 18 years and under |

Disney

Backing tracks may be used in these classes. Please send an electronic copy to the Music Secretaries. Please note, we no longer have the facilities to play CDs

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 287. 12 years and under | 289. 16 years and under |
| 288. 14 years and under | 290. 18 years and under |

Song in a language other than English

291. 12 years and under

292. 14 years and under

293. 16 years and under

294. 18 years and under

British/American Composer Class (excluding Musical Theatre/Disney/Pop/Classical)

295. 12 years and under

296. 14 years and under

297. 16 years and under

298. 18 years and under

Blackburn Festival of Speech, Music and Dance

We are affiliated to The British and International Federation of Festivals



To enable participation in the Performing Arts

Blackburn Festival gives the opportunity for amateurs to form an appreciation of artistic standards; to perform in a state of the art venue, before a different type of audience; to participate in workshops and master classes; to be assessed, encouraged and inspired by active professional adjudicators they would not meet in any other way.

Every skill gained in preparing for and giving a performance is a valuable skill which will be used at job interviews, in the workplace, in leisure activities and interpersonal relationships throughout life.

Our Festival is entirely organised and run by volunteers, not just the Festival Committee, but also those who give up their weekends throughout the Festival days to ensure our performers have a good experience. Few realise the enormous amount of detailed planning which lies behind the Festival itself. Anyone who can take responsibility for organising a particular element of Blackburn Festival is most welcome.

Adjudicators educate and inspire greater appreciation of the work being performed both for the performer and the audience alike. We employ BIFF affiliated adjudicators to ensure high standards are maintained just as the founders of Blackburn Festival intended 80 years ago.

Our Aims

Enjoy

To celebrate and enjoy the performance of Speech, Music and Dance shown by all who take part in our festival;

Nurture

To encourage and nurture all participants regardless of ability or background to ensure that they enjoy a warm and welcoming experience to help them grow in self confidence;

Achieve

To highlight excellence and celebrate achievement by organising a public Festival to which professional adjudicators bring expertise, guidance and an educational aspect to the performers and audience;

Serve

To develop long lasting relationships with our greatly appreciated Patrons, Sponsors, Teachers, Schools, the Local Community and Friends of the Festival;

Endure

To continue in the footsteps of committees since 1945 to ensure that Blackburn Festival endures for many more years.