



Entry Procedure and Rules for 2026

Welcome to our 2026 Syllabus and entry procedure information for the Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech & Drama. The syllabus is only available in digital format. If you wish to see a printed copy, please print the documents at your own convenience; all documents are available to download.

Within the following pages, you will find helpful information to guide you through the entries process and the rules to note.

Festival Prizes

There are many prizes on offer for recipients of 1st, 2nd and 3rd place including trophies, shields, bowls and medals. Some classes also offer a monetary prize and an opportunity to be invited to perform again at the Gala Concert, which takes place on the last Saturday evening. The Gala offers those chosen to perform the opportunity to win further monetary prizes and trophies, including:

The Trunchion Prize of £250 for Most Promising Performer:

The Adjudicators will nominate individuals from Year 9 and under classes across all disciplines in Music, Speech and Drama throughout the week who they think show the most promise as a performer. The Festival Committee will then select a winner who will be invited to receive their prize at the Gala Concert.

The Elaine Bonas Prize of £100 for the Most Promising Young Singer

This prize was introduced at the 2020 Festival. The winner will be decided by the Festival Committee and Henry & Will Vann who donated the prize in memory of their mother.

Woodfine Lousada Prizes:

Two Woodfine Lousada Prizes of £250 (donated by Gareth Woodfine and Charles Lousada) will be awarded to the most outstanding Musical performance and the most outstanding Speech and Drama performance at the Gala Concert.

Entry and Administrative Procedures

Entry to the Festival is via the portal on the Festival's website: www.bedfordshirefestival.org.uk.

Full payment for all the classes entered must be made at the time of entry via PayPal. If you are unable to pay via PayPal, please contact the Festival Secretary. Payment must be received by 15th December 2025.

A discount of 50% off solo and duet fees can be given if the performer qualifies for Free School Meals. Please indicate if this is the case when making your entries.

Child Performance Licencing (BOPA)

To comply with current child protection laws, we will need to collect the gender, age, school, local education authority and chaperone information for all entrants under the age of 16. We need this to obtain our child performance licence, which is provided by the Body of Professional Approval (BOPA) through Bedford Borough Council.



The Following dates must be observed:

15th December:

- Closing date for receipt of entries and fees.
- Closing date for BOPA information for solo entries aged 16 and under

16th January:

Closing date for piece titles and composers/authors to be edited on the online entry system for all classes

1st February:

- Receipt of music for official accompanist
- Receipt of compositions for Class 155, poems for Classes 356 - 359, stories for Classes 360 – 363 and monologues for classes 364 - 366
- Closing date for receipt of BOPA information for groups with performers aged 16 and under

During the Festival

- **Minors under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or teacher at all times.**
- Entrants or their representatives may not have contact with the Adjudicators before, during or after any class in which they are participating.
- A printed copy of the piece to be performed must be available in the performance venue, even if it is not to be used. This is a legal requirement to enable the Festival to meet the requirements of the Performing Rights Society (see Rule 14). The Festival reserves the right to disqualify any performer who does not adhere to this.
- Please arrive for your class at least 10 minutes before the published start time.
- Performers should dress appropriately for public performance.
- Changes to 'own choice' pieces may not be made.
- Performers in Speech and Drama classes should announce the title and writer of their piece.
- Performers in Music classes are invited to announce the title and composer of their piece, but this is not mandatory.
- In classes where there is a time limit, the Adjudicator may stop the performance if the time limit is exceeded and any entrant failing to comply may be disqualified.
- Any form of photography or recording during a performance at the Festival is strictly prohibited.
- Certificates and mark sheets will be available for collection immediately following the class from the Steward. Certificates that are not collected at the end of the class will be taken to the Festival Office for collection.
- The Festival Office will close at **2pm on the last Saturday** to begin preparations for the Gala Concert.
- The Festival organisers cannot accept any liability for loss or damage to instruments or any other property.



Festival Rules of Entry

Please read these carefully before entering.

- 1. Eligibility:** No professional performer may compete. A professional is someone who derives their livelihood from the branch of performance **defined by the class title** in which they seek to enter the Festival. For performers who are over 16, this applies to any individual who has performed in a professional capacity in that discipline in the last two years. For performers who are under 16, this will apply if they have performed in a professional capacity in the last 12 months. This is in order to comply with our child performance licence (BOPA).

In any ensemble, the majority of members must adhere to that principle. Please refer to the music syllabus for more detailed information for each ensemble class. This regulation does not apply to conductors of group classes, accompanists or entrants in Class 150. If you are unsure of your eligibility for a particular class, please contact the Festival Secretary.

2. Entries:

- Entries must be submitted online using our website www.bedfordshirefestival.org.uk
- Changes to piece titles will not be accepted after the piece title closing date of 16th January. Full payment for all the classes entered must be made at the time of entry and at the latest by 15th December.
- Payment for entries may be made via the online 'PayPal' service.
- Any refunds required as a result of a fault by the entrant using PayPal (e.g., duplicate payments for entries) will be subject to a 5% surcharge as the Festival suffers a charge by PayPal on all receipts.
- A copy of the music or texts must be supplied for the Adjudicator's use and handed to the steward at the beginning of the class. Performers not providing a copy for the Adjudicator as outlined above, will be permitted to perform and will receive written comments, but the performance may not be marked or be eligible for any prize.
- With the exception of choirs or large groups, all performers **MUST** be named on the online entry form. In the case of classes involving more than one performer, only **ONE** entry needs to be submitted, together with **ONE** full fee payment. Requests for specific times or dates for performances cannot be taken into account at the stage of entry or any other time.
- It is essential that the information submitted on the entry form is accurate in every respect.
- Invoices cannot be provided for entry fees.
- Queries may be made either via our website (www.bedfordshirefestival.org.uk) or by contacting the Festival Secretary: 07824 829097 - festival@bedfordshirefestival.org.uk
- All questions on the online entry form must be answered. The organisers reserve the right to reject any proposed entry. No person is allowed to perform twice in one class except in the group, duet or choir classes and instrumental solo classes (where performing on a different instrument).
- In the event of there being only one entry in a class, the organisers reserve the right to cancel the class and refund the entry fee or merge similar classes together. Entry fees cannot be refunded except as outlined above. In the event of a class needing to be divided due to high numbers of entrants, the performers will be arranged to make for a more interesting Festival experience. Timetabling restrictions may mean that the separate sections are scheduled on different days e.g., Class 319A could be on one day and 319B on another day. Teachers, please



indicate when making your entry if you do not wish your pupils to be mixed up amongst sub-divided classes.

- I. The Festival organisers reserve the right to produce a timetable that is the best compromise between individual requests and the overall smooth running of the Festival.

2026 Outline Provisional Timetable - This is only intended as a guide and is not final. The Festival Committee reserves the right to make any changes as required when timetabling classes.

Saturday 7th March	Choirs
Sunday 8th March	Piano • Speech & Drama (including Bible Reading classes) • Choral
Monday 9th March	Piano • Speech & Drama
Tuesday 10th March	Speech & Drama • Strings • Primary School Choirs (TBC)
Wednesday 11th March	Woodwind & Brass • Chamber • Composition • Speech & Drama • Groups
Thursday 12th March	Woodwind & Brass • Celebration Morning • Festival Gig • Speech & Drama
Friday 13th March	Speech & Drama • Vocal
Saturday 14th March	Speech & Drama • Vocal • Gala Concert

3. Official Accompanists

All entrants may ask the official accompanist to play for any of the instrumental or vocal / choral music classes. This is a free, professional service.

To book the official accompanist, please indicate this on the entry system at time of entry. Then send a joined-up copy of your music to Mr T Grant-Jones, 35 Church Walk, Kempston, MK42 7BH by **1st February**. No recorded deliveries or email attachments.

- Join loose pages together with tape in a concertina style
- Pages should be single-sided
- The front page should show performer's name and Festival class number
- Confirm any repeat signs
- A covering letter is not necessary

Details of your accompanist will be sent with confirmation of your class date and time. You will be able to arrange any rehearsals if you wish, once you have this information. The accompanist will notify you of their fee for rehearsal time. There is no fee for the actual festival performance(s).

4. Backing Tracks - Pre-recorded backing tracks are not permitted for use as an accompaniment except in the following classes: 1-6, 52C, 54, 132, 149, 161 and 166. The performer is responsible for any equipment required and recording levels. All equipment must be PAT tested.

5. Speech and Drama Pieces

- a) Selections must not be included in any current examination syllabus.
- b) Teachers and performers are requested to be aware of the sensitivity of the audience regarding the content of the scenes. Language likely to cause offence **MUST NOT** be included. Subject matter and language should comply with the Festival's Safeguarding and Equal Opportunity Policies. Performances will be stopped if deemed unsuitable and the performer will be disqualified. Performers in classes for Year 10 and above will no longer be required to send pieces to the Festival Secretary in advance for checking but all performers are reminded that they will need to adhere to the above rule. Please contact the Festival Secretary for more detailed information.



c) Stand-up comedy rules:

1. Keep it Clean:
All material must be family-friendly. No swearing, crude humour, or offensive language of any kind.
2. No Sexual Content:
Jokes or references that are sexual in nature or suggestive are strictly prohibited.
3. Respect All Audiences:
Material must be suitable for children and people of all backgrounds. Avoid anything that could be seen as bullying, mocking, or targeting individuals or groups based on race, religion, gender, disability, nationality, or personal appearance.
4. No Rude or Crude Material:
This includes bathroom humour, violence, or anything that might be considered gross, graphic, or inappropriate.
5. Respect Time Limits:
Stay within your allocated performance time. Running over may result in disqualification.
6. One Warning Only:
If the adjudicator finds any part of your performance in breach of these rules, your act will be stopped immediately.

The adjudicator's decision is final and non-negotiable. These rules are in place to ensure a safe, inclusive, and enjoyable environment for everyone.

6. Music Pieces

- a) Repeats may be played as long as the performance is within the time limit. 'Da Capo' markings should always be observed. Accompanists should abridge any long introductions or tutti sections when playing orchestral reductions.
- b) An entrant may only perform the same piece once during the Festival (except for the Gala Concert).
- c) Entrants must choose a piece at the correct level of difficulty for the class.
- d) Arrangements of pieces may be played as long as they have been specifically arranged for that instrument except for classes 87-97.
- e) If an own choice piece has occurred at a particular grade level with either ABRSM or Trinity, it can be performed in that grade class irrespective of the fact that the same piece might have been selected at a lower or higher grade level by any of these boards subsequently.
- f) Instrumental Classes - In the grade classes there are no set pieces. Entrants should enter the grade class at the grade level at which they are currently working or have recently been successful. Entrants may therefore not enter more than one grade class (except piano classes - see below). Own choice pieces selected should be selected from a recognised graded collection or exam syllabus or be of the appropriate standard for the class. Any pieces played outside of the specified grade level will prevent the performer from receiving a prize or placing at the discretion of the Adjudicator. Entrants should always consult their teacher when choosing the class and the own choice piece to be played. Pianists may enter their chosen grade class as well as any of the additional classes. However, the grade level must be consistent throughout all classes entered and own choice music must be at the appropriate level of difficulty for each class.
- g) In the graded classes, only one piece is to be submitted for performance.
- h) In Classes 87-97 arrangements for piano are not accepted. They must be original pieces written specifically for piano.



- i) Tuning - Up to and including Grade 4 classes, entrants may be assisted in their tuning. It is the entrant's or their teacher's responsibility to ensure that assistance is available at the time of the class if needed. The official accompanist will act as a guide if requested but will not handle the instrument. In classes at Grade 5 and above, entrants are expected to tune without assistance.

7. Deadlines - Entrants are reminded that they must adhere to the published deadlines. The Festival organisers are legally bound by the Performing Rights Society requirements governing the details contained in the programme.

8. Time limits - The Adjudicator may stop a performance when the time limit has been reached. A performance that exceeds the time limit may result in disqualification.

9. Awards. The categories used are those recommended by the British & International Federation of Festivals:

E - Exceptional 95+	A superlative performance, displaying exceptional artistic individuality
O - Outstanding 90 - 94	An impressive performance technically and artistically, displaying spontaneity & clear individuality.
H - Honours 85 - 89	An excellent performance, demonstrating fluent technical and artistic skills with emerging individuality.
C - Commended 80 - 84	A convincing performance technically & artistically, with increasing stylistic & communication skills.
M - Merit 75 - 79	A competent performance, showing some artistic awareness and/or technical ability.
P - Progressing 70 - 74	A performance showing development of technique and/or communication and commitment.
D - Developing 65 - 69	A performance demonstrating an awareness of technical skills, requiring more consistency & artistry.

The Adjudicator's decision will be regarded as final. Awards may be withheld if the Adjudicator feels that insufficient investment has been shown. Certificates for First, Second and Third placings will normally be awarded.

Cash prizes - Where awarded these will go to those with first and second places as long as E, O or H categories are achieved except Class 26 where an Outstanding is required.

Medals - These will be awarded for First place in classes for Year 7 and under in Speech and Drama and Grade 3 and under in Music.

Trophies - Where awarded, trophies will go to winners achieving E, O or H categories. Holders of trophies are to be responsible for loss, damage and insurance during the term of ownership. Names of winners are not to be inscribed on any trophy. Holders will be notified by post when and where to return trophies. Any change of address during the year must be notified to the Secretary. Awards designated in this syllabus may be subject to change before the Festival.



10. Age - For Junior Classes, age specific classes are categorised by school year group or date of birth. For Senior classes, for purposes of entry, the age of the entrant shall be their age on 1st September prior to the Festival.

11. General

- a. The Committee reserve the right to substitute any Adjudicator without notice.
- b. The Committee reserve the right to consolidate classes.

12. Performance from memory - Memorising is essential in Class 154, all singing classes (except the oratorio items and choir classes) and all Speech and Drama classes unless stated otherwise. No extra credit will be given for playing and singing from memory in all other classes. If a prompt is required, it must be given only by the Adjudicator or as delegated.

13. Performing rights – As details of all music pieces, book titles and authors used throughout the Festival will be sent to PRS and ASCL respectively, entrants need not obtain permission for performance.

Copyright - It is the responsibility of each entrant to ensure that the use of any artistic work is not in breach of copyright. The Festival committee accepts no responsibility for any breach of this rule.

14. Photography - Photography and video recording by camera or mobile devices is strictly prohibited. The Festival Committee may appoint an official photographer during the Festival week for the purposes of publicity. By entering the Festival, you consent to being photographed unless you indicate otherwise at the time of entry.

15. Festival Policies, Rules and Regulations – All policies are available to download on the Festival's website. Receipt of monies in payment for entry to Festival classes will be taken to indicate that entrants have read the Festival rules, the Safeguarding Policy, the Data Protection Policy Statement and the Equality and Diversity Policy summary and that they accept all the rules and regulations of the Festival as indicated in the Syllabus. The committee reserves the right to alter any of the arrangements detailed in the Syllabus.

16. Child Performance Legislation - In order to comply with the current Child Performance Legislation, the Festival is required to pass details of ALL children taking part in the Festival to the relevant Local Authority. These details include the gender, age, local education authority where the child resides and chaperone information either individually or as part of a group. For individual entries this information will be requested as part of the entry form. For all groups this information must be supplied by **1st February**. All data will be handled securely in line with Data Protection guidelines. This may be subject to change.



Frequently asked questions

Where can I get a Syllabus?

The Syllabus is available online from our website and social media channels. The PDF can be downloaded and users should print the relevant pages at their own convenience.

How do I apply to take part in the Festival?

Entries are made through the Online Entry portal via the Festival website.

Go to www.bedfordshirefestival.org.uk and click on the 'Entries' tab to follow the step-by-step instructions.

Can I make a late entry?

No. Late entries delay the timetabling of the classes and therefore scheduling information which needs to be circulated to all performers. All entries should be received by 23:59 on 15th December.

How do I book the Official Accompanist?

See Rule 3.

Can I substitute a performer if the original performer has withdrawn?

Yes, provided this does not delay the production of the programme or any information being sent out. The Festival Committee reserves the right to make a decision on this depending upon the individual circumstances.

Do I get a refund if I withdraw?

No. The entry fee covers administration costs which will already have been entered into whilst managing the receipt of entries.

Do I need to send in a copy of my music/text in advance?

No, but all performers must bring a copy of their piece on the day of their performance for the Adjudicator's use. Photocopies are allowed provided the original piece is being used in the performance.

Is there somewhere to warm up or rehearse on the day?

For large groups and ensembles, the Festival will arrange a meeting room for your group and this will be displayed on the notice board in the foyer of the Corn Exchange or ask the Stewards upon arrival. Please note that this may be shared with another group. For other performers, there are a couple of rooms used for warming up subject to availability. Please ask the stewards upon arrival at the hall on the day of your class. There is no piano available in the warm up rooms.

Do I have to announce my name and performance piece before performing?

Speech and Drama performers should announce the title and writer of their piece before the performance commences. Music performers are invited to do the same by way of introduction, but this is not mandatory.

How long will the session last?

The length of each session depends upon the number of performances in the class. The programme gives the start time of the next class, which will indicate the approximate end time of the previous class.



Can we buy refreshments in the hall?

There are no refreshments for sale in the halls. Restaurants and cafes are available within a short walk of the halls.

When will I get my mark sheet?

Mark sheets and certificates will be available for collection immediately following the class from the Stewards. Any unclaimed mark sheets and certificates can be collected from the Festival office during the week or will be posted out by the end of March.

Can my people come to watch me perform?

Yes! We encourage all performers to bring an audience with them. Tickets can be purchased at the door. Tickets are £3 (£2 for concessions) for a session and 11 year olds and under are free. If you are going to attend several sessions throughout the week, you may wish to purchase a season ticket for £15. Performers are welcome to watch the whole session they are performing in free of charge. Audiences and performers attending are requested to follow all instructions from the Stewards and maybe asked to wait outside the venue before being allowed access so that fire exits are not blocked. This is especially relevant on days with large numbers of performers, for example choir day.