

NCO Student Placements 2027 Application Pack

Advance Placement

At NCO, our purpose is to champion the life-changing power of music.

Nearly 2,000 children aged 8-14 connect with National Children's Orchestras each year through:

- auditioned Orchestral Weeks and Weekends
- non-auditioned workshops and Orchestral Days
- activities with schools, music education hubs and other partner organisations
- free tickets to concerts

We empower children to uncover the joy of orchestral music, unleash their creativity, realise their ambitions and embrace a future filled with endless possibilities. We use the power of music to create supportive communities that enrich lives. The confidence, resilience and teamwork learned through music become skills for life, wherever each young musician's journey takes them.

Play together. Be unstoppable.

NCO Student Placements

NCO's Student Placement scheme supports around 40 students from across the country on our Orchestral Weekends and Orchestral Weeks programmes. NCO is committed to supporting and engaging with the UK's emerging musical leaders to provide them with insight, opportunity and experiences that inform and develop their understanding of working with children and within music education, particularly orchestral training. NCO's Student Placement programme:

- Enhances students' understanding of how to work with and to lead large youth ensembles
- Supports the development of best practice in music education in emerging music leaders
- Provides peer learning opportunities with students from across the country
- Provides an insight into NCO's learning framework and creative thinking through shadowing Music Tutors, Creative Leads and Conductors during sectional and full orchestra rehearsals

We have four different types of placement available at NCO - Insight, Tutor, Advance and Conductor.

[For more information on each of the placements available please visit our website.](#)

NCO Advance

Working in partnership with Music Education Hubs, NCO has created a placement opportunity for 2 emerging music leaders. NCO Advance is a more intensive programme **for music students who have recently graduated from an undergraduate or postgraduate course**. The opportunity has a higher level of hands-on delivery than our other placements; a chance for built-in progression in a broad variety of settings to inform their future career choices.

The Advance Placement will include around 20 days of activity, plus 3 mentoring sessions. This activity ranges from working on our weekend activity, being part of our tutor team during a

residential week, performing in our schools' concerts and joining our partnering Music Hub for a bespoke project.

The successful candidates will be mentored by **Helen Brew**, who is a tutor for NCO. Helen is Associate Principal Flute of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. She teaches at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and has served on the faculty of the Royal Northern College of Music and the Chetham's School of Music as well as numerous music courses around the country. Helen is a keen advocate for music in community outreach work, especially working with young people with special needs.

Through this opportunity you will:

- Have an enhanced understanding of mentoring large youth ensembles aged 8-14 years
- Improve your confidence in tutoring and leading young musicians
- Gain a deeper understanding of your own practice
- Gain experience in a variety of music education settings and forge valuable professional connections
- Create a toolkit based on NCO's distinct approach to learning with a focus on facilitating child creativity, child voice and wellbeing
- Have access to online training sessions on warm-ups and ice breakers, building relationships with young musicians and strategies to support neurodivergent young people

You will also attend an online briefing prior to your first placement activity which will include an overview of NCO's learning approach and information on safeguarding and working with young people and neurodiverse young musicians.

What will you do?

Non-residential Orchestral Weekends: These are held twice a year and we welcome up to 100 children aged 8-14 in each setting from Grades 3-8+, who come together with inspiring guest artists, conductors, and a team of experienced tutors to work on orchestral and creative music-making. On this activity you will take part in 2 Orchestral Weekends (one spring and one summer, both in the same location).

During this activity you will:

- Play in orchestra sections and assist Music Tutors to provide support and mentoring to young musicians during full orchestral and sectional rehearsals
- Lead sectional rehearsals
- Gain valuable pedagogical training and a toolkit for working with young musicians

You will be allocated to one of the following and you must be available for both weekends in your given location (one spring and one summer):

Location	Spring	Summer
London North (Camden)	27 th & 28 th February 2027	19 th & 20 th June 2027
London South (Lewisham)	27 th & 28 th February 2027	19 th & 20 th June 2027
North (Bolton)	6 th & 7 th March 2027	12 th & 13 th June 2027
Midlands (Birmingham)	13 th & 14 th March 2027	12 th & 13 th June 2027
South West (Tiverton)	13 th & 14 th March 2027	22 nd & 23 rd May 2027

We aim to offer successful applicants a placement in the weekend location closest to where they are based, but on some occasions we may ask applicants to travel further afield.

Residential Orchestral Weeks: This consists of three symphony orchestras - Under 14 (13-14 year olds), Under 13 (12-13 year olds) and Under 12 (11-12 year olds) - who meet for two, week-long residencies (one in the spring and one in the summer school holidays), culminating in astounding concerts in public concert venues. You will attend three days of one of the following residential Orchestral Weeks and be the only placement during the activity:

Orchestra	Dates	Residential Location
Under 14 Orchestra	5 th – 8 th April 2027	Sherborne, Dorset
Under 13 Orchestra	29 th March – 1 st April 2027	Sherborne, Dorset
Under 12 Orchestra	30 th March – 2 nd April 2027	Shrewsbury, Shropshire

During the Orchestral Week, you will become part of our professional tutor team for three days and will gain experience in the below areas:

- Planning/pacing sessions and outcomes
- Coaching styles
- Group dynamics, child engagement and behaviour management techniques
- Creative composition by being part of Surround Sound, our creative composition project
- Musical content - technical, listening skills, prep skills
- NCO top tips on wellbeing
- Running a sectional rehearsal
- Observing other Music Tutors and participating in musical, creative and recreational activities
- Meeting with wider members of our residential teams to expand your knowledge of running youth activity

Partner Project (location and dates tbc)

NCO works in partnership with Music Education Hubs around the country and part of your activity on the placement will be to be resident with a Hub to experience their delivery. This could include ensemble performances, in-school delivery, curriculum planning and individual teaching. NCO's Advance Placement in 2026 was run in partnership with Bradford Music & Arts and included a whole week of activity jam packed with a Come & Play with the Hallé, workshops with National Youth Brass Band, a Music Centre end of year concert plus the weekly delivery of whole class strings and forward planning for 2027.

Schools Concerts (Autumn 2027 – location and dates tbc)

NCO delivers concerts for primary schools in partnership with the Music Education Hub local to the school. These concerts are performed by an ensemble of NCO tutors and music students, introducing children to the essential building blocks of ensemble music-making. We also work with those schools' pupils who take part in Wider Opportunities Whole Class Instrumental lessons in a tailored workshop. On this activity you will form part of the performing ensemble and support our workshop leader in the instrumental workshops.

Additional online activity:

- Online NCO Weeks 2027 Activity Launch (optional): Sunday 17th January 2027, 3pm
- Online NCO Weekends 2027 Activity Launch (optional): Sunday 17th January 2027, 4pm
- Online briefing & training (mandatory): Monday 25th January 2027, 5pm

Who should apply?

- Musicians who either:
 - have recently graduated from studying music at graduate or postgraduate level **or**
 - are in their final year of postgraduate study **or** are undertaking a fellowship
- Musicians who play traditional orchestral instruments
- Musicians who are passionate about and committed to exploring a career in Music Education
- Musicians who have experience in delivering Music Education work (can include teaching, other placements, projects with orchestras, institutions, schools and groups)
- Musicians who are creative and critical thinkers
- Musicians who like to roll up their sleeves and get involved
- Musicians with an interest in and passion for improving access, inclusion and diversity within the industry. We are particularly interested in hearing from students from diverse backgrounds and those who feel underrepresented in the current music industry

What do I need?

You will receive a briefing and safeguarding training prior to the first weekend. You will need an enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) clearance to support any NCO events. If you do not have a current certificate, we will apply and pay for one for you.

Bursary

The placement includes a bursary of £2,000 plus reasonable travel and accommodation when necessary. Accommodation will be provided on residential.

How do I apply?

[Applications will be open from Tuesday 6th October through our website here](#) and will close on Thursday 12th November 2026.

Interview: We will shortlist candidates once applications have closed and will hold online interviews in the week commencing Monday 23rd November. We will let you know as soon as possible via email if we would like to invite you to interview.

Please get in touch with Emily Pieczko (e.pieczko@nco.org.uk) if you have any questions!