

Vocal Ensembles Handbook



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Introduction

Brisbane State High School has a proud history, and our Extra-Curricular (E-C) program forms an integral component of the State High experience. Tradition is valued in order to acknowledge the past and maintain a consistent identity.

The E-C program aims to offer a range of activities (sporting and cultural) that provide opportunities for students to participate, learn, develop and excel. Our E-C Program is an integral part of student well-being, promotes a sense of belonging and fosters a sense of pride in both individual and group achievements. Student participation in regular sporting and recreational activities is linked to improved attention and concentration, raised academic performance, improved self-confidence and reduction in stress.

History of Vocal Ensembles

Brisbane State High School has a proud history in Vocal Ensembles of developing talented and passionate vocalists. Established in 1926, the Vocal Ensembles program has seen many of its students pursue vocal and music interests after school, either professionally or socially. State High Vocal Ensembles have proudly engaged in competitions, camps/workshops, professional level performances and school/community events. We look forward to continued success and the creation of more State High history throughout the year.

Goals of the Activity

1. Culture – provide opportunities for students to demonstrate school spirit through engagement in a positive learning and community culture through singing.
2. Progress – engage vocal students of all ages and abilities in group singing, enabling them to develop their own vocal and performance skills while promoting development of self-confidence, creative and critical thinking.
3. Competition – enable group singing to develop to a point where ensembles find success at eisteddfods and are engaged to perform at events where they receive critical acclaim.

Mission of Vocal Ensembles

The vocal ensembles form part of a vibrant community of performing arts excellence at our school. We are confident in the knowledge that students will be able to explore their musical potential and find a rich and rewarding musical experience in the program.

Vocal Ensembles

The 2026 vocal ensembles at State High are:

- Vox Musica (SATB) – mixed Advanced Acapella Ensemble – Year 7 – 12.
- Chorale (SATB) – mixed vocal ensemble – Year 7 – 12.

Staff

The Vocal Ensembles program is staffed by teachers from within the school. This includes specialist classroom music teachers through to teachers from other faculties who possess vocal expertise. Staff participation in directing ensembles is voluntary and these people dedicate their personal time to engage in vocal rehearsals, workshops and performances.

Many extra-curricular activities have a Master in Charge (MIC) of the specific activity. The Master in Charge is responsible for overseeing the management of the program. Individual ensemble Conductors manage their ensembles and participate in discussions regarding event scheduling, repertoire selection and management of ensemble attendance.

In 2026, the Vocal Ensembles staff are:

- Miss Naomi Thurlow – Master in Charge and Conductor of Vox Musica
- Mrs Jane Iszlaub – Conductor of Chorale

Expectations of Participants

Conduct

Students are always expected to demonstrate a professional approach at rehearsals and performances. They are also expected to show respect and appreciation towards staff, facilitators, volunteers, supporters and fellow choir members.

Behaviour and uniform expectations are required to be consistent with Brisbane State High School's Policy.

Attendance

Attendance at rehearsals is compulsory and it is a year-long commitment. Students should check their rehearsal times at the beginning of the year to avoid clashes with other activities when planning their participation in various school activities. If a clash arises during the year, students must contact the MICs of affected activities to try to negotiate a compromise that suits all parties and maximises opportunities for participation. If a compromise cannot be negotiated, the relevant Director of Sport and Director of Cultural Activities will work together to resolve the issue.

All Vocal Ensembles staff maintain attendance rolls for ensembles. Students enrolled in a vocal ensemble are expected to attend rehearsals on a weekly basis.

Students who are absent from rehearsals should make direct contact with the relevant ensemble Assistant to explain their absence. Attendance at performances and the rehearsal prior to an event and throughout the year is compulsory. The MIC and ensemble Conductors have the discretion to withdraw a student from events/ensembles if appropriate communication regarding absences, preparation and commitment is not observed.

The process for explained absence from an ensemble is as follows:

- **Illness:** Students who are absent from school due to illness should contact their relevant vocal ensemble conductor via email on the day of absence.
- **School approved excursion:** Notification of the absence due to the school excursion must be provided via email to the relevant ensemble conductor at least one week prior to the scheduled rehearsal or vocal ensemble commitment.

The Vocal Ensembles program is a year-long commitment. At the conclusion of each school year, students who wish to participate in the program in the following year must sign up via the relevant audition process, as communicated via StudentNet.

Students seeking to withdraw during the year must contact the MIC of Vocal Ensembles. Written advice from a parent/guardian regarding the reason for withdrawal is required.

Communication

Contacting Ensemble Staff

The best method to make initial contact with Vocal Ensembles staff is via email.

Conductor	Ensemble	Email Address
Ms Naomi Thurlow	MIC & Vox Musica	nthur12@eq.edu.au
Mrs Jane Iszlaub	Chorale	jiszl3@eq.edu.au

Team App

The school has approved the use of Stack Team App (previously known as Team App), Showbie and email to maintain communication for all extra-curricular activities.

Letters, notices and information regarding performances and events are published via Team App. All participating students and their parents are required to sign up to the 'BSHS Vocal Ensembles' group on Team App. It is essential that all students use their school email address – not their personal email address – when signing up to Team App.

Instructions for signing up on Stack Team App:

1. Download the app on your preferred device by searching for 'Stack Team App'.
2. Register for an account (or sign in if previously registered) with your full name (parents/carers use their personal email and students use EQ email only).
3. Select 'Find your Team/Club'.
4. Type in BSHS Vocal Ensembles and search.
5. Click on BSHS Vocal Ensembles (with the school logo).
6. Click on 'request to join this team's app'.
7. Select the relevant group: parents/guardians select the relevant parent/guardian group/s in the correct year, students select the relevant student group/s in the correct year.
8. Parents/guardians need to put their child's name in the access request message, so we know who we are approving. Occupation and employer details are not required. Click on 'send'. We will go through and approve requests on a regular basis at the start of term.
9. Please ensure that you have selected to receive notifications and emails so that when time sensitive information is sent, you will receive it in a timely manner.

Showbie

Students use the app, Showbie, to access repertoire and other learning resources for rehearsals. Ensemble Conductors will advise access codes for each ensemble's Showbie group at the start of each year.

Parent and Community Engagement

Parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged to contact the Vocal Ensembles MIC or Director of Cultural Activities if they would like to assist with the running of particular events for the ensembles. Assistance is usually called upon in the following ways:

- Ticket collection and management of the door at school events
- Assistance with the promotion of school events
- Assistance with catering at intervals during performances at school
- Assistance with acquisition of donations for raffles and fundraising at events
- Supervision at performances at school and off campus

A valid Blue Card (Working with Children Check) will be required for those volunteers who do not have children enrolled at Brisbane State High School.

Selection Policy

Financial Eligibility

In order for a student to audition/trial and be accepted to participate in any extra-curricular activity, parents must be up to date with payment of all school levies and subject fees or meet the payment plan requirements. Further queries should be directed to the school finance department.

Registration

Parents/guardians must grant consent via QParents to the Annual General Consent 2026 – Extra-Curricular Program and express interest in the program via the 2026 Extra-Curricular Program EOI survey that was email to all parents/guardians at the start of the year.

Please make contact with the Extra-Curricular Office via culturalevents@brisbaneshs.eq.edu.au if you are unable to complete the survey.

Selections

Membership to the Vocal Ensembles program is granted via audition. Students already in the program are not required to re-audition each year, unless seeking to move into a different ensemble. However, ensemble placement for returning students is subject to conductor and MIC approval and is based on the previous year's conduct and commitment to the ensemble.

Auditions are conducted through video submission or live auditions. Auditions will be held in Term 4 of the year prior (with supplementary auditions for newly enrolled students within the first week of Term 1) and process to audition will be emailed to parents/guardians who have registered interest in the activity.

Decisions regarding placement in the ensembles are at the discretion of the Vocal Ensembles Program conductors and MIC.

Newly enrolled students to the school seeking to apply for vocal program outside of standard audition timelines are to make contact with the Extra Curricular Office via culturalevents@brisbaneshs.eq.edu.au to confirm availability.

Levies

All students participating in the Vocal Ensembles program are expected to pay the annual Vocal Ensembles program participation levy. The levies cover expenses such as eisteddfod entry, buses to and from events, professional workshops, and other necessary items and services. All invoiced levies are required to be paid by the end of Term 1.

Please pay upon receipt of the invoice for this activity. Payment plans can be arranged; please contact our Accounts Management Officer, Ms Kirsten Jeffery (07) 3291 4111 or email kjeff0@eq.edu.au to discuss options.

In 2026, the non-refundable levy for a "Core Choir" is \$212.00 per student and \$35.50 for the second or subsequent choir.

Acknowledgements and Rewards

Pockets

Students may be eligible to receive a Pocket (a line describing participation, which is embroidered on their blazer) for participation in school ensembles. All acknowledgements and rewards are dependent on meeting the generic criteria as outlined in the Acknowledgements and Rewards Policy, and attendance and commitment policies.

Ensemble Information

Ensemble Rehearsal Schedule

Brisbane State High School offers two vocal ensembles. From time to time, there are also small group and solo opportunities in which students can engage. All ensemble rehearsals occur outside of school time, generally before or after school.

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Chorale 7:15am – 8:40am <i>Innovation Studio</i>	Vox Musica 7:15am – 8:40am <i>Foyer</i>	Vocal Sectionals 7:15am – 8:30am <i>Music Classroom</i>
Any changes or additions to this rehearsal schedule will be communicated via Team App at least one week's notice.		

Performance Policy

Performances for all groups are planned through the Vocal Ensembles MIC and approved by the Director of Cultural Activities. These include contest and concert performances and a variety of other performances within and outside the school community. As ensemble performances are a group presentation, each member of the ensemble is integral to presenting the best possible performance. If a student is unable to attend a performance, the Conductor must be notified in writing by parents/guardians prior to the performance. Unexplained absence from performances may be grounds for withdrawal from the program. If unforeseen circumstances prevent attendance at a performance and the Conductor is not notified beforehand, the Conductor must be informed at the earliest opportunity.

A calendar of performances is published at the beginning of each year and is available on Team App and the school website:

<https://brisbaneshs.eq.edu.au/extra-curricular/cultural-activities/vocal-ensembles>

Repertoire Selection

Repertoire for vocal ensembles will be chosen by the relevant Conductor. At times, the ensembles are invited to perform specific works outside of the school. These events are negotiated with the Vocal Ensembles MIC and Director of Cultural Activities and take into consideration the academic calendar, cultural activities calendar and major school event dates.

Contact and Dealing with Concerns

Parents can raise concerns with any member of our staff. Where possible, speak directly to the person with whom you have the concern. To make an appointment to see a teacher, please contact the school office by phone on (07) 3291 4111 or by email to admin@brisbaneshs.eq.edu.au.

In the first instance, any concerns regarding the Vocal Ensembles program should be directed to the Vocal Ensembles MIC, Ms Naomi Thurlow, on (07) 3291 4111 or by email to nthur12@eq.edu.au.

Where issues may be of a more sensitive or serious nature, the following staff members can be contacted where relevant.

Director of Cultural Activities	Ms Gabrielle Quin – gmqui2@eq.edu.au
Head of Extra-Curricular & Activities	Mrs Leisa McGiffin – lmcgi9@e.edu.au
Guidance Officer – Year 7 & Year 10	Mrs Helen Wittman – hwitt5@eq.edu.au
Guidance Officer – Year 8 & Year 12	Ms Bianca Sommerville – bsomm4@eq.edu.au
Guidance Officer – Year 9 & Year 11	Ms Carly Simpson – csimp100@eq.edu.au
Guidance Officer	Miss Tia Perchard – tperc11@eq.edu.au
Deputy Principal – Year 7 – 8	Mr Matthew Thornton – mjtho4@eq.edu.au
Deputy Principal – Year 9 – 10	Mr Clinton Sheild – cshie35@eq.edu.au
Deputy Principal – Year 11 – 12	Miss Natalie Coleman – ndcol0@eq.edu.au

We look forward to your child participating in the Vocal Ensembles program.

Gabrielle Quin
Director of Cultural Activities