



# PETERBOROUGH DRAMA FESTIVAL 2026



## SYLLABUS FOR 2026 FESTIVAL

The Peterborough Drama Festival is a registered charity: 1032610

Affiliated to the British and International Federation of Festivals



 [www.peterboroughdramafestival.org.uk](http://www.peterboroughdramafestival.org.uk)



 [pdfsecretary@hotmail.com](mailto:pdfsecretary@hotmail.com)

# FESTIVAL INFORMATION

## The Drama Festival committee:

**President:** Mr David Cupit

**Chair:** Mrs Pam Tedcastle

**Honorary Secretary:** Mr Ben Newstead

**Honorary Treasurer:** Ms Sue Mallows

### **Committee members:**

Mrs Maureen Cupit, Mrs Susan Edwards, Mr Peter Warren, Mr Ian Wilkinson

## What is it like to enter the festival?

Anna Slater recalls her festival experience:

I took part in the Peterborough Drama Festival from when I was in Key Stage 1! From around 2005 to 2016, I competed every year in multiple different categories. I won, lost and sometimes came in the middle. At the time, competing in the Drama Festival was a fun thing to do, outside of school, to harness my passion for Drama and English. It was a way to perform and compete at something I really loved.

Looking back on the Drama Festival now as a journalist in my 20s, I can recognise the skills that were born all those years ago at the Peterborough Drama Festival. It helped me gain confidence in public speaking from a young age, and developed my knowledge for the spoken and written word. Competing against my peers taught me resilience and determination, not to mention commitment because of the practice needed. It was a great educational thing to do outside of the classroom, and the competitive nature gave me something to work towards.

The Drama Festival is always something I saw myself going back to year-on-year and enjoying every single time. It can push you out of your comfort zone and help you to discover talents that could've otherwise stayed hidden!

## KEEP UP TO DATE WITH ALL FESTIVAL NEWS



Follow us on Facebook and X, visit our website and scan the QR code to join our email mailing list.



[www.peterboroughdramafestival.org.uk](http://www.peterboroughdramafestival.org.uk)

Email contact list





# PETERBOROUGH DRAMA FESTIVAL 2026



## WHAT IS THE PETERBOROUGH DRAMA FESTIVAL?

The Peterborough Drama Festival aims to promote speech and performance skills for all age groups in order to increase confidence, develop artistic expertise and to provide competition amongst all keen students of the arts.

The Peterborough Drama Festival has been running an annual festival in the city for over 70 years!

## WHO CAN ENTER?

We accept individual and group entries from schools, theatre groups and youth groups. As well as individual entries from students and keen adults who can enter any of our open classes.

### Our 2026 entry fees:



£7

individual



£12

duo



£18

small group



£30

choral speaking group



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[pdfsecretary@hotmail.com](mailto:pdfsecretary@hotmail.com)

# 2026 SYLLABUS

## Choral Speaking (select one of the two choices):

### Years 1 & 2:

Getting carried away by Colin McNaughton  
Crocodile by Jan Dean

### Years 3 & 4:

Storm Dragon by Witter Bynner  
I hate greens by David King

### Years 5 & 6:

A Smuggler's song by Rudyard Kipling  
Be glad your nose is on your face by Jack Prelutsky

### Key Stage 3:

The Chimney Sweeper by William Blake  
The Charge of the light brigade by  
Alfred Lord Tennyson



### Key Stage 4:

The Road not taken by Robert Frost  
Mirror by Sylvia Plath

## Verse Speaking

**Year 1:** Witches & Wizards

**Year 2:** Night time

**Year 3:** Animals

**Year 4:** Magic

**Year 5:** Seasons

**Year 6:** The World

**KS3:** Technology

**KS4:** History

**Open:** Love

## Storytelling

**Key Stage 2:** Own choice

**Open class:** Own choice

## Prepared Speech

**Key Stage 2:** Own choice

**Open class:** Own choice

## Prose Reading

**Year 1:** Friendships

**Year 2:** Seaside

**Year 3:** School

**Year 4:** Travel

**Year 5:** Heroes

**Year 6:** History

**KS3:** Adventures

**KS4:** Science Fiction

**Open:** Autobiography

## Improvisation

*Solo & Duologue entries*

**Classes for Key Stage 2, 3, 4 & Open**

Theme will be provided at the start of the class.

**Group entries**

Piece to include  
this theme.

**Key Stage 2:** Thank goodness that's over!

**Key Stage 3:** I told you so!

**Key Stage 4:** Just get over it!

**Open:** A difficult decision!

## Acting

*Solo, duologue & group entries*

**Classes for**

**Key Stage 2, 3, 4 & Open**

Own choice.

## Mime

*Solo, duologue & group entries*

**Classes for**

**Key Stage 2, 3, 4 & Open**

Own choice.

## Shakespeare

**Classes for Key Stage 2, 3, 4 & Open**

A sonnet or speech from a play.



**All entries and payments to be received by**

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026**

submitted online through the Microsoft Form  
(accessed by scanning the QR code) or via email



# CATEGORY RULES

## Choral Speaking

Groups are required to perform a poem, or an extract from a poem, in a lively and imaginative style. This may include vocal sound effects, occasional solo voices, small groups speaking separately, juxtaposition, echoes and many other effects to create the atmosphere of the poem. The group must work as a disciplined choir, speaking and moving together. Some groups even set the tone of the poem in the way they move onto the stage. The use of props and costume is not allowed. The piece must have a title. A copy of the poem must be given to the adjudicator's clerk before the performance. Choirs must be no fewer than eight and no more than thirty. The time limit is ten minutes and poems must be taken from themes listed in the year's festival syllabus. With the exception of Key Stage One classes, all performances must be unaided.

**Time limit:** 10 minutes

## Verse Speaking

Each age group is set a different theme such as "The Sea", "Winter", "Space" or "Night". Competitors (with their teachers) choose a poem within this given theme that may be recited within the two minutes time limit. The poem must be learnt. No copies should be used for performance on the day, but a copy should be given to the adjudicator's clerk on the day of performance. Adjudicators are looking for expression, interpretation, communication and enjoyment.

**Time limit:** 2 minutes

## Prose Reading

Each age group is set a different theme, genre or author such as "Mystery", "Legend", "Fairy Tale" or "Sea", "School" and "Magic". Competitors (with their teachers) choose a book that fits the appropriate title and they prepare a short passage from the book that is read on the day of performance, lasting no more than two minutes. The actual book must be used on the day – no photocopies. Adjudicators look for expression, confidence, communication with the audience and an understanding of the text. Competitors should try to make the book come alive so that their reading is dramatic and entertaining.

**Time limit:** 2 minutes

## Storytelling

Competitors choose and prepare their own story, either traditional or original, up to three minutes in length. No script should be used on the day. Stories must be told, not read. Story tellers may sit or stand for their performance. Any kind of story from thriller to fairy story may be used, but all must be suitable for a family audience. Adjudicators are looking for confidence and clarity in a story that captures interest through the use of expression, tension or humour, communication of meaning, different voices and dramatic pause.

**Time limit:** 3 minutes

## Prepared Speech

Each age group has a different title to prepare their speech around. Competitors prepare a speech lasting up to five minutes. All themes are age-appropriate and recently have included titles such as “A World Without Music”, “My Alternative Olympics”, “Stagestruck” and “Is the Film Better than the Book?”. Appropriate props and crib notes may be used. Adjudicators look for clear presentation, appropriate use of humour, interesting content, sincerity, good communication and train of thought, confidence, and the ability to present their arguments to the audience.

**Time limit:** 5 minutes

## Shakespeare

Under this section, competitors perform a sonnet or speech from a play. The time limit is three minutes. No costume or make-up is allowed. Hand held props may be used. The title of the piece should be clearly announced with a brief introduction setting the scene. Adjudicators are looking for a dramatic performance faithful to the works of Shakespeare. Adjudicators will look for good communication with the audience and a clear empathy with the character. A script should be given to the adjudicator’s clerk before the performance begins.

**Time limit:** 3 minutes

## Improvisation (solo and duologue)

The subject will be given at the start of the class. These may include titles such as “Disaster”, “Mistaken Identity” or “Lost in Town”, and performers improvise a short play around the theme lasting up to three minutes. Adjudicators will be looking for a clear development of the story with a dramatic starting point and a good conclusion. Characterisation, interaction and reaction are important. Themes are age-appropriate.

**Time limit:** 3 minutes



## Improvisation (group)

As with solo and duo improvisation classes, competitors make up a short play, but in group improvisation the title is supplied in advance by the festival committee. This theme/title is listed in the festival syllabus. The theme may give a location (eg “In the Attic” or “Behind the Curtain”), a closing/opening line (eg “I have certainly learnt my lesson” or “Did you hear that?”), a title (eg. The Soldiers of the Queen” or “The Lost Tickets”) and performers should use this theme to develop a short play with a clear beginning, development and conclusion. Adjudicators will be looking for good characterisation and clarity of story, as well as interaction and reaction amongst the actors and communication with the audience. There is a time limit of ten minutes for this class. Groups are no less than three and no more than six members

**Time limit:** 10 minutes

## Solo Acting

Competitors perform an appropriate speech from a play lasting up to three minutes. No costumes or make-up may be used. The performance should begin with the title and a brief introduction to set the scene. Small hand props may be used if appropriate. A table and chairs will be available if needed. Adjudicators are looking for a convincing and sincere performance where the audience believe in the character and the scene is brought alive through words and movement. A script should be given to the adjudicator’s clerk before the performance begins.

**Time limit:** 3 minutes

## Duo Acting

Similar to the solo acting classes, but the extract from the play may last up to five minutes and is performed by two people. In addition to the key points listed under solo acting, adjudicators will also be looking for interaction, relationship and response between the two characters in the play. A script should be given to the adjudicator’s clerk before the performance begins.

**Time limit:** 5 minutes

## Group Acting

Performers present an appropriate extract from a play up to ten minutes in length. (A “group” must be no less than 3 and no more than 6 members.) The rules for solo-acting and duologue apply. The play should be suitable for a family audience. A script should be given to the adjudicator’s clerk before the performance begins.

**Time limit:** 10 minutes

## Prepared Mime

There are three classes under Prepared Mime – solo, duo and group. A group is no less than three and no more than six. Hand props, costume and make-up may not be used. Performers prepare a mime up to three minutes in length. In the past these have included babysitting, working-out, flying away on a balloon, taking a shower and a scene on the beach. Performers have a free choice. Adjudicators look for clear representation of what is happening, a logical development, good facial expression and body language, perspective, reaction and interplay between the characters.

**Time limit:** 3 minutes

## The festival mark scheme for speech & drama

The Peterborough Drama Festival is affiliated to the British and International Federation of Festivals (BIFF). The Peterborough Drama Festival adopted the revised BIFF mark scheme in full in 2025, as we are dedicated to using BIFF Adjudicators to adjudicate our festival and celebrate the hard work of all entrants in the most positive manner.

All entrants will continue to receive a certificate and personalised adjudicator remark sheets. There are now 7 bands used to judge all entries. The Peterborough Drama Festival will still continue to use trophies, cups and shields for all class winners.

The new mark scheme is shown below for your reference:

### SPEECH & DRAMA

Marking Band	Descriptors	Criteria
<b>DEVELOPING</b> 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.
<b>PROGRESSING</b> 70 - 74	A performance showing development of technique and/or communication and commitment.	A generally secure performance in need of artistic development.
<b>MERIT</b> 75 - 79	A competent performance, showing some artistic awareness and/or technical ability.	A performance of some ability but requiring greater vocal or physical expression.
<b>COMMENDED</b> 80 - 84	A convincing performance technically & artistically, with increasing stylistic & communication skills.	A performance showing a degree of ability in presentation with developing modulation and interpretation.
<b>HONOURS</b> 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.
<b>OUTSTANDING</b> 90 - 94	An impressive performance technically and artistically, displaying spontaneity & clear individuality.	A performance of heightened sensibility in interpretation which commands audience involvement, sincere in its intention, content and style of the piece.
<b>EXCEPTIONAL</b> 95 +	A superlative performance, displaying exceptional artistic individuality.	An astonishingly impressive performance displaying effortless technical control and superlative individuality in its artistic interpretations.



## Festival rules:

Competitors work hard preparing for the Festival. Please make their experience enjoyable by following the rules of all festivals:



### No mobile phones

Please switch off all mobile phones.



### No photography

To comply with Safeguarding regulations photography is strictly forbidden.



### No videography

To comply with Safeguarding regulations videography is strictly forbidden.



### Quiet please

Please show consideration by being as quiet as possible at the festival.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

## Copyright rules and conditions of entry:

The Peterborough Drama Festival has entered into an agreement with the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society which means that entrants do not have to seek copyright permission for any poetry, prose or solo dramatic items performed to a time limit of 10 minutes.

Solo and dramatic items must be announced with title and author at the time of performance to qualify for copyright indemnity and the performers must not change the words or gender of the character.

Duologues and group dramatic performances are not covered by this agreement and copyright for these should be sought by the performers at the time of entry.

Performers and teachers should know that authors are directly reimbursed as a result of their works being performed.

**All time limits must be strictly adhered to, otherwise penalty points will be imposed.**

Adjudicators' decisions are final.

Ages must be reckoned as at the first day of the Festival. In duologue and group classes the class is determined by the oldest competitor.

Competitors should give a copy of their script/readings to adjudicators at the time of performance.

Further information about entries will be requested in February 2026 to enable the committee to submit relevant copyright performance information.

### Trophies:

A trophy agreement must be signed.

Responsibility for engraving trophies rests with the winning competitor.

Trophies won at the Festival must be returned. Arrangements to return can be made via email to the festival secretary.