



The popularity of performing arts is having an impact on attainment in other subjects at Broughton High in Edinburgh. The purpose-built structure will open on June 4.

Photograph: Tom Main

Suite dreams are made of this

Local authority secondary offers a full complement of drama and arts subjects in its new state-of-the-art facilities

By Jolene Campbell

TEACHERS ARE coming to terms with a surprising new challenge at Broughton High in Edinburgh. They can't get arts students to go home at the end of the day.

More senior students are signing up to the performing arts than ever before. And since they moved into a new school building in March, there is a tangible buzz in the corridors coming from the state-of-the-art drama, dance and music spaces.

Broughton is the only Edinburgh City Council school offering the full complement of performing arts including dance, drama and music. Its students and those from neighbouring schools populate the purpose-built dance studio, state-of-the-art theatre and quality editing and recording suites until well after the bell rings at the end of the day. Head of music Tudor Morris says: "The facilities are in a different league. It makes a great change to see students enjoying school this much."

At the official celebration of the

new building on June 4, students will perform in a promenade featuring music, dance and drama to entertain VIPs as they tour the building. Head of drama Suzie Lundy says: "It will showcase the school's commitment to the performing arts. Students will create an exciting multi-sensory experience that is a result of all the departments working together."

Broughton has a strong reputation for the quality and range of arts opportunities. The prestigious music school continues to attract local and international students every year. But with increasing numbers of senior students, a new Advanced Higher course and an approach to cross-curricular learning that is ahead of its time, it is drama that is taking centre stage. A-level dance will be available next year for the first time.

Despite a falling school roll from 1,100 to 800, the number of students choosing performing arts subjects at Higher has gone up. The figure for S5-6 students doing Higher drama

doubled in the past year, from 15 to 30. Miss Lundy has no doubt that the increased uptake is connected to the hi-tech facilities in the new building. "Students see them and want to be involved," she says.

Fiona Dalgleish, a Standard grade drama student who wants to pursue a career in drama and special interest in sound, says: "With the new building, each class is a mini-theatre. The sound technology is much better. It really enhances drama which can affect audiences more. I also get a chance to be creative and try new things."

Lauren Miller, also in S4 drama, adds: "We get to use all the new equipment including the lighting and lanterns and the black cloths. It helps to create more effects and makes the drama feel more like performing in a real theatre."

The increasing popularity of performing arts is having an impact on attainment in other subjects. "Without question, students involved in arts do better in core subjects," says Miss Lundy. "They build up self-dis-

cipline and learn to think independently. End-of-year reviews always confirm better attainment for those involved in arts subjects."

With the curriculum focus on developing confident learners, she says it is time to look to the arts subjects and their scope to deliver where other subjects can struggle. "A lot of subjects don't fit easily into CfE. The arts subjects are an ideal model for developing skills and confidence. They have their own natural pedagogy, so teachers can work quickly to introduce new approaches."

Active learning has been pioneered in arts projects at Broughton for years. Projects drawing on different areas of the curriculum bring unexpected subjects together with science, history and English and offer students more stimulating experiences. With the plethora of new facilities at their fingertips, students are experimenting more as arts subjects work together closely.

One-off projects that draw on different areas of the curriculum are becoming more integrated into

Standard grade drama. Every year S3 students do a project using the UN rights of the child as the stimulus to learn about Second World War. This year, as part of their devised drama, students have written a play that they will perform to a public audience. Miss Lundy says: "They are bringing history to life. In drama, they can really get a deeper understanding of the world."

As part of the interdisciplinary approach, the drama department has a strong track record in working with theatre companies and colleges. More drama, dance and music students are going on to study performing arts in further and higher education – 75 per cent of Higher drama students in S6.

With efficiency savings affecting school budgets, Miss Lundy says it is a crucial time to champion performing arts. "Arts can be first to go when things are tight. Here it is the reverse. Arts subjects are seen as a qualitative experience with chances to engage with industry. Performing arts improve employment opportunities."