HEADINGTON SCHOOL OXFORD
PIANO COMPETITION

The competition is open to all the primary and secondary school students of Oxford and Oxfordshire.

CATEGORIES

The categories are based on the following levels, taken from any UK examination board:

- Grade 6–7 – one piece (maximum 5 minutes)
- Grade 8 – one piece (maximum 10 minutes)
- Grade 8+ – one piece (maximum 15 minutes)
- Advanced Piano Duets (4 hands) – one piece (maximum 10 minutes)

Candidates should use these guidelines when selecting repertoire and submitting their application. Pieces outside the syllabi of UK examination boards are welcome. The jury may stop performances that exceed the time limit.

Candidates may enter more than one category, provided that the repertoire meets the required level. Candidates entering a solo category may also enter the piano duet category.

REQUIREMENTS AND CHOICE OF PIECES

The competition accepts classical repertoire for which a published solo piano score exists. Works written in a jazz style are also permitted. Improvisation, pure jazz performance, pop music, and electronic music are not accepted.

Unpublished arrangements (for solo piano or piano duet) are allowed provided that the full score is submitted with the application.

Candidates may perform one movement from a larger work (such as a sonata or suite). The chosen movement should demonstrate a clear understanding of the style and structure of the complete work.

Candidates must provide their own original music. Photocopies are permitted only when the music has been purchased legally from a licensed digital publisher.

PAGE TURNING

The competition does not provide page-turning assistance. Candidates are welcome to bring their own page turner if required.

REPEATS

All repeats indicated on scores must be played.

SUBMISSION

Applications must include:

- a YouTube link to a video recording of the performance
- a PDF scan of the exact score used for the performance

Once the entry fee has been paid, an automatic email will provide a link to a form, which will guide you through the submission process.

The YouTube videos must be uploaded and published as 'unlisted'. (*You can watch a tutorial on how to upload a video on YouTube as unlisted here*)

Please read carefully the following requirements for the video submission:

- Videos must be recorded in a single take, with no edits, including audio enhancements such as filters or reverb
- The performer must be fully visible at all times (i.e. hands and feet clearly within the frame).
- Video quality will not affect the marking, provided that the performer is clearly visible. Please ensure good lighting, too.
- Poor audio quality may prevent the adjudicators from assessing crucial musical features and may therefore affect the marking. Please ensure the audio is clear when selecting your submission.
- The video may be taken from a recent live performance or exam, provided that all the above requirements are met.
- The camera must remain static (no zooming or movement).
- Page turners are permitted; however, no assistance with the performance itself is allowed.

FEE

The entry fee is £10 per candidate or piano duet.
(Note: Please ignore the event ticket that you will receive from TicketSource)

PAYMENT LINK

DEADLINE

The deadline for submissions is **5th November 2026**.

SELECTION PROCESS

The jury will select 8–12 candidates per category for the Heats, which will take place live at Headington School Oxford. From these, five finalists will be selected to perform again in the Final, where the winners will be announced.

COMPETITION DATES

The **Heats** will take place in the Music Block at Headington School Oxford on **Friday 22nd January 2027** (all day). The exact time for each category will be confirmed via email and on the Headington School Oxford website closer to the event.

The **Final** will take place in the Main Hall at Headington School Oxford on **Friday 29th January 2027**. The categories will be arranged as follows:

Grade 6&7 and piano duets: from 5 pm to 6.30 pm
Grade 8 and Grade 8+: from 7.15 pm to 9 pm

The winner(s) of each category will be announced at the end of each event.

Both the Heats and the Final are free to attend.

Short breaks will take place between categories, and refreshments will be available.

Free tickets can be obtained via the link here from 11 January 2027.

THE HEATS

THE FINAL

JURY

Lynette Stulting MMus, BMus (Hons), BMus (Perf), HED (Abingdon School)
Sam Mitchell MPhil, BMus (Hons), AMusA (Radley College)
Ilya Chetverikov MMus, MA (Perf) (Summer Fields)
Dr Rossella Rubini FHEA (Headington School Oxford, **President of the Jury**)

ADJUDICATING PROCESS

During the first round, each candidate will be assessed by the jury through an anonymous scoring form, which will generate a shortlist.

During the Heats and the Final, the adjudicators will also discuss the performances before reaching a decision.

Jury members may not assess candidates whom they currently teach or have previously taught, but they may participate in the discussion during the Heats and Final.

MARKING CRITERIA

Candidates should aim to deliver a compelling, engaging, and expressive performance.

The jury will consider:

- understanding of musical structure and texture
- stylistic awareness
- sound quality and tone production
- pedalling
- finger technique
- phrasing
- tempo choices
- overall musical communication

Performances should be accurate and stylistically appropriate.

Playing from memory is not required, and the length of the piece within the allowed time limit does not influence the marking.

PRIZES

Each category winner will receive:

- a medal
- a voucher for Blackwell's Music
- an invitation to perform in local concerts

VOUCHERS

- Grade 6–7: £15
- Grade 8: £20
- Grade 8+: £30
- Piano duet: £15 per player

AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING

Recording or disseminating audio or video of the live performances in the Heats or Final is not permitted. The videos submitted for the competition may be shared publicly by the candidates after 29 January 2027, once the competition has concluded.

RISING STARS
PROGRAMME

The **Rising Stars Programme** is a new opportunity designed to celebrate and encourage young pianists at approximately **Grade 5 standard** from schools across Oxford and Oxfordshire.

Open to students from **all schools**, this programme offers aspiring performers the chance to share their playing, meet other young musicians, and become involved in the vibrant musical life of Headington School Oxford.

Participants are invited to submit **one performance video** of a piece at Grade 5 level (or equivalent standard). Following the submissions, the piano teachers at Headington School Oxford will select a number of performers to take part in a series of exciting musical activities at the school throughout the year.

Selected students may be invited to:

- perform in informal concerts and musical events
- participate in workshops and other musical activities
- meet and perform alongside other young pianists

All activities offered through the Rising Stars Programme are **completely free of charge**.

HOW TO APPLY

1. Pay the entry fee via the link below (£6 per submission).
2. Upload an **unlisted YouTube video** of your performance using the submission form provided after payment.
3. The video should contain one complete piece at approximately Grade 5 standard.

The performance video does not need to be professionally recorded — we simply want to hear young musicians enjoying and sharing their music-making.

ENTRY FEE

£6 per submission

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- One piece only
- Approximately Grade 5 standard
- The video link must be uploaded as an **unlisted YouTube link** (*You can watch a tutorial on how to upload a video on YouTube as unlisted here*)

SUBMISSION LINK