



Bradford Grammar School: School of Rock - proving that Bradford Grammar School can really rock!

As an NSTA representative, I was delighted to attend the Bradford Grammar School performance of *School of Rock* on Wednesday 4th February 2026. Directed with skill by Hetty Steele, this production proved that Bradford Grammar School can really rock! This is an immensely entertaining musical charting the gradual growth in confidence of a group of overprotected youngsters as they move from highly structured, formal lives to becoming free and confident rock stars.

Based on the hit 2003 film, with a Julian Lloyd-Webber music score, lyrics from the pen of Glenn Slater and scripted by Julian Fellowes, *School of Rock* follows Dewey Finn, a failed wannabe rock star who is down on his luck. After being kicked out of his band and threatened with eviction, Dewey intercepts a phone call meant for his flatmate, Ned Schneebly and quickly decides to make a bit of cash and pose as Ned to take up a supply teaching post at Horace Green, a prestigious prep school. He is horrified to discover that his straight-laced pupils haven't a clue about rock and roll, and he makes it his mission to educate them.

The decision to cast a female actor as Dewey was a brave one, but it paid off thanks to the very talented Eva, who brought energy to the ensemble numbers and lifted every scene in which she appeared. Her enthusiasm was infectious throughout the cast, particularly during 'Hardcore', which drew strong reactions from the ensemble around her. The rendition of 'Mount Rock' demonstrated impressive stage presence and drew the audience into Dewey's world through thoughtfully considered gestures and expressive facial work, showcasing his passion for rock music.

Eva was well supported by a talented cast of pupils who worked cohesively as their characters gradually emerged from their shells, transforming from quiet, obedient prep school pupils into a determined rock band aiming to win the Battle of the Bands. Whilst they all had their moments to shine, there are some who deserve special mention here. The ever-enthusiastic Summer was portrayed beautifully by Kate, whose wide range of facial expressions and gestures conveyed the character's many emotions throughout the show. Her solo as band manager was especially engaging, with instructions delivered with perfect timing and an impressive variety of expressions. Tomika truly came into her own following her breakthrough rendition of 'Amazing Grace', marking her growing confidence. Isla is certainly one to watch in the future, as her smooth vocal tone fully conveyed the depth of emotion required.

The worn-out characters of Ned and Patty were skilfully played by Sulayman and Poppy, who portrayed the geeky boyfriend and the overbearing partner with a subtle sense of underlying companionship shining through.



The ensemble demonstrated a strong collective presence, using levels effectively to enhance the visual impact of scenes throughout. The titular song 'School of Rock' was especially vibrant, full of energy and dynamic movement, supported by effective choreography.

The direction of Hetty Steele was particularly evident during the tender moments, especially in the bar scene between Dewey and Rosalie, the headteacher, played with skill by Charlotte. Eva and Charlotte developed their on-stage chemistry gradually, making Charlotte's solo of 'Where Did the Rock Go?' especially moving and heartfelt. The decision to stage this scene facing the audience was cleverly executed, allowing the audience to experience Rosalie's inner conflict and anguish alongside her.

Harmonies were a real strength of the cast, particularly from the teachers in 'Horace Green' and from the children and parents in 'If Only You Would Listen'. The reprise of 'If Only You Would Listen' was sung with such passion that it truly brought a tear to the eye as the pupils pleaded with Dewey to join them on their adventure.

The skilled pit band, under the musical direction of Elizabeth White, added tremendous energy and musical depth to the production. Several talented young musicians within the cast were also showcased beautifully as part of their on-stage roles. A special mention must go to the original rock band, No Vacancy. Their final performance of 'I'm Too Hot for You' was superbly executed, both visually and musically, with Fred, Thomas and Holly fully embracing their roles with an array of fun costumes, wigs and fake tattoos.

The overall atmosphere of the musical was enhanced by an accomplished technical team and backstage crew. Scene transitions were carefully choreographed to ensure slick and efficient changes, and the lighting was used creatively, particularly in the bar scene and the final Battle of the Bands. It was clearly a fantastic team effort, with all elements working seamlessly together.

The Director's message in the programme said that "this show is a celebration of incredible young people and the things they are capable of; we are lucky to know so many of them here at BGS." I wholeheartedly agree. Bradford Grammar School has truly celebrated and showcased the talents of its pupils in the performing arts. Rock on!

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