

Covid-19 FAQs

Update 25th January 2021

Which guidance should I follow for my activity?

There is sufficient variation between sets of guidance that you cannot resolve the differences. To avoid turning yourself inside out, assess the intention and spirit of each activity and match it to the guidance that most closely matches. This does not mean picking whichever guidance best allows you to do run the activity as you normally would!

As a guideline:

WCET or curriculum music in bubbles: Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools (DfE)
Extra-curricular ensembles in school: OOSS guidance (DfE)
Music Centres: OOSS guidance (DfE)
County or borough groups: OOSS guidance (DfE)
Community (mainly adult) groups: Performing Arts guidance (DCMS)

Note that there are also government guidance documents for Early Years and Special Schools, and official (although not government) guidance for youth work.

All these guidance documents are updated frequently so always consult the version on the website (other than the youth work guidance, they are all on www.gov.uk). They have started listing major changes near the top of the document.

Who approves the DfE's guidance?

All Covid-related guidance from Government now goes through a triple lock, which means it must be approved by Public Health England, Cabinet and Number 10 before release.

For some schools, it may be genuinely impossible to welcome peripatetic tutors back, e.g. if the only space available for instrumental lessons cannot be ventilated. If a headteacher is choosing to go beyond the guidance however and refuse peripatetic tutors, their decision is open to being questioned.

Is Music Mark connected with DfE?

The UK Association for Music Education – Music Mark is a membership organisation and subject association for music. Music Mark is in frequent contact with the policy lead for music education at the DfE and we write to the Minister and Secretary of State regularly.

Is *Music Unlocked* endorsed by DfE?

No but *Music Unlocked* is compliant with the DfE guidance for schools and out-of-school settings (except in the matter of [ventilation](#)) and we update it periodically to keep it in line as the DfE revises its guidance. In some aspects, we are able to be more specific in our recommendations than DfE, because of our knowledge of the

sector's work. It takes account of the PERFORM study (the 'Costello research'), which DCMS commissioned, and of a number of American and German research projects and papers.

Do we have to follow the recommendations in *Music Unlocked*?

No.

Music Unlocked (indeed, like most of the DfE and DCMS guidance) is not statutory. Risk assessment is key, as is satisfying your insurers that you are managing the risks responsibly and consistently.

Can my school say they won't accept any visitors?

Yes.

This is not the DfE's guidance but it is ultimately the headteacher's (or the MAT's) decision.

Can visiting teachers visit more than one school per day / every two days / per week?

Yes.

There is no restriction on the number of settings anyone can work in over a given period, even during the lockdown. Decisions to restrict are being taken locally (by Public Health, senior Education officers in LAs, Chief Executives of MATs and sometimes unions) and they have been successfully challenged.

Should peripatetic teachers social distance from other school staff?

Yes.

Peris are moving between sites and classteachers may be moving between bubbles. This all adds to everyone's daily contacts, so social distancing is necessary to control the risk of spreading the virus widely.

Schools manage pupils in bubbles so strictly speaking, any adults who cross bubbles should distance from other adults in school.

Should WCET or peripatetic curriculum teachers social distance from children?

Yes.

They move between sites and between bubbles, so they should distance to reduce the risk of carrying virus from one bubble to another.

Can a school tell me I cannot wear a face covering?

Not really, although some may try.

Some primary schools have a 'no masks' policy, in order to create as normal an environment as possible. If a visiting tutor has an underlying health condition or cares for an elderly relative (for example), they should have a personalised risk assessment. They will need to discuss this with the school, who should really be sympathetic. If they won't play ball though, online delivery or redeployment of the tutor may be the only options.

Can instrumental tutors wear a visor?

Yes but there is probably rarely any reason to.

It will offer some protection against large water droplets, although the range over which this protection is effective or even necessary is much less than recommended social distancing. Over any time though, a visor offers no real protection against aerosol.

Should singing, woodwind or brass tutors have a screen?

Possibly.

Clear pull-up banners or Perspex screens will serve two purposes. Firstly, they provide a barrier, which acts as a reminder for social distancing (helpful for some). Secondly, they will catch most of the large water droplets and stop them reaching the other person in the room. For this reason, they will need wiping down on both sides, although possibly not as often as every lesson. They provide no protection against aerosol.

If badly positioned, they can create dead spots in the room that are not reached by the ventilation. Move them to one side, against a blank bit of wall when ventilating the room.

Is it safe to sing in school?

Yes.

We have heard of cases where headteachers or MATs have issued a blanket ban on singing in school. They are wrong: there is absolutely no case for a blanket ban on singing by any group or in any establishment. A school may however fairly conclude from the risk assessment process that a particular space is not suitable for singing in.

We have also heard of headteachers saying they will not allow it in their school because "singing kills children". This is absolutely not true. There are no recorded cases of children dying from Covid-19 as a result of singing, or any musical activity for that matter. It is, at best, misinformation. Anyone asserting this should be robustly challenged.

So is it 2m or 3m distancing for singing?

Singers should be 2m apart and facing the same direction. The conductor and any accompanist should be 3m from the nearest singer but if this is not possible, a screen could be used.

Surely children don't need to distance in their bubbles?

They did not explicitly before Lockdown three the DfE guidance now recommends social distancing for singing and playing woodwind or brass instruments.

Bubbling is the way schools manage to limit children's contacts. Distancing when singing or playing mouthblown instruments, even within a bubble, does confer some benefits in terms of reducing exposure to large water droplets and reducing the density of each other's aerosol they are exposed to (as it allows aerosol to spread out into a larger volume of air before it reaches another person).

Until more is understood about the spread of new variants in the classroom, distancing has been reprioritised for higher aerosol music making. There is no more need to distance for non-aerosol instruments (guitar, keyboard, violin...) than for any academic lesson though.

Where does it say we can now sing and play woodwind and brass instruments in classes of 30?

It doesn't, although you can, even during the lockdown.

The schools' guidance published in June 2020 explicitly limited singing and playing woodwind or brass instruments to groups of 15. In late August, this limit disappeared and was replaced with guidance about space and ventilation. The guidance permits some things explicitly; others are permitted by virtue of not being excluded and this is one of them.

What instruments can we use in the classroom and where can find a list to show to my headteacher / the Director of Education / our Public Health people?

Anything. There is no restriction on which instruments (or mix of instruments) are considered safe for classroom use.

There is no list but the Music, Dance and Drama section of ['Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools'](#) guidance (January 2021) says:

Pupils should continue to have access to a quality arts education. Music, dance and drama build confidence and help children live happier, more enriched lives, and discover the joy of expressing themselves, while ensuring that all safeguards are in place to reduce the risk of infection in environments where singing, chanting, playing wind or brass instruments, dance and drama takes place.

No current or previous version of the guidance has mentioned any instruments other than woodwind and brass and, therefore, these have never been restricted.

Can we play violins/guitars/ukuleles/percussion in classes of 30?

Yes.

There was never a limit on these instruments. They pose exactly the same risk as any classroom activity which uses equipment.

If we clean instruments between uses, can they be shared?

Yes, for some.

Any instrument can be cleaned. Some, like pianos or drum kits, are always shared; djembes or samba drums are unlikely to be issued to a single user. Specialist woodwind (E^b clarinet, cor anglais, bari sax) or brass instruments (flugel, BB^b tuba) are likely to be used by more than one person, although there is usually time to quarantine and fully sanitise these.

The issue comes with class sets of blown instruments: yes, they *can* be cleaned but who can really be confident that they will be, sufficiently, every time? For this reason, these instruments should be issued to and used by only one student.

You cannot *ever* clean a reed satisfactorily.

Why can we have 30 children playing trumpets in class but only 15 in an after-school string group?

Class (or year group) bubbles reduce children's contacts. They are already exposed to each other for 25-30 hours a week, so any activity they undertake within the bubble does not expose them to any new risk, although activities which generate more water droplets do raise the risk level.

Groups of children in after-school and out-of-school activities will almost always be drawn from different bubbles. Limiting numbers in groups, keeping groups consistent, not attending multiple different activities and social distancing within groups all help to limit unnecessary contacts.

What does “natural airflow of 10l/s/person” mean and how do I measure it?

Ten litres per second per person is only achievable with mechanical ventilation (or possibly during a hurricane), and may not be practically achievable or comfortable to work in, depending on the room and type of ventilation. Other than recent new-builds, most schools will not have a ventilation system at all and your only option will be to open windows or go outside.

In practice, it's very unlikely you will be able to verify the airflow, although if there is a system installed, a sticky bun may induce the caretaker to dig out the manual and check what that says.

Check [here](#) for a set of questions to ask about ventilation but be aware: they were written to provide a practical assessment of the ventilation, not to be compliant with the DfE guidance.

Does the ‘rule of six’ apply to our music centre or county/borough ensembles?

No.

The limit of groups of 15 is still in the DfE's OOSS guidance (8th January 2021):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

Adult or community groups are not able to meet during the national lockdown. It remains to be seen whether the rule of six will come back into effect when the lockdown is eased. Making Music provide current information on the effects of restrictions on amateur music making on their website:

<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/can-group-get-back-in-person>

Can we run a residential course?

No.

With very few exceptions, boarding pupils are currently advised to stay at home and receive their education remotely. The 'Restricting attendance' guidance advises against any sort of educational visits and links to this statement from the Association of British Insurers:

<https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/topics-and-issues/coronavirus-hub/>

Should we be taking additional measures during lockdown, in response to the new variant(s) or if the R rate rises again?

There isn't any specific additional guidance but you can do.

Assuming all activity is being carried out according to the risk assessments, then anything else you introduce is unlikely to have a material effect on the risk of spread. Thus it is not logical to introduce new mitigations, although it is sensible to check that the identified controls are being fully and consistently applied.

That said, it is human to respond to a perceived increase in threat and doing something new may offer some comfort, as long as it does not make people complacent about the more impactful measures already in place.

Do I need a Covid QR code?

Almost certainly no, although there is nothing stopping you creating one.

Attendance records and student contact details exceed the data retention requirements for Track and Trace.

Education buildings are not in scope; neither are private homes, whether they belong to the tutor or the student's family.

Some members have created a QR code for visitors and contractors but were not using it for students and their families attending timetabled activities.

If/when you are permitted to hold a public performance in your own building, you will be legally required to have a QR code but if you are hiring the venue, it will be their responsibility.

Annex A in this guidance contains the full list of business premises in scope (18th Sept 2020):

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>

If you do wish to create one, you can do so here (live on 24th Jan 2021):

<https://www.gov.uk/create-coronavirus-qr-poster>

Do we need to update our Data Privacy Notice for Track and Trace?

There is a model T&T Data Privacy Notice in the guidance but if yours already says that you will release data where required by law, this probably covers processing for T&T purposes.