



## **Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (WCET) in Schools Covid-19 Guidance & Risk Assessment for Singing**

### **Introduction**

Because of the wide-ranging benefits that music education provides, we are keen to resume as many activities as possible from September 2020. We do however have a duty to ensure the safety of both children & young people and our staff. This guidance and risk assessment is intended to support schools and MPN staff to ensure that we can safely resume face-to-face learning where appropriate from September 2020. This guide presupposes that schools and providers are already complying with:

- pupil bubbles and social distancing of adults;
- improved hand hygiene;
- enhanced cleaning of school building and other settings;
- normal considerations regarding noise levels;
- maintaining vocal health i.e. singing safely;
- lifting (manual handling) and posture.

### **General Guidance**

Visiting teachers (including project staff) can be welcomed into schools; they can teach in multiple schools and across bubbles with mitigations. Visiting teachers should ensure that they social distance as much as possible from other adults and from older students. Social distancing of pupils within bubbles will not be effective and may be deprioritised unless the school's risk assessment says otherwise, e.g. because of a vulnerable member of class.

Singing releases potentially hazardous bioaerosols in proportion to volume: the louder the singing, the more aerosols are released. Decibel for decibel, aerosol release is comparable whether singing or speaking, so prioritising quiet singing, a beautiful sound and good technique will help control this. Certain consonants further increase aerosol release, so not insisting on musical theatre levels of diction will also help. Humming is safe.

For singing activity within a class bubble, the DfE no longer recommends limiting group sizes to 15. Social distancing of children is not necessary within bubbles, but we still recommend some distancing (as the room allows) and not singing face-to-face, to control the risk from large water droplets. If pupils are mixing between bubbles, social distancing should be observed.

Choirs can take place in a well-ventilated room but 2m distancing must be respected. Note that the area of the room is critical here: a higher ceiling does not mean singers are safe to stand closer together. The DfE guidance states a minimum ventilation of 10l per second per person but it is unclear how this could be verified or assured in most schools. A more practical approach is to limit rehearsal to a maximum of 40 minutes and then ventilate the empty room for at least 15 minutes.

Musical lunchtime and after-school clubs (ensembles) can take place, although additional mitigations are necessary where they involve children from more than one bubble - please see the Ensembles Risk Assessment for further details.

There is a recognised risk from the accumulation of aerosols, so the need to ventilate spaces is heightened.

Consider singing outdoors if you can. The risk of airborne transmission is thought to be significantly lower in the open air but be aware of wind direction for both the singers and the leader.

**Where singing is led by an external tutor, the person leading the singing and any accompanist should be 3-5m from the front row as they will be facing the singers.** Vulnerable tutors may also wish to consider a plexiglass screen, though this brings its own risks (see Risk Assessment at the foot of this document).

Each singer should have their own music and should ideally keep it between rehearsals. If words or music are projected, that is ideal.

If used, plastic piano and electronic keyboards can be sanitised with disinfectant wipes (unplug electronic equipment first). Do not spray them as residues may harm key mechanisms. It is a good idea to dry keys off afterwards.

Knobs, buttons, sliders etc on CD/MP3 players and so forth should be wiped with antiseptic wipes. Do not use sprays or soaked cloths to avoid liquids getting inside equipment. Always unplug electrical items from the mains before cleaning.

## **Guidelines –MPN Teaching Staff**

Our teaching staff will all be given refreshed guidance and training at CPD days at the start of September. They will be informed of the following expectations surrounding their work in schools:

1. Do not attend school if you suspect that you (or anyone you live with) may be coming down with Coronavirus symptoms: follow the current self-isolation procedures
2. Keep an eye on the school's website, news links, diary and newsletters to anticipate disruptions to your teaching programme. It may save you a journey and unnecessary risk.
3. Sign in at the school reception on arrival and immediately wash your hands thoroughly before going to the teaching room.
4. Remember that this way of working is as new to school staff and pupils as it is to you. Accept that there will be slips and honest mistakes on both sides and take the opportunity to learn from them.
5. Ask for the school's risk assessments for COVID-19 and for music teaching; ask about anything you do not understand and abide by the control measures specified.
6. Find out what the school's infection control procedures are; follow them and make use of anything the school is good enough to provide for your safety.
7. Find out, before you need to know, what to do if you or pupils fall ill.
8. If you think that a child may be showing symptoms of Coronavirus, stop the lesson and report your concerns to the school immediately.
9. Teach outside if it is practical and weather permits.

10. Observe current social distancing guidelines at all times (but don't use your instrument cases to enforce this in narrow corridors!). You may wish to consider wearing a mask when moving around the school.
11. If you can control layout and ventilation in the teaching room, set it up to direct airflow away from both you and the pupil(s) but not at the expense of normal safeguarding or health and safety considerations: e.g. do not move heavy furniture or equipment.
12. If the teaching room does not allow for sufficient distancing, explain this to the school. If no reasonable alternative is offered, politely decline to teach that session for the benefit of both you and pupils. If you have one, raise the issue with your manager or equivalent immediately.
13. You may consider wearing a face mask while you are teaching (of course singing, woodwind and brass teachers will need to remove theirs to demonstrate).
14. Avoid touching pupils' instruments, particularly mouthpieces. Carry disposable gloves and hand sanitiser in case you absolutely have to touch a mouthpiece or instrument, e.g. to set a reed to to fix a stuck valve.
15. Never play on a pupil's mouthpiece or allow them to play on yours.
16. Stick to the agreed timetable as closely as you reasonably can but understand if it has to change at short notice.
17. Wash your hands thoroughly before leaving the school, preferably as the last thing you do before signing out.

# Covid-19 Supplementary Risk Assessment

Whole-Class Ensemble Tuition (non-blown instruments)

|                     |                         |                         |          |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Owner:              | Music Partnership North |                         |          |
| Version:            | 2                       |                         |          |
| Date of assessment: | 4/9/2020                | Review date (max 1 yr): | 8/1/2021 |

## Description of activity

Singing tuition – taught in class bubbles. Led by a MPN tutor, with support from a member of school staff or singing tuition taught across bubbles.

|   | Hazard                | Who is at risk? | Control measure(s)   | Who is responsible? |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Airborne transmission | Everyone        | Social distancing within a class bubble is desirable, but not essential. Visiting staff should keep at least 3m from the nearest player wherever possible. Rooms should be well ventilated. Outside of bubbles, pupils should maintain 3m distancing and stand side by side or | MPN Tutor           |

|   |  |          |  |                               |
|---|--|----------|--|-------------------------------|
|   |  |          | back to back rather than face to face.   |                               |
| 2 | Airborne transmission  | Teacher  | Teacher to be at least 3m-5m from the nearest pupil.   | MPN Tutor                     |
| 3 | Airborne transmission  | Everyone | Discouraging loud singing in favour of quality of sound in quiet singing would generate fewer bioaerosols. Note: extremes of diction (particularly plosives) generate higher volumes of bioaerosols, so maybe try singing only on vowels sometimes. Humming is safe.   | MPN Tutor                     |
| 4 | Airborne transmission  | Everyone | Lessons should take place in a room with adequate ventilation (i.e functioning windows) Wherever possible, singing should take place with the windows open, even if this means that participants have to wear coats. Singing outside is also an option.  | MPN Tutor & School Staff      |
| 5 | Surface transmission via printed music   | Pupils   | Songs may be mainly taught by ear. If required, words should be projected.<br><br>Pupils should have their own copies of any music/books required. If tutors are using their own handout material these should be emailed to parents for printing at home and then go into individual, named, plastic pouches. Pupils will be responsible for bringing their own copies to the lesson/rehearsal. | MPN Tutor, pupils and parents |
| 6 | Surface transmission via equipment used for playing backing tracks or accompanying | Teacher  | Cleaning of PC/CD player/Amplifier for backing track or piano/keyboard.<br><br>Please see above for advice on cleaning equipment.  | MPN Tutor                     |

## Additional control measures

|   | Hazard                                     | Who is at risk? | Control measure(s)   | Who is responsible? |
|---|--|-----------------|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Airborne transmission                      | MPN Tutor       | The use of masks is advisable to ensure the safety of staff.   | MPN Tutor           |
| 2 | Airborne transmission (vulnerable teacher) | MPN Tutor       | Where MPN staff have informed us that they are vulnerable, they will need to work in line with their | MPN                 |

|   |   |                 |   |        |
|---|---|-----------------|---|--------|
|   |   |                 | personalised risk assessment. We may look into offering online tuition or sending an alternative member of staff to school.   |        |
| 3 | Airborne transmission (vulnerable pupils) | Pupil or pupils | Precautionary measures will be taken as per the above however it is at the parent's discretion as to whether they are happy for their child to resume lessons in this manner. | Parent |

## Risk

Covid-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a virus called Coronavirus. Symptoms can be mild, moderate, severe or fatal. We are heavily minimising the risk of transmission of the virus, both airborne and surface, by adhering to the guidance above and in the Risk Assessment. Government guidance will be followed at all times and the above reviewed where required with an initial review date in October.

**Date communicated to staff:** 7/9/2020

**Signed:** *D Francis*

**Date:** 4/9/2020, Reviewed 21/10/20

**Name:** D Francis

**Position:** Acting Lead Officer