

Singing in schools – summary of [current DfE guidance](#)

Updated 4.1.2021 – note no performances with audiences permitted in Tier 3 and 4 areas – other areas follow gov guidance for [DCMS implementing events in the lowest risk order as described](#).

The advice on singing below has been extracted and edited by [Wiltshire Music Connect](#) from the full DfE guidance to provide you with an “at a glance” reference. Full details are in the appendix to this guidance, with a table showing where this information has been extracted from.

This is intended as a reference/check list guide for **singing in school** - and **schools must follow any current and specific guidelines for their own school/locality, as well as checking for any national updates**. At the time of writing England is subject to a month long lockdown which includes suspending extra-curricular activity / out of schools activity - except for certain circumstances eg where the primary purpose is to provide childcare for working parents – [details here](#)

Singing in school

- Can we sing in school? Yes – group singing, choirs, and individual / small group singing lessons can take place – using the recommendations and guidelines for minimising contact- [refer to guidance](#).
- Access to a quality arts education includes music – but there may be additional risks where singing takes place. Although singing doesn’t appear to represent a higher risk than speaking and breathing at the same volume there is some evidence of additional risk can build from aerosol transmission with volume and “combined numbers of individuals in a confined space”
- Some of the mitigation the government has previously put in place has now been reconsidered and research continues. Studies suggest cumulative aerosol transmission is likely to cause risk. Until there is more detailed understanding follow current guidance.
- Specialist / elite music schools need to follow [DCMS guidance](#) for performing arts as well as the guidance below
- As with other activities – reduce contact. Keep singing within class bubbles and aligned with other separation / distancing measures in your school.
- Volume is an issue - reduce the need for prolonged periods of loud singing
- No performances with audiences in Tier 3 and 4 areas, other areas should follow the [DCMS guidance](#) for performing arts

- Visiting peris who teach singing can continue to be engaged and can move between schools as long as they comply with arrangements for minimising risk. They should maintain distancing requirements with each student or group they teach and make efforts to reduce the number of groups taught and locations worked in, to reduce the number of contacts made.

In Wiltshire most peripatetic music teachers are self employed, and many have been able to deliver some of their teaching online in order to continue supporting their pupils whilst minimising risk. [Associate providers](#) have been issued with guidance regarding [safeguarding and child protection](#) for delivering lessons online – and this includes informing school about any or their pupils they are teaching online – even if this happens out of school hours.

Whilst peris will be doing everything they can to plan their teaching for a range of scenarios they do need help from schools to do so. We encourage schools and tutors to collaborate in their localities wherever possible in order to keep specialist music tutors supporting young people’s musical progression

Please do check our #DontDropMusic resources [here](#)

- Any visiting singing teachers should not attend any lesson if they are unwell or are having any symptoms associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) such as fever, a new and sustained cough, loss of sense of taste or smell.
- Even though the weather is colder DfE is still saying group singing should be outside “wherever possible”
- Singing indoors can take place – use as much space as possible and limit numbers according to space and ventilation.
- Note: there is no longer a requirement to limit **in school** group singing to 15, because size of group depends on space and ventilation available.

The UK Association for music education [Music Mark](#) has [collated guidance](#) on singing and choirs from several sources including DfE and this includes:

- as much distance as space allows
- no singing face to face
- be cautious about fans and systems that recirculate stale air: you are probably safer leaving such systems off
- encourage quiet singing
- use microphones where possible (see equipment guidance)

Further Music Mark information about ventilating space for OOS Choirs can be found [here](#)

- **Equipment** used for singing can include microphones, lyric sheets, scores, music books, chairs, music stands

As with any other school equipment used:

- Ensure handwashing before and after handling
- Avoid sharing wherever possible
- Used named labels for equipment / music etc, limit handling to individuals using
- Use pick up / drop off points for any equipment / materials rather than hand to hand

Appendix

Government guidance for music, dance and drama in schools (correct at time of writing – 4.1.21 please monitor for any updates, which will also be flagged in Wiltshire Music Connect schools bulletins)	What does this mean for singing in school?
<p>All pupils should 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. There may, however, be an additional risk of infection in environments where singing, chanting, playing wind or brass instruments, dance and drama takes place.</p> <p>Additional mitigations, such as extended social distancing, were previously required for singing, and playing of wind and brass instruments given concerns that these were potentially higher risk activities. Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has commissioned further scientific studies to be carried out to develop the scientific evidence on these activities, which has allowed the government to reconsider appropriate mitigations and further research is continuing.</p> <p>Singing, wind and brass instrument playing can be undertaken in line with this and other guidance, in particular guidance provided by the DCMS for professionals and non-professionals, available at working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19):</p>	<p>Access to a quality arts education includes music – but there may be additional risks where singing takes place</p> <p>Some of the mitigation the government has previously put in place has now been reconsidered (refer to all guidance below).</p> <p>Research continues...</p> <p>Singing can take place in line with the guidance below</p>

<p>performing arts. However, these studies have also indicated that it is the cumulative aerosol transmission from both those performing in, and attending, events which is likely to create risk. DCMS is continuing to develop a more detailed understanding of how to mitigate this potential aggregate risk, but in that context, organisations should follow the guidance set out below.</p>	<p>Studies suggest cumulative aerosol transmission is likely to cause risk. Until there is more detailed understanding follow the guidance below</p>
<p>Schools that offer specialist, elite provision in music, dance and drama should also consider this guidance alongside the DCMS guidance on the performing arts</p>	<p>Specialist music schools need to follow DCMS guidance for performing arts as well as the guidance below</p>
<p>Minimising contact between individuals</p> <p>Schools must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing. The overarching objective should be to reduce the number of contacts between pupils and students, and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in bubbles) and through maintaining the social distance between individuals. These are not alternative options. Both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the age of pupils, the layout of the building, and the feasibility of keeping groups separate from each other while offering a broad curriculum. If staff need to move between classes and year groups, they should try and keep their distance from pupils and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults.</p> <p>Schools should take particular care in music, dance and drama lessons to observe social distancing where possible. This may limit group activity in these subjects in terms of numbers in each group. It will also prevent physical correction by teachers and contact between pupils in dance and drama.</p>	<p>As with other activities – reduce contact. Keep singing within class bubbles, and aligned with other separation / distancing measures in your school.</p>
<p>Additionally, schools should keep any background or accompanying music to levels which do not encourage teachers or other performers to raise their voices unduly. If possible, use microphones to reduce the need for shouting or prolonged periods of loud speaking or singing. If possible, do not share microphones. If they are shared, follow the guidance on handling equipment.</p>	<p>Volume is an issue</p> <p>Reduce the need for prolonged periods of loud singing</p> <p>If using microphones don't share - follow equipment guidance below</p>
<p>Performances</p> <p>Schools in local restriction tier 3 and 4 areas should not host performances with an audience. Where schools are unable to put on live performances to parents, they may wish to consider alternatives such as live streaming and recording performances, subject to the usual safeguarding considerations and parental permission.</p>	<p>Keep following the DCMS guidance for performing arts</p>

<p>Schools in other local restriction tier areas planning an indoor or outdoor performance in front of an audience should follow the latest advice in the DCMS performing arts guidance, implementing events in the lowest risk order as described. If planning an outdoor performance they should also give particular consideration to the guidance on delivering outdoor events.</p>	
<p>Peripatetic teachers Schools can continue to engage peripatetic teachers during this period, including staff from music education hubs.</p> <p>Peripatetic teachers can move between schools, for instance, but schools should consider how to minimise the number of visitors where possible. They will be expected to comply with arrangements for managing and minimising risk, including taking particular care to maintain distance from other staff and pupils. To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the premises, and secure best value, schools could consider using longer assignments with peripatetic teachers and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year.</p> <p>If a teacher is operating on a peripatetic basis, and operating across multiple groups or individuals, it is important that they do not attend a lesson if they are unwell or are having any symptoms associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) such as fever, a new and sustained cough, loss of sense of taste or smell. In addition, they should:</p> <p>Maintain distancing requirements with each group they teach, where appropriate.</p> <p>Avoid situations where distancing requirements are broken; for an example demonstrating partnering work in dancing.</p> <p>Make efforts to reduce the number of groups taught and locations worked in, to reduce the number of contacts made.</p> <p>Further information on the music education hubs, including contact details for local hubs, can be found at music education hub, published by the Arts Council England</p>	<p>Visiting peris who teach singing can continue to be engaged, and can move between schools as long as they comply with arrangements for minimising risk.</p> <p>In Wiltshire, peripatetic music teachers are self employed, and many have been able to deliver some of their teaching online in order to continue supporting their pupils whilst minimising risk. Associate providers have been issued with guidance regarding safeguarding and child protection for delivering lessons online – and this includes informing school about any or their pupils they are teaching online – even if this happens out of school hours.</p> <p>Any visiting singing teachers should not attend any lesson if they are unwell or are having any symptoms associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) such as fever, a new and sustained cough, loss of sense of taste or smell.</p> <p>In addition, they should: Maintain distancing requirements with each group they teach, where appropriate.</p> <p>Avoid situations where distancing requirements are broken; for an example demonstrating partnering work in dancing.</p> <p>Make efforts to reduce the number of groups taught and locations worked in, to reduce the number of contacts made.</p> <p>See further guidance below – individual music lessons Wiltshire Music Connect is your music education hub</p>
<p>Music teaching in schools and colleges, including singing, and playing wind and brass instruments in groups</p>	<p>Group singing teaching can take place</p>

<p>When planning music provision, schools should consider additional specific safety measures. Although singing and playing wind and brass instruments do not currently appear to represent a significantly higher risk than routine speaking and breathing at the same volume, there is now some evidence that additional risk can build from aerosol transmission with volume and with the combined numbers of individuals within a confined space. This is particularly evident for singing and shouting, but with appropriate safety mitigation and consideration, singing, wind and brass teaching can still take place. Measures to take follow in the next sections.</p>	<p>Although singing doesn't appear to represent a higher risk than speaking and breathing at the same volume there is some evidence of additional risk can build from aerosol transmission with volume and "combined numbers of individuals in a confirmed space" – but singing can still take place using guidance below</p>
<p>Playing outdoors Playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible. If indoors, consider limiting the numbers in relation to the space.</p> <p>Playing indoors If indoors, use a room with as much space as possible, for example, larger rooms; rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission. If playing indoors, limiting the numbers to account for ventilation of the space and the ability to social distance. It is important to ensure good ventilation. Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak.</p> <p>Singing, wind and brass playing Singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in larger groups such as choirs and ensembles, or assemblies unless significant space, natural airflow (at least 10l/s/person for all present, including audiences) and strict social distancing and mitigation as described below can be maintained.</p> <p>Social distancing In the smaller groups where these activities can take place, schools should observe strict social distancing between each singer and player, and between singers and players, and any other people such as conductors, other musicians, or accompanists. Current guidance is that if the activity is face-to-face and without mitigating actions, 2 metres is appropriate.</p> <p>Seating positions Pupils should be positioned back-to-back or side-to-side when playing or singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible. Position wind and brass players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player.</p>	<p>Even though the weather is colder DfE is still saying group singing should be outside "wherever possible"</p> <p>Singing indoors can take place – use as much space as possible and limit numbers according to space and ventilation.</p> <p>Note: there is no longer a requirement to limit <i>in school</i> group singing to 15, because size of group depends on space and ventilation available.</p> <p>Music Mark has collated guidance on singing and choirs from several sources including DfE and this includes:</p> <p>Class bubbles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as much distance as space allows • no singing face to face • be cautious about fans and systems that recirculate stale air: you are probably safer leaving such systems off • encourage quiet singing • use microphones where possible (see equipment guidance) <p>Further Music Mark advice about ventilating space for OOS Choirs can be found here</p>

<p>Microphones Use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly.</p> <p>By considering and adopting these cumulative risk mitigation measures, the overall risk will be reduced.</p>	
<p>Handling equipment and instruments Measures to take when handling equipment, including instruments, include the following.</p> <p>Handwashing Requiring increased handwashing before and after handling equipment, especially if being used by more than one person.</p> <p>Avoiding sharing instruments Avoid and equipment wherever possible. Place name labels on equipment to help identify the designated user, for example, percussionists' own sticks and mallets.</p> <p>If instruments and equipment have to be shared, disinfect regularly (including any packing cases, handles, props, chairs, microphones and music stands) and always between users, following government guidance on cleaning and handling equipment available at hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets.</p> <p>Instruments should be cleaned by the pupils playing them, where possible.</p> <p>Handling scores, parts and scripts Limit handling of music scores, parts and scripts to the individual using them.</p> <p>Suppliers Consider limiting the number of suppliers when hiring instruments and equipment. Schools should agree whose responsibility cleaning hired instruments is with the suppliers. Clean hire equipment, tools or other equipment on arrival and before first use. Equipment and instruments should be stored in a clean location if schools take delivery of them before they are needed, and they should be cleaned before first use and before returning the instrument.</p> <p>Pick up and drop off points</p>	<p>Equipment used for singing can include microphones, lyric sheets, scores, music books, chairs, music stands</p> <p>As with other school equipment used: Ensure handwashing before and after handling</p> <p>Avoid sharing wherever possible</p> <p>Used named labels for equipment / music etc, limit handling to individuals using</p> <p>Use pick up / drop off points for any equipment / materials rather than hand to hand</p>

Pick up and drop off collection points should be created where possible, rather than passing equipment such as props, scripts, scores and microphones hand-to-hand.

