

Guidelines for learning and teaching in music during the COVID-19 pandemic

These guidelines are designed to be read in conjunction with the Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reducing the risks in schools.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on reducing the risks in schools - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Coronavirus-(COVID-19)-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues – advice on physical education and expressive arts - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Coronavirus-(COVID-19)-Advisory-Sub-Group-on-Education-and-Childrens-Issues-advice-on-physical-education-and-expressive-arts)

These guidelines recognise the importance of music education in developing skills and supporting health and wellbeing, and the potentially negative impact of limiting music in schools. However, the guidelines continue to maintain a precautionary approach. This is based on the latest scientific advice, with the aim of minimising the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and allowing schools to remain open.

Local authorities and schools should exercise their judgement when implementing these guidelines. Their focus should be to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and staff, taking local circumstances into account.

The guidelines will be kept under review and updated in response to changing circumstances and updated scientific advice. Local authorities and schools will also need to adapt to local issues, e.g. outbreaks or increases in cases of COVID-19, and follow any locally-determined advice and guidance.

Separate guidance for Early Years and Childcare (ELC) practitioners is available on the Scottish Government website.

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1. Overview of scientific advice

This document has been prepared by Education Scotland with input from key stakeholders. It is based on advice from the Scottish Government Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues.

The sub-group continues to take into consideration the importance of music for the health and wellbeing of children and young people, as well as their social, physical and cognitive development; creativity, communication, team working, and discipline.

The greater transmissibility of the currently dominant variants of the virus, means that ongoing vigilance is required to minimise opportunities for spread.

Children and young people engaging in music activities in schools, indoors and outdoors.

All learning in groups, ensembles and larger groups such as choirs and orchestras has been going ahead this term. However, there remains an increased risk of transmission of COVID -19 during instrumental and class music lessons (particularly when singing and playing wind instruments). This is because of the respiratory aerosols which are exhaled during these activities and the close proximity of participants. Staff should ensure that all COVID 19 mitigations should continue to apply in relevant settings where these activities are able to take place (e.g. good ventilation, enhanced hygiene, social distancing etc.)

The learning for music performances has been going ahead. In preventing COVID 19 aerosol transmission, physical distancing, the wearing of masks and good ventilation remain important mitigation measures for music performances and must be strictly adhered to. Staff should also put in place these mitigations if a very small group, invited on the grounds of health and wellbeing of children and young people, is present for a short performance. Staff may also wish to consider whether it is preferable to provide a digital recording of performances as an alternative to an invited group.

There should still be no sharing of brass or wind musical instruments between learners, unless these instruments are thoroughly cleaned. Careful consideration should be given to the cleaning of all instruments and other equipment such as music stands. People should wash their hands before and after touching such shared equipment.

There remains a hierarchy of risk in these activities. For example, learning outdoors remains safer than indoors. Activities undertaken at low volume or those that have lower respiratory exertion are safer than stronger aerosol-generating activities. Individuals or small numbers are safer than large groups performing. Activities involving no sharing of equipment is safer than those where learners do share, or where equipment cannot be thoroughly cleaned between uses. Activities which can be done at a distance or virtually are safer than those experienced in close proximity. Shorter duration activities carry a lower risk than longer duration activities.

2. Suggested continued mitigations recommended for music

A clear risk assessment should be in place. This needs to address the risks of COVID-19, using the scientific guidance provided above to inform decisions and control measures. The individual needs of children and young people requiring additional support for learning should remain a priority. Risk assessments should identify clearly all measures in place to control the risks in a music learning environment. Music risk assessments will help to ensure that everything necessary has been done to promote safe learning and teaching at this stage of the pandemic.

Completed music instrumental risk assessments should be kept under review as circumstances change and advice is updated.

These guidelines should be shared with all music practitioners and partners who work with children and young people in your establishments and school communities. All private music teachers and all other music partners including external and other private providers who work with children and young people within schools should follow these guidelines. Staff should explain the updated guidance requirements clearly to learners, parents and carers, sharing the rationale and detailed practical music arrangements in place at present for all learners.

Space and ventilation

In preventing aerosol transmission, physical distancing and ventilation remain important mitigation measures for music.

Staff and learners should continue to use masks in accordance with the guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools.¹ Masks can be removed when necessary for playing, in line with the scientific advice above.

Cleaning and sharing of instruments and equipment

There should be no sharing of brass or wind musical instruments between learners, unless these instruments are thoroughly cleaned. Careful consideration should be given to the cleaning of all instruments and other equipment, such as music stands. People should wash their hands before and after touching such shared equipment.

Cleaning strategies should include regular cleaning and disinfection of musical instruments and all other music devices frequently touched. In addition there should be regular cleaning of hard surfaces, chairs, doors, handles, shared technology, light switches, keyboards, headphones, and any other relevant music or music technology classroom equipment. When learners are using school music headphones, the entire headphone including any headband and adaptor should be cleaned before and after use. Piano keys, drumsticks etc. should be disinfected with cleaning cloths before and after being played.

Hand sanitisers and other appropriate cleaning materials should be available for use in music classrooms and practice rooms.

Individual sheet and/or digital music scores should be provided for all learners. Music sheets should be provided early in the term to ensure learners can continue to learn at pace. This guidance applies especially to those preparing for SQA or other music examinations, and for any young people unable to attend school at any point during this session.

Use of technology

Technology can continue to be used when appropriate to facilitate collective participation safely. For example, singing and choir practice may still take place on

¹ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on reducing the risks in schools - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/pages/21/)

occasion virtually. Young people might record themselves performing, and then provide the recordings to their teacher.

To support the teaching of individual music compositions, web cams can be connected to interactive boards or visualisers to enable teachers to provide helpful demonstrations and comment.

Performances should continue to be recorded as part of normal learning and as part of a virtual portfolio. This can provide support for the development of music skills and provide latest and best evidence of the level achieved by a learner work with their school senior leaders to ensure equipment is made available.

Preparation for assessment

Risk assessments should include the following mitigations:

- There should be a clearly defined space of at least one metre or more between the learner and their teacher. However, as schools already have two metres physical distancing arrangements for adults that work well and do not limit capacity, it is expected these will be retained in practice.
- The learner should wear a mask whenever they are not performing.
- The room must be sanitised carefully at the end of each performance.
- There should be a delay between candidates using the room to allow aerosol particles to dissipate.