

# Covid-19 Supplementary Risk Assessment

## Guidance

### Purpose

This document is intended for anyone who has responsibility for music-making in education settings. It provides suggested control measures and prompts to think about specific local circumstances. Please note that it is not intended to cover all risks associated with any activity: it looks only at additional measures to minimise transmission Covid-19. Existing risk assessments still apply.

This is not a complete document: users must adapt the content to fit local circumstances and to comply with individual organisations' safety management systems. Legal responsibility for any activity rests with the person or organisation in charge.

### Assessing the risks

Remember that assessing risk is about understanding hazards and can never expect to eliminate all possibility of harm.

The standard is to identify **reasonably foreseeable** risks. We know that the extreme outcome of this infection is death or long-term health detriment but both are unusual outcomes in children and younger adults. The reasonably foreseeable risk here is the spread of Covid-19 virus.

If the activity happens in a health setting or participants are known to have underlying health (particularly respiratory) issues, you will need to account for this at an activity or individual level.

Control measures should be **reasonable** and **proportionate**. Remember that the person most at risk may be the adult leading the activity: this is not just about the children. As death rates increase with age, it may be reasonable and proportionate to have more or fewer controls depending on their age and definitely depending on their general health.

### Control measures

Many control measures need cost little, if anything, to put in place, so consider behavioural or procedural measures (a Safe System of Work) before specifying equipment. Do bear in mind the cost of staff time however.

### Enable and encourage

Risk assessment is a positive process which enables activity. Music Mark and its members want children to be able to make music. The safest classroom music-making is no music-making but that is deeply undesirable and it still does not mean nobody will catch the virus. Music Mark hopes this document will help music educators to make the case for playing musical instruments and singing in education, whatever the setting's risk appetite and local circumstances.

# Covid-19 Supplementary Risk Assessment

Class Music – Singing in Bubbles

Owner:			
Consultees:			
Version:			
Date of assessment:		Review date (max 1 yr):	

## Description of activity

Singing as part of class activity and music teaching. If specific to a group, school or situation, provide details such as where it takes place (site, space, room) numbers involved, equipment and who leads the activity.

## References to related risk assessments

If there is a pre-existing risk assessment for this activity, refer to it here.

## Existing control measures

These are the things you already do, or are inherent in the activity, that reduce the risks.

	Hazard	Who is at risk?	Control measure(s)	Who is responsible?
1	Airborne transmission	Everyone	Pupils take up the maximum space possible and in no circumstance, less than 3m <sup>2</sup> per pupil.	
2	Airborne transmission	Teacher	Teacher to be at least 3m from the nearest pupil.	
3	Airborne transmission	Everyone	Singing limited to x minutes or x songs. Note: 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.	
4	Airborne transmission	Everyone	Ventilation is key. Could you sing with the windows open, even if you have to wear coats? Or better yet, sing outdoors?	
5	Surface transmission via printed music	Pupils	Songs mainly taught by ear. If required, words are projected. Can pupils retain their own copy of any music or could music go into individual, named, plastic pouches?	

6	Surface transmission via equipment used for playing backing tracks or accompanying	Teacher	Cleaning of PC or CD player for backing track or piano/keyboard? Refer to <a href="#">Music Mark's guidance</a> for advice on cleaning equipment.	
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## Initial risk rating

How likely is the activity to result in actual harm (1-5)?			<b>Likelihood less more</b>	5					
				4					
				3					
How severe would the consequences be (1-5)?				2					
				1					
					1	2	3	4	5
<b>Risk rating (likelihood x severity)</b>					better		worse		
					<b>Severity</b>				

## Additional control measures

These are new measures identify to reduce the risk rating. It is usually easier (and it is perfectly acceptable) to reduce the likelihood of harm rather than the severity.

It is not necessary to implement additional control measures for every hazard identified. Prioritise the hazards you have identified and ensure that control measures are reasonable and proportionate.

	Hazard	Who is at risk?	Control measure(s)	Who is responsible?
1	Airborne transmission	Teacher	Mask and/or screen advisable?	
2	Airborne transmission (vulnerable teacher)	Teacher	State any extra measures if the teacher is more vulnerable (older, underlying health issues).	
3	Airborne transmission (vulnerable pupils)	Pupil or pupils	State any additional measures required for children with health issues, e.g. asthma	
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## Residual Risk rating

How likely is the activity to result in actual harm (1-5)?			<b>Likelihood less more</b>	5					
				4					
				3					
How severe would the consequences be (1-5)?				2					
				1					
					1	2	3	4	5
<b>Risk rating (likelihood x severity)</b>					better		worse		
					<b>Severity</b>				

<b>Risk rating:</b>	<b>1-6</b>	<b>Green</b>	Monitor to ensure control measures are implemented consistently and that the rating remains valid.
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<b>Risk rating:</b>	<b>1-6</b>	<b>Green</b>	Monitor to ensure control measures are implemented consistently and that the rating remains valid.
	<b>8-12</b>	<b>Amber</b>	Try to identify additional controls to reduce the risk. Ensure that control measures are implemented consistently and look to improve by the next review.
	<b>15-25</b>	<b>Red</b>	Cease this activity until additional controls can be put in place to manage the risk.

**Date communicated to staff/volunteers:**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Remember:**

- This is a legal document: you must do (or ensure that people working for you do) what you say in it.
- Risk assessments must be reviewed at least annually or when there is an incident, i.e. in this case, if someone falls ill after taking part in the activity.
- For the purposes of Health & Safety, if you have not recorded it, you have not done it.

# Singing in schools

## Supplementary observations

Since Music Unlocked was published (five days before I write this!), more has appeared on the subject of singing. Most authoritative is a meta-analysis by Professor Martin Ashley for the Association of British Choral Directors ([paper here](#)). Ashley cites the overwhelming volume of studies from 1934 to the present day (literally, today) into aerosol propagation in closed environments and the sort of spaces in which singing typically occurs. The bluntest conclusion that can be drawn is that communal singing, as it was practised up until March 2020, is not safe while there is no vaccine for Covid-19. He pours cold water on suggestions in the press this week that singing may not be as dangerous as was thought:

*An issue here would appear to be the dangers of scientists venturing a little beyond their normal sphere of work and hasty and superficial reading of papers by journalists.*

In our advice to the education sector, Music Mark has taken account of these studies. Nevertheless, our advice is given in the context of the following circumstances and observations.

- Almost all research has focussed on professional, university-level and a tiny number of amateur adult singers. While some year 11 and above pupils may approach these standards (and risk assessment will need to take account of these), in the main, most school singing happens in KS1 and KS2. Children in these age groups will have lower lung capacity and less strength in the diaphragm. They will not move as much air or project it as far.
- Much of the research talks about typical choir rehearsals of two to 2½ hours and there is talk of reducing to a maximum of 90 minutes in some cases. In most classroom circumstances, time actually vocalising is unlikely to exceed maybe ten minutes.
- Choirs usually have more members than the 15 plus a teacher permitted in classroom bubbles.
- The social element of choir rehearsals was undoubtedly a factor in widely-reported cases of Covid-19 outbreaks in choirs in the US and throughout Europe. Typical behaviour included physical affection and often the sharing of food and drinks, prolonged proximity (singers are usually seated just inches from each other) and leaning in together to check markings or borrow pencils. Schools will routinely be discouraging and managing such behaviour.
- Children will be spending upwards of 30 hours a week in their bubble. If they are not singing, they are all still breathing the same air, unless they are scrupulously social distancing (unlikely in KS1) and each breathing only out of their own open window (no, I don't think so either). There will be some additional risk to singing but whatever they would otherwise do is not risk-free.

It gives this semi-professional singer and experienced chorister no pleasure to say that formal choral singing is probably unsafe at this time. The only responsible advice is that the school choir cannot meet for now.

It is possible to teach music without singing (by focusing on music appreciation and music theory for

example) but how long would it be reasonable to teach a foreign language without speaking it? For the reasons stated above, we are confident that teachers can include singing in their bubbles.