



Music Unlocked

Guidance for School Leaders on Musical Learning

(major update reflecting [DfE's 28th August guidance](#))

The vital role of music and the wider arts in supporting mental health, social engagement, and learning in children is well recognised globally, backed by high quality scientific data. This role of music is more important now, during a global crisis, than ever, given the wide-ranging challenges being faced by children and families. But it is crucial that activities are promoted in a safe way. The guidance published here provides clear recommendations so is very much welcomed.

Dr Daisy Fancourt, University College London

The UK Association for Music Education – Music Mark is a subject association for music and a membership organisation for those providing musical learning across the UK. Through our network of over 150 music education provider Members, such as Music Services, we have been able to celebrate and champion music provision in over 6,500 Music Mark Schools.

Music Mark and its Members understand that schools and school leaders will be under strain as all pupils return in September and nobody is expecting an imminent return to normality. The lockdown has had a dramatic impact on the lives of children and young people and Music Mark urges you to include music and creative arts in your recovery curriculum, as a way to help them settle back into a positive learning environment.

The music service and other music education providers in your local area, which in England come together into partnerships called Music Education Hubs, are available to help, support and advise you, working with you and your staff in the best way for your school at this time for the benefit of your pupils.

Studies and many schools' own experiences have shown that, as well as being intrinsically valuable as a subject, music:

- readies children for learning across the curriculum;
- improves memory by stimulating both hemispheres of the brain;
- has unrivalled connectivity across the whole curriculum;
- correlates with improved progress in a range of other subjects;
- is highly effective as a strategy for school improvement¹.

In formulating this COVID-19 related guidance, we have reviewed academic studies and DfE guidance for schools and FE settings, and we have consulted our Members, the Music Teachers' Association, the Music Industries Association, the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Musicians' Union, as well as individual sector experts, headteachers and teachers. Scientific understanding of music and COVID-19 is developing constantly and Music Unlocked is our best understanding of how it can be safely applied in statutory education.

¹ To find out more, read [The Power of Music](#) by Prof. Susan Hallam MBE and [Ten Things Every School Should Know about Music](#).

Key changes to the message for music in schools

- A broad and balanced curriculum, including creative subjects, should be taught to all pupils; discretion to reduce exam subjects is expected to be exceptional;
- Visiting teachers can be welcomed into schools; they can teach in multiple schools and across bubbles with mitigations ([Music Mark's accompanying provider guidance](#) suggests a code of practice for visiting teachers);
- Singing and playing of woodwind and brass instruments is no longer limited to groups of 15;
- Extended social distancing for these activities appears to have been lifted, although we continue to recommend it as a mitigation, particularly for singing and playing mouth-blown instruments;
- There is still a risk from cumulative build-up of aerosols, so the need for ventilation is heightened;
- Musical lunchtime and after-school clubs (ensembles) can take place with appropriate mitigations.

Wellbeing

The benefits to pupils of participating in musical activity in terms of their wellbeing are well-known. Sheffield University's music department has a specific research group dedicated to wellbeing; many mainstream and special schools fund music therapy sessions and music is a staple of youth work and mental health projects. The charity Mind devote a page of their website to the [benefits of music to mental health](#) and CanDoMusic.org shares [a blog about music and mental wellbeing](#).

During lockdown, many music education providers have found creative ways in which to enable students and families to continue engaging in music making. Where possible, 1:1 instrumental and vocal lessons have gone online, and variously across the country, thousands of children have taken part in singing and playing, in weekly tutorials, in Youth Voice consultations and simply in social events led by music tutors.

We mustn't forget or underestimate the impact music has on our children.

Words of a parent whose child is involved in the Band Factory in Nottingham

Music has for many children and young people been an outlet for expressing and working through the emotional impact of lockdown, and the subject has significant potential to support pupils as they return to school.

Music in the curriculum

Many schools are keen to return to normality as quickly as reasonable and safely possible. Most music services and other providers have worked up risk assessments for their activities and are keen to adapt these to individual schools' circumstances. They are keen to present you with solutions to minimise the demands on your SLT. Music Mark is supporting members in this process through our provider guidance and with direct advice.

If your school buys (or is allocated) time for whole-class, curriculum, ensemble or choir work, talk to the music providers you work with about what support they can provide to your subject or phase leads as they look to create schemes of work and resources that:

- are musically sound, progressive and academically valuable;
- link to learning in other core subjects;
- address pupils' wellbeing and PHSE needs;
- empower pupils to express themselves freely;
- help pupils to feel valued and that their voices are heard.

To help with music making in schools, either delivered by your staff or by visiting teachers, Music Mark has provided guidance on singing and using musical instruments safely in the classroom, which is based on recent and emerging specialist research. The providers you work with will be able to advise and support your staff and pupils on a more practical level, but the guidance can be found [here](#) and the research from which it has been developed is [here](#).

Practical advice and ideas from other teachers are sought by our #CanDoMusic campaign (jointly with the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Music Teachers' Association) and is being collated at www.CanDoMusic.org, which your teachers can access freely.

Most music education providers are planning to be ready in the event of localised or national lockdowns to offer all or part of their teaching online. In the last six months, the music education sector has created new expertise and gained a great deal of experience in teaching online. Many resources and whole schemes of work have been developed or adapted for the purpose and your providers will very probably be keen to demonstrate how they can make this work safely for you, should the need arise.

Instrumental and vocal tuition

The DfE's guidance, updated on 28th August 2020, clearly states that visiting teachers may return to schools and may teach across bubbles however it is well understood that, to accommodate local circumstances, a flexible approach may be needed. The providers' version of this guidance includes a suggested code of practice and detailed guidance for different instruments to help providers assess risks and work safely. Whilst nothing can replace the invaluable face to face experience, many providers will be in a position to discuss alternative methods of delivery, including fully and partially online options, where and when this may be necessary.

Ensembles and choirs

Choirs and ensembles within schools are able to restart but extra-curricular activities are subject to the Out of School Settings (OOSS) guidelines, so are limited to 15 in a group, regardless of the mix of instruments or voices. More than one group may be in the same space. The OOSS guidelines stipulate 2m social distancing (at minimum) and good ventilation. The [Music Mark provider guidelines](#) include advice for all sorts of ensembles and choirs, based on the latest medical and scientific research.

Music around the school

Music creates friendships and builds the school community: Music Mark has been told of many examples of pupils and the adults they work with who are hungry for the engagement with school life that music can offer. Many music education providers have developed expertise in creative and exciting ways of sharing the music that pupils and teachers make online. Some case studies are available on the Music Mark website [here](#).

Make music part of your school's 'new normal'

Music Mark hopes that the partnership with your local music education providers, such as the music service, will help you to ensure your pupils and staff can access the academic, wellbeing and social benefits that come from having music as part of school life. These benefits are key as the country's children and young people return to their classrooms but they will also enhance and expand the value

of the holistic provision you offer. We would therefore encourage you to put music at the heart of your school now and into the future.

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/music-unlocked-guidance-for-schools-and-music-providers/>

<https://www.CanDoMusic.org>

Acknowledgements

Music Mark would like to thank its Members, the Music Teachers' Association, the Incorporated Society of Musicians, the Musicians' Union and the Music Industries Association for their help and support in preparing this guidance.

Additional remarks for schools hosting out-of-hours activity

Where schools are satisfied that it would be safe to do so, they may choose to open up or hire out their premises for use by external bodies or organisations, such as external coaches or after-school or holiday clubs or activities.

Guidance for full opening: schools (end of section 2)

Where a third party (often the local music service or a Hub partner) has an external letting to use your school as a venue for a children's choir, ensemble or a music centre, this will come under the Out of School Settings (OOSS) guidance. This will apply when the activity is open to children from other schools and the third party controls membership, even if some members are your pupils. The OOSS guidance also applies if you contract a third party to provide an after-school club exclusively for your pupils.

The guidance for OOSS differs from the schools' guidance particularly in terms of how providers must manage groups (bubbles). Groups continue to be limited to fifteen participants plus at least one adult; more than one group can use a single space if necessary but the groups must be kept consistent and prevented from mixing.

Music services' attendance records, and those of reputable Hub partners, will already exceed the Track and Trace requirement of 21 days.

Community (adult) music groups who may use your facilities are covered by the [DCMS guidance](#) and are able to meet in groups of any size but this is contingent on robust mitigation including 2m distancing and adequate ventilation. The choice of guidance depends on the activity and target group, so an adult ensemble would fall under the DCMS guidance, even if it is run by the music service.

Our guidance to music providers is that they should follow the guidance that provides the best fit with each activity, as trying to manage one activity to meet two sets of guidance will be impossible.

Complying with the appropriate guidance in managing their activity in your school will still mean that the organisation leading the activity will work constructively with you to ensure that their risk assessment reflects the school's arrangements for managing Covid-19 (and other) risks for external lettings.