

Government Allows Full Resumption of School Music Provision

Visiting music teachers may return to schools, and ensemble rehearsals and performances can resume as long as health and safety measures are in place.

The Department for Education has issued new guidance on school music in England advising that visiting music teachers can return to schools, and that ensemble rehearsals and performances can resume, as long as the health and safety measures it specifies are implemented.

The guidance states that the previous requirement for extended social distancing in relation to brass and wind instruments and singing is no longer applicable if the risk of cumulative aerosol transmission can be minimised. It also states that all pupils should have access to a quality arts education, indicating that schools are expected to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum and not just focus on 'core' subjects. Key points are as follows:

- *Peripatetic teachers can move between schools as long as they comply with schools' arrangements for managing and minimising risk*
- *Ensembles should play and/or sing outdoors if possible, or indoors with ventilation as described in the HSE air conditioning and ventilation guidance*
- *Ensembles should implement strict social distancing measures, positioning pupils back-to-back or side-to-side if possible, and directing the air from wind and brass instruments away from other pupils*
- *Singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in large groups unless significant space and natural airflow is available for all present, including audiences*
- *Performances should follow the DCMS performance arts guidance to minimise risk*
- *Contact between individuals should be minimised and physical contact avoided*
- *Individual lessons are also subject to social distancing and health and safety measures, although these measures are likely to be less complex than for ensembles.*

Diane Widdison, the MU's National Organiser for Education and Training, said: 'We welcome this updated guidance, although the delay in providing it means that many schools will already have planned this term's musical activities based on the previous more restrictive guidance. This could have a damaging knock-on effect for music services and hubs, which engage many MU members and are already struggling financially after two terms – and now possibly a third – with reduced work.'

She added: 'It is also disappointing to see that the Scottish government has yet to relax its guidance on wind, brass and singing, considering the growing body of scientific evidence that suggests these disciplines can be successfully managed in schools with the correct mitigation procedures. Likewise, we hope to see further clarity from Wales and Northern Ireland so that more of our members can get back to work and provide vital music education.'