



Covid: Policy Statement

Version 4: 31 October 2020

YMES recognises the dreadful effects of the covid pandemic over recent months. It has caused terrible loss of life around the world; has harmed the health of millions of people; and has had wider impact on society.

To date YMES has acted swiftly and responsibly in response to the pandemic and will continue to do so. We will keep our policy under review at all times and will make future changes as necessary including in response to any future Government direction and any localised measures.

This latest statement follows the Prime Ministerial address of 31 October.

Summary of actions taken until now

YMES facilitates specialist music lessons. The majority of our work ordinarily takes place in normal school settings. We also run a small home tuition programme.

All our face-to-face delivery ceased on 20 March when schools closed. We put in place a highly effective online lesson option throughout the summer term which enjoyed extensive take-up across our small group and 1-to-1 instrumental/vocal pupils from our partner schools. Our home tuition pupils also switched to this method of learning.

As schools reopened it was right that we worked with our partner schools to consider when and how we returned to face-to-face learning. In September we returned to face-to-face learning for all our curricular work in schools. From September/October, we also began moving back to face-to-face formats for our extra-curricular work in schools in many cases, whilst retaining our online contingency option where required. All moves back to face-to-face learning have been conducted in with Government guidance and a range of covid adjustments have been made in line with YMES and school risk assessments and policies.

Our home tuition programme has remained online throughout.

Current position

The Prime Minister announced on 31 October a new national lockdown to take effect on 5 November. Under both this new national lockdown, and all three tiers of the 'regional' lockdown mechanism that has been in force lately (and is likely to return from December onwards), schools remain open.

The YMES position therefore remains that we will continue to work with schools to deliver face-to-face lessons. As at present, we will also continue to maintain our online option for some small groups/1-to-1s.

Whilst our face-to-face work in schools can and will continue, in the same way it has since September, we do take this opportunity to re-emphasise to all parties the importance of adherence to guidance, risk assessments and procedures – including but not limited to strict distancing, use of masks/sanitiser.

YMES expects its teachers to act as responsible citizens and therefore to inform YMES that they are not available for face-to-face teaching in all cases wherever:

- The teacher has covid symptoms (high temperature/persistent cough/change in taste or smell);
- A member of the teacher's household has the above covid symptoms;
- The teacher has been informed they have been in contact with someone who is covid-positive
 - Be that through the national Track and Trace programme;
 - An equivalent localised Track and Trace programme;
 - Or a school/the YMES office/another workplace.

Our home tuition programme will remain entirely online.

Government Guidance

In the Government's 'Guidance for full opening: schools' (which was published on 28 August and remains current) there is a specific sub-section for 'Music, Dance and Drama in school'. YMES will always ensure adherence to this guidance.

The guidance highlights that "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". It explains though that "there may be an additional risk of infection in environments where singing, chanting, playing wind or brass instruments, dance and drama takes place".

It goes on to say that "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".

YMES will remain cautious and our current position (which will be continually reviewed, along with everything else) is that in all instances our teachers must seek prior specific permission from the YMES Director to undertaking singing, wind or brass work with more than 15 participants. The Director will consult the relevant school's headteacher before granting permission, who will need to be in agreement. Permission will normally also require: b) the pupils to be the same class/bubble; c) the activity's location to be the school hall for distancing reasons.

(Link to Gov.uk last accessed 31/10/20: <https://bit.ly/3jniffk>).

Individual teacher circumstances

We recognise that each teacher's individual circumstances are different. This may mean that some teachers are either not able to, or do not wish to, return to face-to-face teaching. Any teacher who chooses to decline one or more teaching assignments will be able to do so in the usual way.

Other documents

Other key documents produced by YMES in addition to this "Policy Statement" include our "Code of Practice for Teachers" which sets out how YMES teachers must act when resuming face-to-face teaching, and our organisation "Risk Assessment".

Up-to-date risk assessment/policy documents must be shared with all parties at all times. That is to say that the school and YMES must share their organisational documents with each other, and teachers conducting face-to-face teaching must be provided with copies of all. This is imperative both to ensure both that teachers act how schools need them to act in accordance within schools' own defined procedures, and also that due consideration has been given by the setting to teachers' welfare. For the purposes of covid policies, YMES teachers must be treated by the school to the same standard as if they were a member of the school's own staff.

Contact

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