

Safe Return to BOVTS for Staff and Students

Information and guidance for the whole School surrounding COVID-19



**Bristol Old Vic
Theatre School**

1. Introduction from the Principal

I am writing to staff and students who jointly create the whole Theatre School community.

Although I am new to the School, I have heard and can see the effort and resilience staff and students have shown to keep the School running since March, and giving its very best at such a challenging time for everyone involved. I wish I could say 'let's get back to normal' but unfortunately have to say 'let's step towards the next normal' as the C-19 epidemic will likely remain with us for a very long time to come.

This document sets out how the Theatre School has been planning the re-opening of all our buildings in as safe a way as possible. It will be constantly reviewed by the School's C-19 Committee which I lead, and our C-19 Supervisor, Beshlie Thorp, will continue her hard work to make sure we are operating safely. I would ask everyone in the School community to respect and listen to Beshlie; she has my full support and will draw my attention to anything she is concerned about.

It is every individual's responsibility to keep themselves and the rest of the School safe at all times. Stop and think about the possible repercussions of your actions as they are intrinsically linked to the whole School community. Always act within the national, local and School's guidelines, whether on any of the School's premises, external venues, or when you are away from School and in your own time. At best the School will remain open by working within the guidelines. At worst the School will have to close due to an outbreak that will see wider risks to health, the loss of face-to-face learning and the School's live productions in venues across the City being cancelled.

If any of you have suggestions or ideas over how to improve our buildings and our safe use of them, please come and see me; my door is always open. This document, our Outbreak Management Plan and the School's approach will be constantly under review and amended as necessary. Please check your emails and the School's website for important updates.

Thank-you in advance for helping to keep our School open and our School community safe.

Fiona Francombe
Principal

2. General Measures

Course and module leaders will be discussing the protocols with students before and during induction week to ensure that everyone is confident with our new operating procedures and feels safe.

All references to 'School' include all three BOVTS sites (*Christchurch, Downside Road and Sheene Road*) as well as any additional spaces or venues that have been hired for use by the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

- The timetable has been arranged in a way that allows as few people to be on-site at any one time, and to reduce the risk of corridor congestion forming.
- **You must wear a mask at all times**, unless you are exempt from this for medical reasons, in this case you will have made your course leader (if applicable) and Julia Heeley (Student Support Manager) aware of this and alternative arrangements will have been made. There may be classes in which a teacher allows students to remove their mask, provided that all guidance from this document is strictly followed. Please refer to signage found around school to aid in this safe practice. Rooms have been measured and we have determined the safe maximum capacity for each. Please refer to each room's door for this information. Visors are available should they be preferred for certain activities, please ask Joe Watt or Beshlie Thorp for these. Please be reminded that a visor is not as protective as a mask, for yourself or others, and should be worn with caution.
- You will have your temperature taken each day when you arrive at *any* School site, including the additional spaces the School has hired. You will need to declare you are not experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19. Temperatures will be taken by a member of staff or an assigned student.
- If you have a raised temperature (37.8C or greater), a persistent cough or other symptoms of COVID-19 you will be asked to self-isolate and take a COVID-19 test. You will be allowed to take your temperature a second time to allow for being warm from walking/running to school, but you must wait outside for 5 minutes first.
- Students must leave time before they are required in class to allow for the signing in process. To sign in you will be required to scan a QR code and fill in an online form, you must also use the same process to sign out. Please make sure your mobile device has the ability to process these codes, if there are any issues with this then there will be a physical sign in/out sheet, but please make sure you bring your own pen.
- Once you have signed in please head straight to your classroom/office, do not hang around in corridors or kitchen areas. Please remember that COVID-19 is transmitted via aerosols, keeping your voice at a low volume will help to reduce any possible spread of the virus.
- You must provide your own mask to wear on any school site, make sure you have a spare to hand and follow this guidance on safe mask wearing.

- For additional safety, we will be keeping to the 2 meter social distancing model where possible and there are floor markings and signage to remind everyone.
- Please try to walk on the left as much as possible when you are moving around the School buildings.
- Between classes, if you are vacating a room, there will be time provided for you to clean the area with the cleaning supplies found in each room. You will be required to wipe down your chair and any other high contact surfaces that have been touched, for example, tables, door handles and equipment. Please place all disposable items in the C-19 specific bin for safe disposal.
- Please remember to wash or sanitise your hands regularly. There are extra sanitising facilities being put in place around the buildings to help you to do this.
- The Staff Common Room will remain open and staff must adhere to safe distancing at all times. Visiting tutors have priority over sitting in this space, regular staff are advised to use the facilities and retire back to their office or to the garden, weather permitting.

The Student Common Room kitchen will be open between 1pm-2pm and will operate a one-in-one-out system, so that food can be heated up in microwaves, or to give access cold and hot water. Please wipe down everything you touch once finished.

- There will be a heightened cleaning regime in place; please be patient if some areas are temporarily unavailable due to additional cleaning.
- Cleaning products will be available in each room, please use the designated COVID bins to dispose of any rubbish. Stock will be checked every morning but should supplies run low then emergency products will be available from reception.
- To avoid unnecessary travel and external exposure, we would prefer you to bring lunch to School with you. Please eat in the studio/office you are working in, or use the outside areas, whilst always following social distancing guidelines. To avoid additional external exposure we ask that no food is ordered to be delivered to School. Please keep your working area clean.
- A COVID Officer, **Beshlie Thorp 07955076932 covidsafety@oldvic.ac.uk** has been appointed; Beshlie will be regularly reviewing activity and solely focused on COVID-19 compliance and safety. We would ask that you respect the advice and instruction that Beshlie gives.
- If you begin to feel unwell while at school you should return home and contact:

Staff: your line manager / C-19 Supervisor (see above for contact details.)

Students: **Julia Heeley** (Student Support Manager) on **0117 9809247** or **julia.heeley@oldvic.ac.uk** or **your course leader.**

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 you should arrange to have a free NHS test

3. The practicalities of coming to BOVTS in the Autumn Term 2020

Attendance in person at the School:

- It is expected that students will come into the School's buildings for timetabled classes and then leave immediately afterwards in order to reduce exposure to others and put pressure on the capacity in each of the School's buildings.
- Staff are also asked to only be in the buildings when necessary.
- Students, please ensure you have left enough time to have your temperature checked and to scan the QR code before your class is due to start.

If you are scheduled to attend the school premises in person:

- Please ensure that you feel well enough to come into School and do not have any symptoms of COVID-19 or any other illness. If you do have any COVID symptoms or other illness please contact:
- **Staff:** your line manager / C-19 Supervisor (see above for contact details.)
- **Students:** **Julia Heeley** (Student Support Manager) on **0117 9809247** or **julia.heeley@oldvic.ac.uk** or your course leader.

Things to prepare for before leaving for School:

- There will be limited access to food preparation facilities, so we advise all bring their own packed lunches, snacks and flasks.
- There will be no access to changing areas, showers, lockers in changing rooms, and limited access to toilet facilities (see doors for details) so all must arrive dressed in their appropriate clothing for the day's work.
- Due to the limitation of the Library space, we are planning for the Library to be closed. Should any student need to refer to a specific text/book, please let Reception know. They will organize for the text/book to be available for collection from Reception the following day. Access to the PCs in the Library will also be restricted to one person at a time. Online resources (such as [Dramaonline](#)) will be available.
- Students should bring only one bag into School, which will always be kept with you and must be stored under your chair, or out of the way from activities and other people's belongings.

- It is an expectation that everyone wears a 3-layer face mask or covering around School, unless you have been told otherwise, or if you are exempt. Ensure you have at least one spare and that they are kept clean. Follow this guidance for mask wearing if unsure. When using a visor, make sure you have your name marked clearly on it and that you wipe it with disinfecting wipes after use.

Even if you have been told it is safe to remove your mask, you are not obliged to, and you are also encouraged to ask others to wear a mask if you so wish. Your decision will be respected as everyone must be made to feel comfortable whilst at School.

External entrances/exits

- All students are to use the main Reception door at Downside Road, while all staff are to use the entrance at number 3. Sheene Road's main door is to be used by Production Arts and visitors, whilst the side door is access for Scenic Art. Christchurch only has the usual use of the main front door. You will be advised over the local procedures for entering / exiting additional hired spaces and venues.
- Always be mindful of maintaining 2 meter social distancing as you enter any building, and follow the markings on the floor where these exist. The entrance to Downside will be up the stairs/ramp on the left and down the stairs on the right, please follow the arrows.
- There are hand sanitiser stations at all entrances to all School buildings and additional spaces and venues. Please sanitise your hands before entering, and on exiting, all School buildings. Help us maintain a culture of regular handwashing as this is proven to be the most effective way to control the spread of the C-19 virus.
- There is guidance in place for any external buildings being used, please read any information you are provided with thoroughly.

Procedures to follow when entering School buildings:

- A BOVTS staff member, or assigned student, will carry out temperature checks on all students and visitors entering School buildings. Staff will take their own temperature and wipe down the thermometer after use with the wipes provided. Any persons showing an unusually high temperature may be asked whether they have any other C-19 symptoms and will be asked to return to their homes. The standard C-19 procedures should then apply. These can be found in the outbreak plan in **Appendix 2**.

Please note that when signing-in you are declaring that you do not have any of the COVID-19 symptoms. If you continue to access any School building when you knowingly have symptoms you will be putting the whole School community at risk.

Foyer and reception area:

- Please do not socialise or meet in any foyer or corridors in any buildings. This is unfair on staff and students who may wish to move through these areas to access their study/workspaces.
- Please keep noise to a minimum as we will be keeping as many doors open as safe to do so to allow good air flow throughout the building and studios.
- Everyone must sanitise and/or wash their hands before entering work rooms and studios.
- Printers are available for use so long as you wash/sanitise your hands first and wipe down everything you touched upon finishing.

Room Capacity:

- All rooms have been allocated a maximum capacity with clear signage on all entrance doors- Please strictly adhere to these allocations. Seating arrangements will be made appropriate to the discipline and the space.

Ventilation:

- Good ventilation can help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus. For instance, by keeping doors and windows open (weather allowing).
- Please leave windows and doors open at the end of your session in your room / studio if safe to do so in order to air it before it is next used. For those using rooms at the end of the day, please make sure that all windows are locked and made safe before you leave.

Cleaning, Sanitising and Hygiene:

Staff and students are asked that they take responsibility for cleaning surfaces, equipment, and high touch areas after use.

Areas include:

- handles on doors, windows, rails, and taps
- control panels for equipment, control pads and switches
- computer keyboards, printers, touch screens, monitors, and phones
- work surfaces in studios, along with tools and machinery

- toilets – please follow guidance in the next section on toilets

The School premises will continue to be cleaned as usual, with C-19 preventative measures taken by the School's external cleaning contractors. Due to the higher volume of users (academic & support staff and students) at Downside Road, an extra clean of toilets at Downside Road will take place over the lunch period by our external cleaning contractors.

Everyone is reminded that it is an expectation that our cleaning guidance is followed whenever accessing any building. This is not just to protect individuals but everyone else who uses the space. **Please be mindful of the effects of your actions on others.**

Toilets

- Toilets have been assigned to courses or staff to reduce the traffic in these areas and to avoid cross-contamination.
- Please take responsibility for making sure the facilities are always left clean, and follow the guidance displayed within – this includes using the sanitising spray provided after use.
- Please sanitise hands before entering and upon exiting toilets.
- If there is a queue, please make sure you adhere to the socially distanced floor markings.
- Toilet allocation is below, alternatively, the information can be found on the toilet doors.

Christchurch Toilets

- Easy Access – Students
- Gents 1st Floor – Unisex Staff
- Ladies 2nd Floor – Unisex Film Students

Downside Road Toilets

- Reception – Disabled and Staff
- Building 2 stairway – Prod Arts and Costume
- Building 3 stairway – Prod Arts and Costume
- Ladies Changing room – Actors and Prod Arts
- Gents Changing room – Actors and Prod Arts
- Easy Access Basement – Disabled and Staff
- Basement Building 3 – MA courses
- Attic Building 3 – Staff

Sheene Road Toilets

- Ladies Toilet – Production Arts Students
- Gents Toilet – Scenic Art Students
- Staff Toilet – Staff and Visitors

External spaces & venues

- Guidance will be given to those using external spaces & venues, according to local provision.

Socialising Outside of School

Everyone is reminded to follow the government guidance on socialising, both inside and outside of their homes. We must all take responsibility for keeping everyone safe during this time and everyone is asked to act responsibly for the whole School community to remain safe and well.

What will happen if there is a second, or a local, lockdown?

Should this be necessary, the COVID Committee will decide on a course of action of how the school proceeds. The 'Outbreak Management Plan' document is added at the end of this Guidance under **Appendix 2**.

What happens if someone in the building displays symptoms?

Please follow the outbreak procedure (appendix 2) and alert Beshlie Thorp (COVID Supervisor) immediately.

4. Access to Support at the School

Staff have been working on strategies that are thoughtful and responsive during this unprecedented time. These include building information, communication and practices related to how we can support students and staff who may be disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

We recognise that students and staff may not have access to the technology and equipment needed for successful online learning including: a laptop, access to high speed internet and private space within the home for learning. Speak with your course leader or line manager to see how the school can help you.

We understand that Covid-19 can create levels of increased anxiety for both staff and students.

Staff: please talk to your line manager and/or the Principal.

Students: The Student Support Manager, Julia Heeley, can guide you to resources, services and organisations that can help with your emotional wellbeing.

Please speak to Julia Heeley, Student Support Manager 0117 980 9247, julia.heeley@oldvic.ac.uk for advice and support.

Please also see the following for advice on emotional wellbeing:

- **VitaMinds** – NHS psychological therapies (self-referral)
- **Every Mind Matters: 10 tips to help if you are worried about coronavirus**
- **GOV.UK: guidance on wellbeing and covid-19 s**

- **Bristol Mind - Bristol MindLine** is a confidential freephone helpline, call 0808 808 0330
- **The Samaritans** has a 24 hour telephone and email support, call 116 123
- **AWP (Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust)** has set up a 24/7 phone support line for service users requiring support or advice during this time, 0300 303 1320
- **Directories of Bristol services** - Independent Mental Health Network, CASS and Well Aware

5. Further Guidance and Resources

Below are various links to information which we advise all should read. The information is constantly being updated so we ask everyone to take responsibility for staying up to date.

Information regarding the COVID-19 Virus

[UK Government Guidance](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[NHS Test Information](#)

[Performing Arts Guidance](#)

[Bristol Outbreak Management Plan](#)

[Coronavirus Support App](#)

Appendix 1

At-a-glance BOVTS COVID-19 Protocol Document

General Guidance

All must follow the 2 meter distancing model where possible.

Masks must be worn at all times unless told otherwise, please bring your own.

Once a group has finished in a room, they are responsible for wiping down any chairs and surfaces that have been touched. Cleaning supplies and bins will be available in every room.

Entry and Exit

Please queue outside the building if necessary, following the floor markings where in place and keeping a distance of 2 meters.

Please use sanitizer dispenser outside of building before entering.
Hand sanitiser dispensers are situated throughout the building for your use.

Please sign in using the QR code. Temperatures will be taken for you to declare when signing-in.

Please leave enough time when leaving for school to allow for waiting to sign-in if necessary.

By signing in you are confirming that you have not within the last 14 days;

- Tested positive or am presumptively positive with the Coronavirus or been identified as a potential carrier.
- Experienced any symptoms commonly associated with the Coronavirus.
- Been in any location designated as a risk by the Government or Public Health England. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus> for more information.
- Been in direct contact with or in the immediate vicinity of any person being identified as a carrier or potential carrier of the Coronavirus.

If possible, you should remain onsite once you have entered to avoid using local shops and reduce movements on/off site.

Please head straight to your room once you have signed in, leave coats and bags under your chair.

Changing facilities and the lockers within are not in use.

Corridors and stairways

Please walk on the left when travelling through the building.

Staff and students must each take responsibility for their actions, adhering to walking on the left at all times.

Please be aware of persons who are on a stairway and give way, do not cross on the stairs.

Toilets and changing rooms

Hand sanitizers are provided outside the toilet facilities. Please use before entering.

Please leave the facility in the condition you found it.

Please adhere to notices on how to clean the facilities after usage.

If there is a toilet seat provided, please close it before flushing.

You will find information on the doors in regards to who the toilet is intended for.

Please stick to floor markings if queuing for the toilet.

Showers are not available for use.

Limbers/warmups should be done before coming to School.

Staff Common rooms

The Staff Common Rooms will remain open and staff must adhere to safe distancing at all times. Visiting tutors have been allocated Studio 5 at Downside Road as a restroom; please check with your contact at the School what arrangements can be offered at our other buildings and hired venues.

Student Common Room

The Student Common Room kitchen will be open between 1pm-2pm and will operate a one-in-one-out system, so that food can be heated up in microwaves, or to give access to cold and hot water. Please wipe down everything you touch once finished.

Please bring your own drinks and snacks.

Classes are scheduled to avoid students being in the building at lunch time, if you do require to eat lunch at school, please bring your own and eat it outside or in your designated room.

Post and Deliveries

To reduce volume of post and deliveries, please refrain from ordering personal goods (Amazon etc) to be delivered to BOVTS.

Emergency Evacuation

In the event of an emergency, staff and students should exit the buildings via their nearest fire escape route following social distancing as much as practicably possible. Staff and students should observe the 2m distancing rule when they reach their designated muster point having reported to their departmental fire marshal as normal.

Further information and more in-depth guidance can be found in the school guidance document, please make sure you have read both documents thoroughly.

Appendix 2

BOVTS COVID-19 OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT PLAN

This document aims to provide the information and plans necessary to support the staff and students during the opening of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information applies to people at all main sites and any external buildings in use.

The Theatre School has established a Covid-19 Committee which meets weekly to assess and monitor activity across the School community. This Committee is led by the Principal, Fiona Francombe. Anyone is welcome to join the Committee at any stage: please let the Covid-19 Supervisor Beshlie Thorp (covidsafety@oldvic.ac.uk) know if you would like to join. The Committee will be quickly convened in the case of any concern or if any positive cases should arise.

There will be a constant open dialogue with the whole School community to allow issues to be raised and changes to be made to ensure everyone is kept, and feels, safe and supported.

Prevention and COVID Secure Plans

Currently, masks must be worn at all times in communal spaces, and in class unless told otherwise or dangerous to do so.

Capacity of the school buildings have been reduced, implementing online learning where physical presence is not necessary.

Social distancing signage and markers are in place to remind people to give space when in the building, as well as any other space relevant guidance. For example, one-in-one-out for toilet facilities. Hand sanitiser stations have been installed throughout the building, and everyone is required to use it upon entering and exiting any room.

Temperatures are to be checked on arrival and recorded. All entering the building are required to sign a declaration stating they are not experiencing any symptoms, nor have been in contact with anyone who is ill. This information will be stored securely for 21 days and then destroyed.

Anyone who is feeling unwell is asked to stay at home, and anyone experiencing symptoms are asked to get a test as soon as possible and isolate until results are out. They must make the COVID Supervisor aware of this.

Extra cleaning is in place and performed by an external cleaning company, as well as having cleaning supplies in every workspace for the users to disinfect when leaving.

Any high-risk or vulnerable people will be identified before the start of term. Depending on their situation, they will either be required to attend school remotely where possible or they will be carefully monitored when in the building, ensuring that people around them are adhering strictly to all measures that are in place.

Certain activities, such as dance, and stage combat will be closely monitored in order to make sure all guidelines are being followed and are safe for practice.

Identifying Positive Cases

Should a member of the School (student or staff) present with symptoms of COVID-19 then they must immediately seek to be tested. They must inform the COVID Supervisor; their details are held by the Theatre School's Reception on **0117 973 3535**.

They should also inform their course leader/line manager of the situation. Until the results of the test are confirmed, anyone in that household must isolate. Isolation of the wider School community who have been in close contact will be dynamically assessed and acted upon accordingly.

If the person is on school premises when presenting symptoms then please follow [this Department of Education guidance](#) on what to.

Government Self-Isolation Guidance:

- If the test results come back negative, then everyone associated who are isolating may return back to the School.
- If the results are positive, then those who have been associated must isolate for 10 days, and the person who is ill must isolate for 10 days from the day symptoms started.
- If anyone develops symptoms within the 10 days isolation, they must get tested and isolate for another 10 days. Those in the household must restart their 10 days of isolation.

If a student or staff member has taken a test, they will be required to disclose the results with the COVID Supervisor, whether positive or negative. The Supervisor will then take this information to the COVID Committee who will discuss the next course of action.

Anyone asked to isolate will have the full support of the School, they will be able to request that essential supplies are gathered for them and will be encouraged to contact the School's Student Support Manager with any and all queries or worries. Guidance will be shared with them to aid with any mental health implications isolation causes.

If necessary, all will be encouraged to utilise the contact tracing service provided when they take a test, and it will be stressed how important this is in order for the School to continue to remain open. The sign-in sheets at each building will serve to support contact tracing should there be an outbreak.

Identifying Emerging Outbreaks

As higher education settings have a greater risk of outbreak due to the movement of young people from across the country, we will be extra vigilant in our enforcement of rules around the Theatre School buildings.

If there are 2 or more confirmed linked cases, then this will class as an outbreak.

If there are 2 or more cases the Covid-19 Supervisor, or Student Support Manager in their absence, will immediately notify:

- South West PHE Health Protection Team – 03003038162 or swhpt@phe.gov.uk
- Bristol Public Health England Duty Team – ph.healthprotection@bristol.gov.uk

In this event BOVTS will work with Public Health England to consider who the affected persons are and act accordingly, which may mean having to close the School in order to ensure the situation is managed and contained. Teaching will resume online for those who cannot attend.

If the cases are confirmed at only one building of the three main Theatre School sites, then the other two may be allowed to continue attendance, depending on the extent of contact the confirmed case has had with students and staff at the other sites. This will be discussed with the dedicated PHE representatives whose details are held by the Covid-19 Supervisor and Covid-19 Committee.

Managing an Outbreak

If the School has two or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where Covid-19 is suspected, then it may have an outbreak and we will continue to work with PHE. In some cases PHE may recommend that a larger number of other students self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps a whole student group or year group. If the School is implementing controls and reducing transmission risks, whole School closure based on cases within the School may not be necessary, and will only be considered following advice from PHE.

It is understood that, working with Bristol's Director of Health, where an outbreak at the School is confirmed, a mobile testing unit may be dispatched to test others who may have been in contact with the person who has tested positive.

Testing will be undertaken according to Bristol's routine public health outbreak control practice. The whole School community will be regularly and clearly updated on the outbreak control and support and guidance for all staff and students will be available.

Information on further control measures that will enable the School to re-open will be sent to the whole School community and any concerns listened to and addressed.

Core staff members for the Outbreak Management Response

- **Beshlie Thorp** - COVID Supervisor - 07955076932, covidsafety@oldvic.ac.uk
- **Fiona Francombe** – Principal – 0117 980 9249, fiona.francombe@oldvic.ac.uk
- **Julia Heeley** – Student Support Manager – 0117 980 9247, julia.heeley@oldvic.ac.uk