

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School

Covid-19 Outbreak Management Plan

1.1 Introduction

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School is part of the Conservatoire of Dance and Drama. **Bristol Old Vic Theatre School is one of the most successful and well-respected conservatoire drama schools in the UK.** We attract the very best talent in students and staff, and our courses are recognised nationally and internationally as a benchmark of quality in professional acting, technical, production and management training. Throughout this document Bristol Old Vic Theatre School is referred to as BOVTS.

We have 223 full and part-time Students. The School is open from 8am until 6pm, from Monday to Friday. The Theatre School covers three sites. Our Main Site is situated on 1, 2 & 3 Downside Road. We also have Christchurch Recording Studios and our Scenic Workshops on Sheene Road. Staff and students can access the School out of hours and at the weekend with prior arrangement. The School also makes use of several external venues in Bristol to facilitate larger working groups.

From September 2021, all classes are scheduled to be in person with some measures to remain in place. These include wearing a mask at all times unless performing, rehearsing or being observed, being in a fixed group where the agreement is that everyone is comfortable working unmasked or when a tutor is happy for students to unmask for educational purposes. All Staff and Students are encouraged to maintain good levels of hygiene by continuing to sanitise and thoroughly clean their hands. Additionally, all Staff and Students are strongly advised to take part in twice weekly LFT tests. We no longer enforce social distancing and have left that up to personal choice. All staff and students have been reminded and guided to establish how they want to work with each other. Staff have been asked to make provisions for students who wish to maintain social distancing if they do not feel comfortable with working closely with one another. Our overall message to everyone has been to check in with each other and to continue to respect and support each other's own personal boundaries at this time.

1.2 Decision-making

Staff, Students and Visitors no longer need to fill in BOVTS' personal Google Form that we were using for our own Track and Trace purposes. Instead, all Visitors will need to sign into our Visitors Book. Each Course has their own way of tracking their student's attendance. For example, all Acting Students will need to initial on their registers when they check in in time for 'limbers' before their class.

All Staff, Students and visitors will have their temperature checked upon arrival. Anyone displaying a temperature over 37.8C will be asked to wait outside for 5 minutes and have their temperature retaken. If their temperature still remains above 37.8C they will be asked to leave School premises and arrange to have a PCR test. They will then be instructed to self- isolate at home until they have their result. All Students are told to ring the Reception after 8am to report an absence if they are unwell. If they are experiencing symptoms akin to Covid-19, then Reception will communicate this with the Covid Supervisor and other members of staff to manage next steps. BOVTS is encouraging any student or staff member experiencing any cold- like symptoms to go for a PCR Test.

All Staff and Students are strongly advised to take part in twice weekly LFT tests. If they have a positive test result, they are asked to email covidsafety@oldvic.ac.uk to report a positive test and the Covid Supervisor (Alice Dillon) will work with the School to decide which Students and Staff will need to take a PCR test and self- isolate. If there is a significant number of students who test positive, whole groups may be put on a 'circuit breaker'. This means they will be advised to stay away from School for a set amount of days to allow for any further positive cases to arise and to contain further transmission.

In the event of a positive case, our Vaccination Status Log will be referred to, to see who is fully- vaccinated and who needs to isolate for 10 days. This is a secure document, only visible to the Covid Supervisor and Director of Production Courses, Helen Bater, who is a trained Covid Supervisor.

The Theatre School has established a Covid-19 Committee. This Committee is led by the Principal, Fiona Francombe and is made up of several members of the Senior Management Team and Acting and Production Departments. The Committee meets once a month, and can be mobilised at very short notice to convene if necessary in order to make decisions and to share those decisions with staff and students as quickly as possible.

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 5 or more confirmed cases whether linked or not, then this will class as an outbreak. The School will immediately notify:

- South West Public Health England (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. On the advice of Bristol Public Health, the School may need to reintroduce some measures in order to contain transmission as best as possible.

If the School has five or more confirmed cases within 10 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where Covid-19 is suspected, then we 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.

2) Prevent

These measures are kept inline with the current Government Guidance. It is the responsibility of the Covid Supervisor to disseminate any updates to the School’s Covid Guidance to all Staff, Students and visitor.

2.1 Control Measures

Our mask policy has changed slightly. Although it is still mandatory to wear a mask at all times when in any communal areas in a BOVTS building, (unless exempt for a medical reason) there are instances where it is possible for masks to be removed. This is always at the Tutor’s/Director’s discretion and is relative to each individual class. We ask that students respect each Tutor’s decision and the School will support each individual tutor’s position. Upon entering a classroom or rehearsal space, everyone must maintain wearing a facemask, until invited to unmask if they wish to do so, by a tutor or director. For classes, tutors may establish that they are happy for students to take masks off for an exercise. This is at the discretion of the tutor, and of course it is the student’s right to keep wearing a mask if they feel safer doing so. For final- year show rehearsals, it is ultimately the Director’s decision to establish how they want to establish mask- wearing in their rehearsals, this includes for read-throughs, sharing research and warm- ups. There is an expectation that masks will be worn as much as possible. For stationary desk/ computer work or in shared office spaces, masks do not need to be worn if room capacity is maintained, ventilation is good and it has been established that everyone

sharing the space is happy to work unmasked. If a student or students are up in a space performing, being observed for educational purposes by their Tutor and other classmates they can take their mask off. If someone is being filmed or working in front of a camera, they do not need to wear a mask. During rehearsals, where there is 'active work' i.e. blocking, running a scene, working 1-2-1 with a Director or Tutor, students can take their masks off. Masks can be taken off for those who are up working in the space. If students are working up in the space with someone from their household, they do not need to wear a mask. If you are working on your own in a room, they do not need to wear a mask. If a group is working without supervision, (for example in a breakout room, or after school) and they are within the room capacity, they must establish with their group how they would like to work. Reduced capacities have been set on all spaces including studios, offices and workspaces around the building.

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.

Around the School there has been signs visibly placed to encourage Students and Staff to get both vaccines and maintain good hand hygiene.

BOVTS has advised all Staff and Students to ensure good levels of ventilation in all working spaces. In areas that have been identified as not having direct access to outside, natural ventilation we have provided Co2 Monitors to keep an eye on the levels of CO2. These work on a traffic light system so that those using the rooms can easily identify the levels of CO2 and then take necessary steps to improve ventilation or mitigate the risk by bringing in extra safety measure, for e.g. wearing facemasks.

These monitors are available to be signed out by tutors whose classes naturally have more risk, for example singing or voice work.

2.2 Communication plans

The BOVTS Autumn Term 2021 Covid Guidance was sent to all Staff and Students, and visiting professionals, before the start of term. Other ways in which the School's measures will be communicated to them over the course of the term:

- Induction sessions
- Student Handbook
- Rehearsal and Classroom Covid Etiquette document
- Key points to remember in each classroom
- The School website

- Invitation to share Vaccination Status with the Covid Supervisors
- Posters around the School
- Opportunities to ask questions or raise concerns with Heads of Courses, which can then be passed onto the Covid Committee and addressed.

2.3 Students' feedback

A structure has always been in place to allow for Student Representatives of each group to be responsible for collating feedback from their group to communicate to senior management. Any Covid related issues are included in these discussions. If necessary these issues are brought to the attention of the Covid Committee and addressed accordingly.

2.4 Vulnerable People

BOVTS holds medical records on students and allows students to disclose to us any health conditions that means they are vulnerable and are considered high- risk. Those who are exempt from wearing a face covering in the building are told to inform their Course Leader and necessary arrangements are made to support them.

2.5 Collaboration

BOVTS is part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama and they facilitate a Safe Schools Return Meeting every fortnight. This gives representatives from BOVTS the chance to collaborate and share with other member schools regarding their Covid practices.

3) Contain

Below is the following advice that has been sent to all students, staff and visiting professional in advance of them starting at BOVTS:

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 should also inform their course leader/line manager of the situation.
- Should the result come back positive they should isolate for 10 days, either from the point of when their symptoms started or if asymptomatic, from when they

tested positive.

- NHS Track and Trace will get in contact with those who have tested positive and it will be their responsibility to share the details of those who they class as their close- contacts.

- NHS Track and Trace will then get in contact with those people who have been identified as close- contacts.

Households and Close- Contacts

From the 16th of August, self- isolation rules for close contacts changed. Government Guidance outlined that you may not be required to self-isolate if you are notified you have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 and any of the following apply:

- You are fully vaccinated
- You are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- You have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- You are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Fully vaccinated means that you have been vaccinated twice with an MHRA approved COVID-19 vaccine in the UK, and at least 14 days have passed since you received the recommended doses of that vaccine.

How the School will treat close contacts:

- The School will risk assess on a case by case basis and decide the best course of action to contain spread and protect staff and students. Anyone identified as a close contact of a positive case will need to undergo a PCR test and isolate away from the school until they have had their result. The school will give them further guidance in the event of a negative result.
- Anyone who lives in the same household as a positive case will need to undergo a PCR test and isolate away from the school until they have had their result. The school will give them further guidance in the event of a negative result.
- In the event of a few positive cases appearing in a group, the School may initiate a 'circuit breaker'. This will mean the whole group are asked to isolate away from the school for a set amount of time in order to contain potential further spread.

What is considered as close contact?

Examples of close contact include:

- close face to face contact (under 1 metre) for any length of time – including talking to them or coughing on them, with or without a mask.
- being within 1 to 2 metres of each other for more than 15 minutes, with or without a mask – including travelling in a small vehicle
- spending lots of time in your home, such as cleaning it, with or without a mask

If you have had close contact with someone who has tested positive, you must self-isolate if you are told to by the NHS Test and Trace service or the NHS App, you should take extra care to follow social distancing advice, including washing their hands often. If you get any coronavirus symptoms, you must self-isolate and get a test as soon as possible.

It is a legal requirement to self-isolate for 10 days if you test positive for COVID-19 or if you are identified as a close- contact and are not exempt from isolating.

4) Manage

4.1 Support and wellbeing

Each student group has at least one member of staff who is the point of contact in case of any issues they feel they may need support with. Julia Heeley is BOVTS' Higher Education Administration & Student Support Manager. She works closely with Heads of Courses to support students with any issues.

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 maybe 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.

The School has also signposted to 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

4.2 Disciplinary Action

If a student repeatedly ignores advice and guidance issued by the School, they will be referred through CDD's [Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

4.3 Potential scenarios

We will apply the appropriate Tier of Restriction (as advised by PHE) to the below scenarios:

- Tier 1: All teaching delivered face- to- face with light restrictions. These include temperature taking, hand sanitizers, maximum room capacities, masks when moving around the building and maintain good ventilation
- Tier 2: Blended learning, with a mixture of online and in person teaching. Some measures will be reintroduced. These will include masks at all times except when up performing/rehearsing, temperature takings, hand sanitisers, consider reduced room capacities for certain activities such as dance/movement and social distancing. Staff will be asked to work from home if possible.
- Tier 3: Blended learning. Masks at all times except during performances and dress rehearsals, temperature takings, hand sanitisers, reduced capacities for rooms/halving the groups again to limit how many people are working with who and social distancing. Access to certain facilities such as the Student Common room and Library will be prohibited. Assigned toilets for year groups.
- Tier 4: National Lockdown: All teaching to return online and as many staff as possible to work from home.