Instrumental music program guidelines for managing hazards associated with COVID-19

Updated November 2020

These guidelines are intended to assist principals and instrumental music teachers/instructors in schools when considering how they implement their Instrumental Music program during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This information is based on current government and medical advice, as well as published COVID-19 research, and complies with the current operating guidelines for Queensland state schools.

Potential risk

The instrumental music classroom environment presents a number of factors that schools must consider in addition to the factors associated with a general classroom environment. These factors include:

- stagnant air flow in a space with excessive breath and saliva expulsion from the playing a woodwind/brass instrument or singing (research suggests that the projection of moisture droplets when playing certain instruments is similar to a cough)
- close proximity to breath and saliva expulsion (the 'breath' space)
- excessive moisture/air inhalation associated with playing a woodwind/brass instrument or singing (requirement for continual deep breaths)
- sharing of resources that could hold moisture/saliva droplets
- contact with equipment that has been handled, placed on the face and in the mouth
• contact with equipment and surfaces that could hold moisture/saliva droplets
• exposure or sensitivity to cleaning and/or disinfectant products.

Considerations for the instrumental music classroom

Volume, people, time

Within the school environment, members of large bands, choirs or ensembles are able to rehearse in the same location (indoors or outdoors) if they ensure that current hygiene management practices are maintained.

Choirs or bands that usually use a stage may need to relocate to the hall floor to ensure physical distancing. We would advise avoiding the use of podiums/platforms with risers.

Where possible, hold choir practice outdoors. If it is not possible to hold practice outdoors, open windows/doors or ensure adequate ventilation.

Any gathering outside of the school grounds must be at a location/facility that has implemented an approved industry COVID-safe plan.

Standard hygiene practice - instrumental music

Hand hygiene

• Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after the activity or ensure use of hand sanitiser upon entry and exit to facility, as well as before and after the lesson.

During activity

• Students should play only the instrument allocated to them.
• Students must not share instruments/mouthpieces/reeds or other accessories.
• Teachers should avoid handling student instruments where possible. If a teacher
has to handle a student’s instrument e.g. for tuning or repair, the recommended action is to use a barrier (paper towel or vinyl/nitrile (not allergy triggering latex) gloves) and to wash or sanitise their hands both beforehand and afterwards. The added step of wiping down the instrument with a disinfectant wipe is also an option.

**Air flow**

- Open doors and windows if suitable and available and ensure ventilation system is operating (e.g. ceiling fans).

**Physical distancing**

- At all times, all persons within choirs or ensembles should ensure they comply with general physical distancing guidelines (at least 1.5 metres between singers/players in all directions, no more than 1 person per 4 square metres).

- Students should be spaced (and not facing each other) to ensure no air is blown directly towards another student or teacher. Bell covers may be used on woodwind instruments to enhance the control of aerosols.

- Teachers should position themselves alongside the student, not directly in front.

**Limited contact**

- Limit any sharing of resources wherever possible, i.e. all students should use their own music stand, pencil, folder, mallets, etc.

**Equipment and cleaning**

- Students must use their own cleaning equipment (i.e. pull-throughs, cleaning rods and cloths), as well as music, pencils and any other item they may require to participate in instrumental music. These items should not be shared.

- Individuals must swab and wipe their instrument after each activity, using their own personal cleaning equipment.

- Students with wind instruments should have their own spit rag or cloth, which is placed under the instrument while it is being played. The spit rag should not be handled by anyone else and should be kept by the student in a zip-lock bag or
container.

- It is to be assumed that any unallocated instrument from the school music storeroom has not been cleaned and therefore will need to be disinfected before playing.

**Accessories**

- Students should only use their own accessories, such as neck or seat straps, ligatures and mouthpiece covers, reed containers and protectors, and cork grease.

**Cleaning and disinfecting**

High-touch areas in teaching spaces and storage areas must be wiped down with approved disinfectant between each activity. The classroom must be cleaned after each teaching day or rehearsal (as part of regular school cleaning).

As a reminder - **cleaning and disinfecting are two different processes.**

**Cleaning** means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. A detergent is a surfactant designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water.

- Anything labelled as a detergent (e.g. dishwashing liquid, liquid hand soap) will work. Avoid the use of washing powder as this may damage instrument surfaces. Detergents help to loosen germs so that they can be rinsed away with clean water. Allowing the surface to dry once clean, makes it harder for germs to survive or grow.

**Disinfecting** means using chemicals to kill germs (bacteria and viruses) on surfaces. It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs.

- Disinfectants containing ≥ 70% alcohol or quaternary ammonium compounds, chlorine bleach or oxygen bleach are suitable for use on hard surfaces (that is, surfaces where any spilt liquid pools and does not soak in). These will be labelled as ‘disinfectant’ on the packaging.
**Cleaning product safety**

- Approved cleaning and disinfectant products are listed as having any of those active ingredients listed above. Active ingredients are listed on the product label (front or top of container) and in section 3 of the product safety data sheet (SDS).
- Ensure the active ingredient is compatible with the material being cleaned (table 1).

Table 1: Approved cleaning products and application to instrument materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Suitability of product for use on instrument material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard rubber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm water and liquid hand soap or mild dishwashing detergent</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinfectant products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (70%) hand sanitiser (gel*)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isopropyl alcohol (70% alcohol)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinfectant wipes* (alcohol based) e.g. &gt;70% alcohol</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquid hand sanitiser* (non alcohol)</td>
<td>Check label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinfectant wipes* (non-alcohol based) e.g. benzalkonium, lactic acid as active ingredient</td>
<td>Check label directions to determine if the active ingredient will damage instrument surfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinfectant solution* (diluted and applied as per manufacturer instructions)</td>
<td>Check label directions to determine if the active ingredient will damage instrument surfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bleach containing products</td>
<td>Not recommended for use on mouthpieces or instruments due to their potential effect on skin, plastics, wood and metals¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50:50 water and white vinegar (food grade)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^For wood instruments, any excess amount of liquid can be damaging. Apply liquids sparingly outside of the mouthpiece area that need to be cleaned.

* Avoid dispensing liquid directly onto the instrument. Instead apply product to paper towel and then wiped over the instrument. Hand sanitiser products with too many moisturising properties might damage the surface of the instrument, or build up residue over time.

# Where non-alcohol based disinfectant wipes or solutions are used, carefully check the active ingredients (found on the front label) and directions for use before application to ensure they will not damage the instrument surface.

- Obtain and review the product SDS before purchasing to ensure the product is

appropriate and chemical risks can be managed in the workplace:

- access the SDS from the procurement webpage (hand sanitiser SDS only) or access the SDS from your workplace’s Chemwatch subscription.
- review and apply the safety information in the SDS
- wear personal protective equipment appropriate to the task as per the SDS.
- Refer to the department’s Interpreting Globally Harmonised System (GHS) safety data sheets for assistance in understanding chemical safety information.

Sample SDS for products with active ingredients listed in table 1 are provided below.

**Note that these products are representative only and have been selected from available procurement providers based on ingredient composition** – you should select the relevant product to meet your needs. Typically, the person ordering the products should download the SDS from the supplier’s website so that it can be made available in the workplace:

- **Pine O Cleen Disinfectant Surface Wipes** (70% isopropyl alcohol wipes).
- **Accent disinfectant** (1-10% benzalkonium chloride and detergent disinfectant)
- **Northfork Liquid Hand Wash** (liquid hand soap)
- **Hercules disinfectant wipes** (non-alcohol 2-Phenoxyethanol)
- **Cleaning vinegar** (non alcohol, non detergent cleaning agent)
- SDS for a range of hand sanitiser products can be viewed from the OnePortal COVID-19 page.

- Where consumer cleaning and disinfectant products are purchased and used, follow the label instructions for safe use and check that the active ingredient is compatible with the surface being cleaned (table 1).
  - Note: manufacturers are not required to produce SDS for consumer products. Where sufficient safety information for a product cannot be obtained, do not purchase or use the product.
- After cleaning your instrument:
  - allow instrument to air dry before placing in closed container
  - wash your cleaning cloth and any containers used for cleaning with warm soapy water, rinse and let air dry
  - dispose of consumables (wipes, paper towel etc.) after use on each instrument
Please refer to the following documents for further information:

- Queensland Health – [Routine cleaning](#)
- SafeWork Australia – [How to clean your workplace](#)
- Department of Education [Infection Control Guideline](#) – pages 22 to 24
- [Managing risks with chemicals in Department workplaces](#) procedure
Instrument cleaning methods

The level of effort required to clean a musical instrument depends on the instrument type, how often it is played and by whom. The use of standard hygiene practices e.g. hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette (and not touching the face) are the primary methods of preventing transmission of COVID-19. Cleaning and disinfection is an additional measure. The cleaning regimes in table 2 are provided as a guide to further minimise risk of transmission across class groups and to adults during instrumental music activities.

The procedures below are in addition to the standard cleaning practices listed in table 2 used to clean instruments after each use. It is suggested that teachers/instructors consider these disinfectant procedures for when school instruments are returned and cleaned before reallocation.

Woodwind

[Flute, clarinet, saxophone, oboe, bassoon]

Woodwind instruments, cases and accessories are constructed with a variety of materials. Any cleaning product used should be approved for use by the school and must be suitable for its intended use.

Select one of the following cleaning options based on the type of instrument and existing cleaning processes, using detergent or an alcohol-based product.

*Note: Products containing bleach could damage the instruments.*
### Table 2: Standard hygiene practices for instrumental music equipment and resources (see also additional cleaning practices for specific instruments later in this document)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/item</th>
<th>Limit contact</th>
<th>Clean and disinfect</th>
<th>Regime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outside equipment e.g. music stands, chairs, stools, amps, leads, keyboards, piano, desks, folders, percussion instruments.</td>
<td>Avoid carrying any unnecessary equipment into the classroom, i.e. no school bags.</td>
<td>• Used resources must be wiped down with approved disinfectant. This may be a disinfectant wipe or disinfectant on paper towel.</td>
<td>After each use, Use a fresh wipe/towel for each new object.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Instruments (see below for additional cleaning instructions for specific instruments) | Neither instruments nor mouthpieces should be shared. (This excludes percussion - see particulars on percussion below). | Water and saliva release:  
  • Provide absorbent paper towel for the cleaning of moisture/saliva  
  • Students must use and dispose of their own piece of paper towel used for saliva. avoid spraying droplets around the room, students should empty water/saliva out of their instruments as gently as possible.  
  Cleaning:  
  • Students must swab and wipe down their instruments after use as part of their regular instrument-cleaning practice.  
  • Extra paper towels should be provided to assist.  
  • Students should have local access to a sink with running water to wash out mouthpieces with warm detergent and water after each use. | After each use |
| Instrument cases | No sharing of instrument cases should occur. | Cases must be wiped with disinfectant upon entry into the classroom. | Upon entry into the classroom. |
| Accessories and personal cleaning equipment i.e. reeds, rosin, neck straps, seat straps and hand rests, reed covers/protectors/cases, mouthpiece covers. | No sharing of instrument accessories should occur. | All students must have their own instrument-cleaning equipment. | After each use |
| Percussion instruments and instrument surfaces | Wipe down used mallets, instruments and high-touch surfaces with disinfectant | | After each activity |
How to disinfect woodwind instruments

**Flute: head joint**

1. Clean around the embouchure hole using a cotton swab saturated with isopropyl alcohol (70% alcohol content is recommended).
2. Wipe the flute's lip plate using a soft cloth saturated with isopropyl alcohol (70%) to kill germs. Alcohol wipes (if available) are a suitable alternative.
3. Clean the inside of the head joint using a soft, lint-free silk cloth inserted into the cleaning rod.
   - Do not run the head joint under water because it may saturate and eventually shrink the head joint cork.

**Flute: body and foot joint**

1. Wipe the flute's body, including keys using a soft cloth saturated with isopropyl alcohol (70%) to kill germs. Alcohol wipes (if available) are a suitable alternative.

**Clarinet and saxophone mouthpieces**

1. Select a small container that will fit the mouthpiece vertically and place the mouthpiece, tip down, into the container.
2. Fill the container just past the window of the mouthpiece with a solution of 50% water and 50% white vinegar (the dilute vinegar solution will dissolve calcium deposits). Ensure water temperature is no hotter than lukewarm. Protect clarinet mouthpiece cork from moisture.
3. After the mouthpiece has soaked for 15 minutes, use mouthpiece brush to remove any calcium deposits/residue from inside and outside surfaces.
4. Rinse the mouthpiece thoroughly and then saturate with approved disinfectant solution. Place on paper towel and wait one minute.
5. Wipe dry with paper towel.

Note: Metal saxophone mouthpieces can clean well with hot water, mild dishwashing liquid or liquid hand soap and a mouthpiece brush. Disinfectant solution is also safe for metal mouthpieces (no bleach).
**Saxophone**

**Neck**

Swabs are available to clean the inside of the saxophone neck; however, a flexible bottle brush can also be used.

1. Use the bottle brush with mild, soapy water to clean the inside of the neck.
2. Rinse under running water.
3. Approved disinfectant solution may be used on the inside of the neck if desired.
4. Place on paper towel for one minute.
5. Rinse again under running water, dry, and place in the case.

**Brass**

[Trumpet, French horn, tenor horn, baritone, euphonium, tuba]

The following section identifies concerns and possible mitigation for playing and cleaning brass instruments.

- **Brass instruments, mutes, cases, etc.:**
  1. Wipe over instrument with alcohol wipes or compatible disinfectant spray applied to paper towel. Consider the product ingredients and the surface being disinfected (see table 1).
  2. Where bell covers are used, wash cover in warm soapy water, rinse and allow to air dry after each use.

- **Products containing bleach will damage the instruments — e.g. bleach makes silver plating turn black.**

- **Brass instruments may be flushed with water or detergent if required.**

  **Mouthpieces**

- Students should play only on their own mouthpiece.

- Brass mouthpieces should be cleaned regularly with a mouthpiece brush and warm, soapy water. Cleaning brass mouthpieces has always been recommended by the department and should be done at least every month. In the current
environment, however, it is more important than ever.

Percussion

[Tuned and un-tuned percussion as taught in the Instrumental Music curriculum, including snare drum, bass drum, timpani, xylophone, glockenspiel, marimba and auxiliary percussion]

The following section identifies concerns with the spread of germs and provides possible mitigation within the percussion section.

- Plastic, metal and synthetic materials may be cleaned with liquid (not gel) hand sanitiser (do not apply directly to instrument) and the residue wiped with some disposable paper towel. Use approved hand sanitiser (see COVID procurement) that is managed effectively within the classroom. Disinfectant wipes might also be suitable; however, consider the product ingredients carefully. Products with too many moisturising properties might damage the surface of the instrument, or build up residue over time.

- Wood and natural skin materials are difficult to clean. Using mallets or sticks to hit the instrument or substituting with another instrument are options. Alternatives to specific instruments are listed below in table 3.

- Use detergent or a product containing 70% alcohol — whichever is best for the instrument.

Mallets and sticks

As students move around the percussion section, it is usual practice for them to share mallets and sticks. To mitigate the spread of germs within this practice, the following could be considered:

- Use your own sticks and mallets — do not share personally owned equipment.

- Sanitise school mallets (e.g. bass drum mallet) after each use, between different students.

Instruments that are dampened with hands

Percussionists are often required to use their hands to dampen instruments as they play.
To mitigate the spread of germs from one player to the next, schools could consider cleaning the instrument/instrument head after each player. Instruments to consider include:

- timpani (synthetic/plastic heads only)
- bass drum (synthetic/plastic heads only)
- suspended cymbal
- glockenspiel

**Instruments that are held in the hand to play**

Various percussion instruments are required to be held while being played. Schools could consider limiting use of these instruments by substituting with a different instrument or cleaning between each player. The following require direct contact with hands:

- snare drum mechanism
- tambourine (synthetic/plastic heads only)
- other auxiliary instruments such as cabasa, cowbell, triangle, claves, etc.

**Table 3: Suggested percussion instrument substitutes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Suggested substitutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crash cymbals</td>
<td>Difficulty in cleaning leather straps</td>
<td>Substitute with suspended cymbal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xylophone and marimba</td>
<td>Cleaning products might damage lacquer or be absorbed into wood.</td>
<td>Substitute with glockenspiel/vibraphone. Wear single-use disposable gloves (avoid latex due to potential allergies unless specified in the product SDS) while playing wooden mallet instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aux instruments</td>
<td>Difficulty in cleaning intricacies of some auxiliary instruments</td>
<td>Substitute with another instrument, or play part on drum pad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongos/congas</td>
<td>Difficulty in cleaning with non-plastic/synthetic head</td>
<td>Substitute with another instrument/drum pad. Use round-ended mallets to hit the instrument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strings

[Violin, viola, cello, double bass, bass guitar/electric bass]

The following section identifies concerns and possible mitigation for playing and cleaning string instruments.

- Instruments, cases and accessories are constructed with a variety of materials. Consider the product ingredients carefully because they could damage the instruments or finish. **Products containing bleach will damage string instruments. Undiluted alcohol products may strip varnish from the instrument.**

1. Lightly spray a clean, lint free cloth (e.g. microfibre) with disinfecting spray or use a disinfectant wipe and wipe the instrument over. Allow instrument to air dry before returning to case.

Poster/communication

This poster, downloadable from [OnePortal](#) may assist in managing COVID-19 hazards within the Instrumental Music field.
Instrumental Music
COVID-19 considerations

Wash hands
Wash your hands with soap and water before and after entering teaching and rehearsal spaces.

Percussion
- Clean and sanitise shared sticks and mallets after each player
- Use your own sticks and mallets if possible
- Clean and sanitise instruments held and damped by hands after each player

Strings
- Clean your instrument after use
- Use your own instrument accessories

Woodwind and Brass
- Clean your instrument after use
- Empty water keys onto disposable paper
- Use your own instrument accessories

Ensembles
- One stand per player
- Clean chairs and stands after use
- Empty water keys onto disposable paper
- Use your own resources (pencils, music, etc.)
- Ensure physical distancing of 1.5m between each ensemble member