**Singing, Choral Speaking, Instrument Playing and Christmas Concerts**

The situation in relation to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in schools is ever evolving and how schools are required to do things may necessarily have to change and be adapted in light of the advice from the Government, NPHET and the HSE.

Singing and instrumental music produced by woodwind or brass instruments are thought to be higher risk activities for COVID -19 spread due to the aggressive expelling of respiratory droplets which can result in aerosols that can hang in the air for hours.

Any decision to have live rehearsals, nativity plays, Christmas concerts or choral events places an onus and a responsibility on a BoM to ensure the safety of those involved and to ensure that a thorough risk assessment has been completed. The following advice is offered to help with this process in schools.

1. Under levels 3 to 5 no organised indoor gatherings can take place. No audience is allowed for any musical, concerts or choral performances
2. The following precautions are suggested for classes involved in group singing, choirs, nativity concerts and the playing of brass musical instruments held in-doors in a school setting:

* All staff present to wear face coverings during rehearsals and performances
* A strict physical distance of at least 2 metres to be maintained between pupils (particularly singers and musicians) during rehearsals and performances
* The duration of indoor practice, teaching and performance would be limited with frequent breaks to facilitate regular ventilation of rooms and instrument cleaning (where applicable)
* Ventilation quality should be reviewed when determining location of practices and performances
* Brass and woodwind musicians would use coverings for their instruments to reduce droplet spread while playing

1. Additional recommendations would include:

* Using pre-recorded or streamed music as an alternative to live performances whenever possible
* Reducing the number of pupils involved whenever possible
* Giving preference to outdoor rehearsals and performances
* Avoiding and not permitting the sharing of equipment where the mouth may come into contact with equipment (such as mouthpieces, microphones, etc.) and cleaning equipment thoroughly between uses
* Reducing rehearsal and performance times

1. Considerations when using an indoor school space:

* Look at the rehearsal space, number of pupils and staff attending rehearsals and ventilation in the area – use larger spaces where possible
* Risk assess the room/space – access, distancing of chairs, keeping pathways clear so distancing can be maintained and the setting up of the room to make best use of available ventilation and changes in air flow
* Have a single one direction pathway in and out of rehearsal space where possible
* Limit rehearsal length and ideally have it take place outdoors
* Keep a detailed attendance record and develop a plan that details the steps that will be taken should a pupil or staff member be diagnosed with COVID-19 following a rehearsal or performance (part of existing plan within the school)
* Comply with social distancing and other advice from NPHET and HSE
* Hand hygiene to be done on arrival in rehearsal space and frequent use of hand sanitiser or washing hands to be encouraged during rehearsal and performance
* No sharing of equipment, pencils, music, music stands, chairs, water bottles, cups, etc. – same procedures as currently apply in classrooms
* Keep the piano/keyboard for use by the teacher alone
* Review procedures to see might be done differently – what preparation could be done outside or online with class? Could individual scenes for the nativity play be shot and then edited together afterwards? Could Zoom be used with scenes organised into class bubbles? Could each class be filmed taking one scene and song separately and then it all be cut together?

1. Individual schools are best placed to put the appropriate safeguards in place in line with public health guidance and advice. There is no straightforward procedure that can be followed with certainty, leaving each school to negotiate its own best solution. The aim is to create a student-centred and safe solution for all stakeholders.