

VOICE CARE POLICY

Date of policy review:	September 2026
Date for Review:	September 2027
Lead for Review:	Headteacher

Introduction

This policy outlines the measures taken to promote and protect the vocal health of staff and students at The Guildhouse School. Effective voice care is essential for teaching, learning, and extracurricular activities, particularly for those who use their voices extensively. Teachers are professional voice users and on average, talk for about 60% of the working day.

Evidence shows that teachers are particularly at risk of developing voice problems. The publication *Fitness to Teach: Occupational Health Guidance for the Training and Employment of Teachers* (DfE 2000) refers to teachers being at risk of suffering voice disorders because of work. Female voices are more vulnerable, and some subjects, e.g. physical education, music and technology are more risk to the voice than others. Environmental factors can also contribute to voice strain and in schools these can include:

- class size
- class layout and design
- remote or online speaking
- noise
- acoustics
- dust, fumes and other irritants
- uncomfortable temperature and/or poor ventilation.

Research also indicates that as the voice influences the listener's reaction, the teacher's voice quality can affect pupil learning. The most common types of voice misuse are shouting, using a strained loud voice and also excessive throat clearing.

The usual symptoms of voice problems are:

- throat pain when speaking or swallowing
- sore throat in the morning which disappears when the voice "warms up"
- hoarse, tired voice in the evening
- increase in mucus
- rapidly-changing pitch or loss of control of voice

Medical help is needed if there is:

- persistent hoarseness for more than 2-3 weeks
- regular hoarseness or voice loss
- significant voice quality changes
- constant vocal fatigue

- difficulty or pain when swallowing

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers must do all that is reasonably practicable to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of their employees at work. This includes providing health and safety information, instruction and training, and providing a safe working environment, without risks to health. Employers must assess the risks of all activities, introduce measures to manage those risks and tell employees about the measures (The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Raise awareness of vocal health and its importance
- Provide guidance on maintaining a healthy voice
- Reduce the risk of voice strain and long-term damage
- Ensure a supportive environment for individuals experiencing vocal difficulties

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and students at The Guildhouse School particularly those in roles that require frequent voice use, such as teachers, drama students, and choir members.

Voice Care Guidelines

- **Hydration:** Staff and students should stay hydrated by drinking water regularly. Caffeinated and sugary drinks should be consumed in moderation.
- **Volume Control:** Avoid shouting or raising the voice unnecessarily. Use classroom management strategies and amplification tools when needed.
- **Rest and Recovery:** Encourage regular vocal rest periods, particularly after prolonged voice use.
- **Environmental Factors:** Reduce background noise to prevent unnecessary vocal strain. Use a microphone for large audiences when available.
- **Posture and Breathing:** Promote proper posture and breathing techniques to support vocal projection and reduce strain.
- **Health and Hygiene:** Avoid excessive throat clearing, smoking, and exposure to irritants such as dust and dry air.

Supporting Staff and Students

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is disabled if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

An impairment is 'long term' if it has lasted for at least 12 months or is likely to last for that period. There has been some legal dispute over the meaning of 'likely' although it has been

interpreted as meaning “could well happen”. A substantial adverse effect means, according to government guidance, more than ‘minor’ or ‘trivial’.

Disabled employees are protected against discrimination. The employer is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments where any work arrangements or the physical features of the workplace put a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled.

The Guildhouse School will therefore;

- seek to make reasonable adjustments to lesson and teaching arrangements, acoustic improvements and the use of personal microphones investigated as a way to reduce the strain on the speaker’s voice when necessary.
- Training on voice care will be provided as part of staff induction and professional development.
- Students involved in voice-heavy activities will receive guidance on proper vocal techniques.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made for individuals experiencing voice difficulties, including workload adjustments or access to medical support where necessary.

6. Reporting and Support

- Staff and students experiencing persistent voice issues should report concerns to their line manager.
- Referrals to occupational health or medical professionals will be facilitated if needed.
- The Guildhouse School will take a proactive approach to voice care and has completed a Voice Care Risk Assessment. Guildhouse staff have access to Health Assured and GP24 which can be accessed for support, advice and medical care.

7. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness and relevance.

Feedback from staff and students will be considered in future revisions.

For any questions or further support regarding voice care, please contact the Business Manager

Further information:

<https://old.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/free.htm>

Related Policy

Medical Care Policy

Staff Wellbeing Policy

SEND Policy

Voice Care Risk Assessment

Assessment Date	
Assessor	
Location	
Review Date	

1. Overview

This risk assessment identifies potential hazards associated with voice use in The Guildhouse School and outlines control measures to mitigate the risks. It aligns with the Voice Care Policy and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

2. Hazards Identified

Hazard	Potential Risks	Affected Individuals	Comments
Excessive Voice Use	Hoarseness, throat pain, vocal fatigue, long-term damage	Teachers, drama students, choir members	
High Background Noise	Straining the voice to be heard, increased vocal stress	All staff and students	
Poor Acoustics	Echoing and sound distortion leading to increased vocal effort	Teachers, students, performers	
Dehydration	Dry throat, increased susceptibility to vocal strain	All staff and students	
Poor Air Quality (dust, fumes, dry air)	Irritation of vocal cords, increased throat clearing	All staff and students	
Poor Posture and Breathing Techniques	Increased strain on vocal cords	Teachers, students, performers	

Illness or Pre-existing Conditions	Greater vulnerability to vocal strain and damage	Individuals with respiratory conditions	
------------------------------------	--	---	--

3. Control Measures

Control Measure	Actions Implemented	Comments
Hydration	Encourage regular water intake, provide water stations	
Volume Control	Promote non-verbal classroom management techniques, use amplification tools	
Rest and Recovery	Ensure voice breaks during lessons, limit prolonged speaking periods	
Environmental Adjustments	Reduce background noise, improve classroom acoustics	
Air Quality Management	Ensure good ventilation, minimize exposure to dust and fumes	
Training	Provide voice care training for staff and students	
Posture and Breathing Techniques	Encourage proper posture and breathing techniques	
Health Support	Refer individuals with persistent issues to occupational health or medical professionals	

4. Monitoring & Reporting

- Staff and students experiencing persistent voice issues must report concerns to their line manager.
- Occupational health referrals will be provided when needed.
- Adjustments (e.g., reduced teaching load, use of microphones) will be made where necessary.
- Regular review and feedback from staff and students to improve risk management strategies.

5. Review & Sign-Off

This risk assessment will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness. Any changes in the school environment or staff needs will be taken into account for future revisions.

Assessor Signature: _____

Date: _____



GUILDHOUSE SCHOOL
LONDON



Creating tomorrow's change makers.