

PARENT & CARER GUIDE

Music, Arts & Drama Teachers

How to choose a safe, trusted teacher for instrument, singing, dance, drama or art lessons.

Private lessons in music, dance, drama and art can build confidence and bring a lot of joy. Many teachers work for themselves, often one to one and sometimes in your home or theirs. This guide explains what checks to ask about and how to feel sure you have made a good choice.

They can get a DBS check. You can ask to see it.

Since 21 January 2026, eligible self-employed workers can apply for their own Enhanced DBS check through a DBS Umbrella Body.

Can a self-employed teacher get a DBS check?

Yes. Since 21 January 2026, eligible self-employed workers, including music teachers and other private tutors, can apply for an Enhanced DBS check. Depending on their role, this may include a check of the Children's Barred List, the Adults' Barred List or both.

Not everyone qualifies. It depends on the work they do and who they work with. The teacher can use the DBS eligibility tool at gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check to confirm.

You cannot apply for a check on a teacher's behalf. They apply themselves through a DBS Umbrella Body, such as self-employed-dbs.co.uk. The certificate belongs to them, but you can ask to see it.

Lessons at home, at their home, or in a group

Where lessons happen makes a difference to how you plan. One-to-one lessons are common in music and singing, so it helps to think ahead about how you will stay in touch with what goes on.

- Lessons in your home: stay in the house and keep the door open if you can.
- Lessons at the teacher's home: ask who else lives there or may be present.
- Visit the teaching room first and check it feels open and suitable.
- Group classes in dance, drama or art: ask about staff numbers and who else helps.
- For shows, exams or trips, ask who supervises and how you will be kept informed.
- Online lessons: keep the device in a shared room, not a bedroom.

Physical contact and communication

Some teaching involves touch, such as correcting posture on an instrument, breathing for singing or positions in dance. A good teacher will explain this, ask first and be happy to demonstrate instead.

- Ask how they handle any need for physical guidance.
- Agree that messages about lessons come to you, not directly to your child.
- Ask how photos or videos of performances are taken and shared.
- Check any changing arrangements for costume or dance kit.

How to check their DBS certificate

For teaching under-18s, the certificate should cover the child workforce. If they also teach adults who may be vulnerable, it may cover the adult workforce too.

If they subscribe to the DBS Update Service, you can do a free status check with their permission. You need their certificate number, surname as on the certificate and date of birth. GOV.UK suggests entering "private employer" as the organisation name. If new information exists, ask them to apply for a new check.

If a certificate shows the person is on a relevant barred list, they must not do this work with children. Do not employ them.

- ☐ See the original paper certificate. Copies or photos are not acceptable.
- ☐ Check the name and details match their government photo ID.
- ☐ Look at the issue date.
- ☐ Check it covers the child workforce for work with under-18s.
- ☐ See whether a Children's Barred List check was included.
- ☐ Ask if they subscribe to the DBS Update Service.
- ☐ Do not photocopy, share or keep the certificate information longer than needed.

More than a certificate

A DBS certificate is only one part of the picture. Put it together with references, qualifications, experience, recommendations from other families and your own judgement.

- Ask for references from families they have taught.
- Ask about training, exam board experience or membership of a professional body.
- Sit in on the first few lessons or stay nearby.
- Talk to your child regularly about how lessons are going.

Where to get help

- In an emergency, call the police on 999.
- Worried about a child? Call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.
- Worried about an adult? Contact your local council's adult safeguarding team.
- If you know a barred person is doing this work, report it to the police.
- Full guidance: gov.uk/guidance/private-individuals-employing-self-employed-workers-or-personal-employees

Questions to ask

1. Do you have an Enhanced DBS certificate, and may I see the original?
2. Does it include a Children's Barred List check?
3. Are you signed up to the DBS Update Service?
4. Where will lessons take place, and who else will be there?
5. How do you handle any physical guidance, such as posture or dance positions?
6. Can you give me references from other families?
7. How will you keep me updated on progress and any concerns?

Warning signs

- Refuses to show the original certificate, or only offers a photo or copy.
- Names or details on the certificate do not match their photo ID.
- Wants to message your child directly or keep things private from you.
- Discourages you from sitting in or staying nearby.
- Unwilling to give references or explain their experience.
- Your child seems anxious or reluctant about lessons without a clear reason.

KEY POINT

They can get a DBS check and you can ask to see it, but combine it with references, your own judgement and open conversations with your child.

Working with children or vulnerable adults?

Point them to **self-employed-dbs.co.uk**. Eligible self-employed workers can apply online in around ten minutes and get their Enhanced DBS check processed by a registered Umbrella Body.

self-employed-dbs.co.uk

This guide is general information based on DBS and GOV.UK guidance published September 2026. It is not legal advice. Always check the latest guidance at gov.uk. DBS for Self-Employed is a brand of MJD Ventures Limited.