

MG DANCE ACADEMY CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The MG Dance Academy recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 (in Scotland change to Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003). The school recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

The school is committed to practice which protects children from harm. All students of the school accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

The school believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All students and employees of the school should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The school will ensure that:

- All children will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers the children to share in the decision making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult students of the school provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour.
- It will keep up-to-date with health & safety legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the school and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies. The school has child protection procedures which accompany this policy. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy and Health & Safety Policy.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Responsibilities of the school

At the outset of any production involving children the school will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for child protection.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (if necessary in consultation with the local education authority).
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.

- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

Parents

- The school believes it to be important that there is a partnership between parents and the school. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the school and to share responsibility for the care of children. All parents will be given a copy the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures if requested.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the school to take children home.

Unsupervised Contact

- The school will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, steps will be taken to minimize risk. For example, work will be carried out in a public area, or in a designated room with a door open.
- If it is predicted that an individual is likely to require unsupervised contact with children, he or she may be required to obtain a criminal record disclosure.

Physical Contact

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.
- Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity.
- Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Managing sensitive information

- The school has a policy and procedures for the taking, using and storage of photographs or images of children.
- Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- The school's web-based materials and activities will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.
- The school will ensure confidentiality in order to protect the rights of its students, including the safe handling, storage and disposal of any sensitive information such as criminal record disclosures.

Suspicion of abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of the school, please make this known to the person with responsibility for child protection. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for child protection is the source of the problem, you should make your concerns known to another teacher.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.
- If a serious allegation is made against any member of the school, chaperone, venue staff etc., that individual will be suspended immediately until the investigation is concluded. The individual will be excluded from the hall, changing rooms etc. and will not have any unsupervised contact with any other children in the school.

Disclosure of abuse

If a child confides in you that abuse has taken place:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Don't ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for child protection. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.

Criminal Record Disclosures

- If the school believes it is in its best interests to obtain criminal record disclosures for chaperones or other personnel, it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required. A Standard disclosure will apply for anyone with supervised access to children. An Enhanced disclosure will be required for anyone with unsupervised access.
- The school will have a written code of practice for the handling of disclosure information.
- The school will ensure that information contained in the disclosure is not misused.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by the school for the care of children during the production process. By law the chaperone is acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child. The maximum number of children in the chaperone's care shall not exceed 12.
- Potential chaperones will be required to supply photographic proof of identity (eg. passport, driving licence) and two references from individuals with knowledge of their previous work with children, unless already well known to the school. They will also be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the school's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Chaperones will not usually have unsupervised access to children in their care. If unsupervised access is unavoidable, or if this is a requirement of the local authority, a criminal record disclosure will be sought.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the attention of the principal. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily, the chaperone should consider not allowing the child to continue.
- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue, the chaperone must inform the principal and not allow the child to continue.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb. This could include working on wires or heavy lifting. Chaperones should tell the principal to cease using children in this way and should contact the local authority.
- During performances, chaperones will be responsible for meeting children at the stage door and signing them into the building.
- Children will be kept together at all times except when using separate dressing rooms.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.

- Children are not to leave the theatre unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets.
- Children will not be allowed to enter the adult dressing rooms.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety arrangements and first aid procedures in the venue, and will ensure that children in their care do not place themselves and others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported to and recorded by the school.
- Chaperones should examine accident books each day. If an accident has occurred, the principal is not allowed to use that child until a medically qualified opinion has been obtained (not just the word of the parent or child).
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for children after performances. If someone different is to collect the child, a telephone call should be made to the parent to confirm the arrangements.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and a record made of the person collecting.
- If a parent has not collected the child, it is the duty of the chaperone to stay with that child or make arrangements to take them home.