



Policy on Keeping Children Safe at Mezzo Dance Company

Child Protection, Safeguarding and Safer Staffing

Information relating to this policy:

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Checked by: Kirsty Nicholls

Date of implementation: 1/01/19

Next Review Date: 1/01/20 (earlier if legislation or government guidance changes)

Introduction

Safeguarding children at Mezzo dance company is everybody's responsibility.

Every child should feel safe and protected from any form of abuse which, in this policy, means any kind of neglect, non-accidental physical injury, sexual exploitation or emotional ill-treatment this pertains to direct contact and virtual contact through online social networking and mobile technology. .

Where a child is at risk, is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so, action will be taken to protect the child.

Aim

Mezzo Dance Company is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people up to the age of 18. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation.

MDC acknowledges its duty to act appropriately to any allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse. All staff and volunteers will work together to encourage the development of an ethos which embraces difference and diversity and respects the rights of children, young people and adults.

MDC will ensure 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 will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All reasonable measures are taken to minimise the risk of harm to our students' welfare.
- Appropriate actions are taken to address any concerns about the welfare of any child.
- All persons working or volunteering at MDC are appropriately and regularly trained in child protection awareness and procedures, are made aware of this policy and are required to read section 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (July 2015).
- In ensuring that children at MDC are kept safe, the school will: - Create an atmosphere where all our children can feel secure, valued and listened to.

MDC will ensure that:

- Everyone will be treated with respect and dignity.
- The welfare of each child will always be put first.
- Enthusiastic and constructive criticism will be given to pupils rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members will provide a positive role model.
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate behaviour
- Will comply with health & safety legislation
- Will undertake relevant professional development and training
- Will ensure all contact and medical details are available at all places of teaching, performing and competing
- all staff will receive dedicate safeguarding training.

Listening to children

Schools and Services should:

- Create the opportunity and environment for students to be able to talk about their concerns
- Ensure that staff are trained in active listening techniques
- Establish systems to enable cover for the member of staff listening to a child's concerns

Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures. Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action. Bullying incidents should be treated as a child protection concern where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Please refer to the schools Anti-Bullying Strategy for further guidance.

Always:

- Report on as soon as you have a concern.
- Record information verbatim using the actual words of the child and noting any questions the child raises.
- Note dates, times, who was present, positions in the room, anything factual about the child's appearance.
- Pass these notes to the DSL at the earliest opportunity.
- If possible use a silent witness.

Never:

- Promise confidentiality to any student who is disclosing Child Protection information/evidence.
- Ask leading questions.
- Ask the child to write down his/her account.
- Investigate with, or without, others.
- Take photographs of marks.
- Attempt any medical judgement
 - . Arrange a medical examination
 - . Tape/video record an interview
 - . Ask a child to remove any clothing. Staff members should always be aware of their own vulnerability at this point, and should take steps to minimise risk to themselves whilst supporting the child.

Supporting Staff

We recognise that staff and volunteers who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm may find the situation stressful and upsetting. We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the DSL and to seek further support as appropriate.

Reporting Procedures

MDC communicates readily and immediately with the local safeguarding agencies whenever an allegation or disclosure of abuse is made with no threshold or caveat.

Normally, concerns are referred to and managed by the DSO/DSL, all staff members have the right to make a referral to Social Care Services.

Children at risk will be referred to Children's Social Care immediately.

If a crime may have been committed, the matter will be reported to the police.

If a disclosure is made or a member of staff has reason to believe abuse has occurred a Child Protection Log must be completed as soon as possible and passed to the DSL or Principals as appropriate. No member of staff should undertake an investigation at this stage but should note the basic details of the disclosure or concerns. Any questioning of a child at this point could prejudice any subsequent investigation. Any original notes should be signed, dated and securely attached to the Child Protection Log . All staff must be aware of the confidentiality of notes and individual staff members should pass all notes and records onto the DSL for secure storage. The DSL will make a verbal referral to Social Services by the end of the working day and follow this up with a written referral within 24 hours.

After submission of a Child Protection Log form the DSL will catalogue the form and sign and date the Red Child Protection folder to evidence the procedure has been followed.

If the child's situation does not appear to be improving, the staff member with concerns should press for reconsideration.

Staff and or Volunteer allegations

1. Allegations against anyone working at MDC will be referred to the principle or DSL before any investigation takes place, within one working day. The allegation will be logged. The appropriate bodies will guide the appropriate course of action.

2. Any complaint or concern of a child protection nature relating to the Principal must be passed immediately to the DSL Safeguarding without alerting the Principal. The DSL will take appropriate action

3. If a crime may have been committed, the matter will be reported to the police.

The full evidence will be made available to the member of staff or volunteer who is the subject of the allegation, as soon as is agreed appropriate, within the ongoing needs of any investigation by the Police, Children's Services, or by any disciplinary process. In some cases it may be necessary for the staff member/volunteer to be suspended whilst an investigation is carried out, pending an investigation, of a Child Protection nature. It must be recognised that any decision to suspend a member of staff is without prejudice and on full pay, and is not an indication of any proof or of any guilt.

All members of staff including volunteers working within MDC need to be aware of their vulnerability to allegations especially when working with students on a one to one basis, escorting students to appointments in their own vehicles and engaging with students in inappropriate electronic communications, and must address their practice accordingly. They must adhere to the school's policy/guidance in respect to safe conduct. Students cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so. All staff/ volunteers should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

Staff members should not:

- unsafely overstretch any child
- accompany any child, no matter their age, to the toilet or changing rooms
- help any child get changed
- make a child perform a move beyond their capable abilities in your professional opinion
- be alone in a enclosed space for example car or secluded room
- encourage excessive and unsafe use of weights

As a training and coaching environment, some contact may be needed to assist learning safely, particularly in gymnastics. Such contact will only be used when required and by a trained and qualified staff member.

Mezzo Dance company has a designated Safeguarding Officer who is in charge of ensuring that the child protection policy is adhered to. The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is Adam Nightingale and he can be contacted on:07875847353

There is also a Deputy Designated Safeguarding lead (DSL) who is Juliet Short she can be contacted on: 07798862166.

In implementing this policy Mezzo Dance Company will:

- Ensure that all workers/members understand their legal and moral responsibility to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- Ensure that all workers/members and volunteers understand their duty to report concerns that arise about a child or young person, or a workers conduct towards a child or young person to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- The DSO/DSA will refer any child protection concerns to the statutory child protection agencies (i.e. Police and/or Children's Social Care).
- Children, young people and parents will be informed of who the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy are and be able to raise any safeguarding concerns & know that these will be taken seriously and acted upon.

