

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

The Australian Ballet School

ACCOUNTABLE: Board

RESPONSIBLE: Health and Wellbeing Committee (HWC)

VERSION 1 APPROVED BY THE BOARD: 2019

LATEST VERSION APPROVED: – Currently under review to incorporate the updated eleven

Standards

REVIEW DATE: Annually (taking effectiveness and the publication of relevant research or

changes to child protection laws into consideration)

DATA ACCESS LOCATION: Staff Portal, Student Portal, The Australian Ballet School website

1. OVERVIEW

Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities for children are required by law to implement the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Standards) to protect children from harm.

The eleven Child Safe Standards (CSS) require schools that provide services for children to have strategies embedded in their school community which promote and support an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements, the involvement of families and community and risk management strategies. The Standards also align with associated child protection laws.

In Victoria there are specific criminal offences which impose general obligations on individuals:

- Aged 18 years or over to report any belief that a sexual offence has been committed, against
 a child under the age of 16 years, by a person over the age of 18 years (*Crimes Act* (Vic) S327)
 and
- In authority and identified people and roles within a school to act to remove or reduce a substantial risk that a sexual offence will be committed against a child (Crimes Act (Vic) S327) and the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic).

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to detail how The Australian Ballet School (School) will meet these Standards and in doing so provide a strong foundation for a child safe environment. The Standards require policies and procedures to be implemented to ensure the safety of children is supported and to prevent and respond to and report allegations of child abuse. The School has a clearly defined Child

Safe Policy which is communicated thoroughly to all members of the School Community through the Statement of Commitment to Child Safety on the School's website.

Related Policies: This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Code of Conduct (1.2), Whistleblower Policy (1.4), Appropriate Use of Technology Policy (4.3), Photography and Film (4.3.2), ICT and Cyber Security Policy (4.3.3), Bullying Policy (5.1.1), Equality, Respect and Diversity Policy (5.1.2) (pending), Sexual Harassment Policy, (5.1.3), Gender Identity (5.2.7), Recruitment Policy (5.3.1), Working with Children Check Policy (5.3.5), Student Complaints and Appeals Policy (6.3.3), Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy (6.4.1).

3. DEFINITIONS

Child: (or young person) who is under 18 years of age.

Child Safety Officer: the designated officer on the School staff who has a thorough knowledge of child safety issues and is the primary point of contact for any member of the **School Community** who has concerns or wishes to report an allegation of abuse. This position is held by the School Counsellor.

Child Abuse: any act committed against a child involving:

- Physical violence;
- Sexual abuse;
- Serious emotional or psychological abuse (this includes grooming);
- Serious neglect.

Executive Team: comprises the Director of the School (Director), the Executive Director and the Director of Development.

4. WHO DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO

This policy applies to all members of the **School Community**.

5. POLICY

This policy sets out the behaviour and conduct standards expected of all members of the School Community. The policy also operates in conjunction with the School's Code of Conduct.

All children enrolled at the School (including those undertaking casual/out-of-hours classes), and explicitly those under eighteen (18) years of age, have a right to feel and be safe; to be happy and empowered. The policy confirms the School's commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

The School supports and respects all children and is committed to championing and fostering these aims. In order to reduce or remove child abuse dangers, a risk management strategy to identify, assess, prevent and respond, by undertaking steps to reduce or remove these risks is embedded in this policy and includes:

• All staff, direct-contact volunteers and regular contractors/consultants being required to be familiar with the School's Child Safe Policies and Procedures and their legal obligations with

- respect to reporting child abuse through an induction process and being aware of the School's Code of Conduct;
- Provide training to staff, direct-contact volunteers and regular contractors/consultants regarding what to do when an allegation of child abuse is made. This includes the importance of information sharing and record keeping obligations;
- Inclusion of child safe obligations in staff position descriptions and the performance monitoring process;
- Child safety is a standard discussion item at School Executive Team meetings and all staff meetings;
- Incident reporting process;

 Annual review and identification of risk factors for the School.

The School has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously. The legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when there is concern for the safety of a child is paramount.

The Australian Ballet School Board and staff are required by law to report to police if they reasonably believe or know that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 years. It is a criminal offence to fail to comply (failure to disclose) and is enforceable across jurisdictions.

Although all children are vulnerable, some children face additional vulnerabilities. The CCS provides the following overarching principles for organizations to ensure equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected:

- Be aware of and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds, circumstances and needs of Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with disability;
- Attend to any adjustments to provide equal protection for all children;
- Give particular attention to the needs of children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex;

 Give particular attention to the needs of children unable to live at home.

The policy aims to develop and promote an organizational environment where child safety is embedded into everyday thinking and practice across the School, highlighting that all members of the school community have a responsibility to keep children safe from abuse, to be observant and to raise any concerns relating to child abuse with the Child Safety Officer. To ensure this is achieved by the School, it is important that the Executive Team drive the policies, procedures and behaviours, along with appropriate annual training for staff and other members of the school community (where appropriate) to support an environment of child safety.

6. PROCEDURES

The Executive Team at the School is responsible for encouraging the attributes identified in the School's Code of Conduct of mutual respect, openness, support, accountability and behaving ethically as a strong demonstration of the need to actively encourage any member of the School community, (including students), who observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour to have the confidence to report this behaviour to the Child Safety Officer in the first instance. Then if necessary, the Director of the School (Director) and/or Executive Director. These responsibilities are identified in the Position Descriptions of staff.

If any person reading this document believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse, they should phone 000.

The Director of the School is to ensure legal regulations and their amendments are kept up to date, with any changes and their relevance communicated to all departments and supervisors along with amendments to relevant reference material, such as the School's Code of Conduct.

At the commencement of each calendar year the Director and the Executive Director will ensure all staff and students receive appropriate general, wellbeing and health and safety updates or induction.

The recruitment policy and procedures of the School is closely aligned to the CSS and ensures Standard 6 of the CSS is fully incorporated .

In support of Standard 2, the School has enunciated clear expectations, including written guidance on acceptable and unacceptable behaviours towards children.

All allegations of child abuse will be treated very seriously. This covers complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection. In all matters relating to the reporting of child abuse, authority within the School resides with the Director.

In complying with Standard 7 the School has a Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and a Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy ensuring the processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

In support of Standard 3 of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, the School fosters the involvement of the students in developing and maintaining a child safe environment. The School Counsellor promotes and encourages children's participation in the decision-making process, by seeking their views and demonstrating the value and respect this participation and feedback deserves. Children are informed about all their rights, including to safety information and participation. The School Counsellor also conducts regular classes to create a safe environment for sharing ideas and highlighting the importance of friendships and encouraging support from peers. 'Connecting to the School Community' classes are conducted by an external provider and are tailored for each year level. Together these programs provide students with the knowledge that all staff and members of the school community provide a group of approachable adults who children can feel confident they can speak to in relation to any concerns they may have, particularly in relation to safety. When children believe their contributions are valued, they are more likely to speak up when harmed or feeling unsafe or isolated.

In support of Standard 9, the School identifies that it has a responsibility to ensure physical and online environments promote child safety and wellbeing without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. The School has cyber safety policies in place and conducts regular/annual information sessions for all students on these subjects. This is also included in staff meetings and training sessions. The Online Learning Guidelines and Staff/Student Agreement documents complement these requirements.

In support of Standard 1 the School encourages a culturally safe and inclusive environment, where diversity and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and their families are valued and respected. The School is currently undertaking a review to ensure staff have the relevant cultural training and understanding of cultural acknowledgments and sensitivities.

Standard 1 also links to Standard 5 which is championed by the Executive Team of the School and supported by staff to ensure equity is upheld and diverse circumstances and needs are identified and respected, while also responding to those who are vulnerable.

The importance of families and communities in promoting child safety and wellbeing is identified in Standard 4. The School has a Family Support Program in place which actively engages families in a two-way consultative communications processes with the School.

