



Policy Document

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Created by: Jamie Read
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READ DANCE AND THEATRE COLLEGE

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Child Protection and Safeguarding policy statement

Read College has a duty of care to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults involved in their training and employment from harm. All children and vulnerable adults have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled people and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

Read College will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults involved in their classes through adherence to the child protection and safeguarding guidelines adopted by **Sport England**.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

The aim of The Read College Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is to promote good practice:

- ☑ Providing children and vulnerable adults and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of Read College.
- ☑ Allow all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgment about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school/college and within out of school clubs. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A teacher or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters Read College having been subjected to child abuse outside this environment, the company can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem. In such instances the teachers must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

Good practice guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behavior in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- ☒ Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- ☒ Treating all young people/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- ☒ Always putting the welfare of each young person first.

- ☒ Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with students (eg it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- ☒ Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children and vulnerable adults to share in decision making.
- ☒ Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly. If it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving, young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- ☒ Keeping up to date with skills, qualifications and insurance.
- ☒ Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- ☒ Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- ☒ Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults.
- ☒ Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- ☒ Ensuring that if children and vulnerable adults are taken off site from their regular class that there are the appropriate ratio of DBS checked adults to young people.
- ☒ Requesting written parental consent if teachers or volunteers are required to transport young people in their cars.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (eg the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge or the child's parents.

Otherwise, avoid:

- ☒ Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children and vulnerable adults away from others.
- ☒ Taking or dropping off a child to an event.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- ☒ Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.

- ☒ Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- ☒ Allow children and vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- ☒ Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- ☒ Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- ☒ Do things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- ☒ Invite or allow children and vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

NB It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children and vulnerable adults, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the players involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the college's Child Protection and Safeguarding representative who will record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- ☒ if you accidentally hurt a student
- ☒ If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- ☒ if a student appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- ☒ if a student misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of photographic/filming equipment

Read College will always seek signed parental permission before any photographs/video recordings are taken. Parents will always have the right to veto any photographs taken of their child/ren and the images will only be used directly by Read College and will never be circulated to individuals or organizations outside the company.

Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

Read College recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children and vulnerable adults in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults.

Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- ☒ All volunteers/staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.

- ☐ Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the DBS.
- ☐ Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children or vulnerable adults. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- ☐ Evidence of identity should be provided (eg passport or driving license with photo).

Interview and induction

All employees (and volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction, during which:

- ☐ A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on criminal records and self-disclosures).
- ☐ Their qualifications should be substantiated.
- ☐ The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified.
- ☐ They should sign up to Read College's Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- ☐ Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified.

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:

- ☐ Analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- ☐ Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- ☐ Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person.
- ☐ Work safely and effectively with children and vulnerable adults.

Read College requires:

- ☐ Teachers and volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person.
- ☐ Relevant personnel to undergo national first aid training (where necessary).
- ☐ Completion of a Child Protection course, i.e. SAFEchild.co.uk
- ☐ An enhanced disclosure DBS check completed within the last 24 months

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for Read College in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

Read College will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- ☐ a criminal investigation
- ☐ a child protection investigation
- ☐ a disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action

1. Concerns about poor practice:

- ☐ If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- ☐ If the allegation is about poor practice by the Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse:

- ☐ Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- ☐ The Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services department which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- ☐ The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- ☐ If the Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Manager or in his/her absence the child/teacher/volunteer will refer the allegation to social services.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This includes the following people:

- ☐ The Child Protection Officer
- ☐ the parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- ☐ the person making the allegation
- ☐ social services/police
- ☐ the alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (eg that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal enquiries and suspension

☐ The Child Protection Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

☐ Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiry, the Disciplinary Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

☐ Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children and vulnerable adults, parents and members of staff may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, Email: bac@bacp.co.uk, Internet: www.bacp.co.uk

☐ Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (eg by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children and vulnerable adults). Where such an allegation is made, the club should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children and vulnerable adults, either within or outside the company's classes, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from

working with children and vulnerable adults. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children and vulnerable adults Act 1999.

Action if bullying is suspected

Read College has a separate Discipline Policy, covering the full details of what to do if an allegation of bullying is made or if it is suspected.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying in sport:

- ☑ Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- ☑ Encourage all children and vulnerable adults to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children and vulnerable adults per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- ☑ Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- ☑ Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- ☑ Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- ☑ Report any concerns to the Child Protection Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action towards the bully(ies):

- ☑ Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- ☑ Inform the bully(ies)'s parents.
- ☑ Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- ☑ Provide support for the victim.
- ☑ Impose sanctions as necessary.
- ☑ Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- ☑ Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- ☑ Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- ☑ Keep a written record of action taken.

3. Concerns outside the immediate environment (eg a parent or carer):

- ☑ Report your concerns to the Child Protection Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.

- ☑ See 4. below for the information social services or the police will need.
- ☑ If the Child Protection Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.
- ☑ Social services and the Child Protection Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- ☑ Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.
- ☑ See 4. below regarding information needed for social services.

4. Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse:

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- ☑ The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- ☑ The child's home address and telephone number.
- ☑ Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- ☑ The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- ☑ Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- ☑ A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- ☑ Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- ☑ The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- ☑ Have the parents been contacted?
- ☑ If so, what has been said?
- ☑ Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- ☑ If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- ☑ Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- ☑ Where possible referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact social services or the police direct, or the **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000**, or **Childline on 0800 1111**.