

RYAN MCNEILL SCHOOL OF MUSIC



Child Protection Policy

2023

Contents

Section 1 & 2	Introduction – Child Protection Policy Statement	3
Section 3	Staff Code of Behaviour	4
Section 4	Reporting of Suspected or Disclosed Abuse	7
Section 5	Confidentiality Statement	10
Section 6	Recruiting and Selecting Staff	11
Section 7	Staff Management and Supervision	12
Section 8	Involvement of Primary Carers	13
Section 9	Dealing With Allegations Against Staff	14
Section 10	Complaints and Comments Procedures	15
Section 11	Accidents Procedure	16
Appendix 1	Declaration Form	

Guidelines and Procedures for Child Protection

1.0 Purpose


The purpose of this document is to outline the Music Centre's policies for dealing with issues or concerns surrounding child protection.

2.0 Child Protection Policy Statement

Ryan McNeill School of Music is committed to a child-centered approach to our work with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child / young person is paramount. We will adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, published by the Department of Health and Children. We have implemented procedures covering the following areas:

- Code of behaviour for all staff
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment and staff selection
- Management and supervision of staff
- Involvement of primary carers
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
- Complaints and comments
- Incidents and accidents

Policy to be reviewed: Autumn 2024.

Signed: 

Date: July 2023

3.0 Code of Behaviour for Staff

The object of the Code of Behaviour for Staff is to help create a supportive environment for staff to provide a child-centered approach for children and young people.

3.1 Child Centered Approach

At Ryan McNeill School of Music we undertake to:

- Treat all children and young people individually
- Listen to and respect children and young people
- Involve children and young people in decision-making, as appropriate
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability)
- Use appropriate language
- Encourage a positive and enjoyable environment
- Offer constructive criticism when needed
- Treat all children and young people as individuals
- Respect a child's or young person's personal space
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their primary carers
- Encourage feedback
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials
- Lead by example
- Be aware of a child's or young person's other commitments if scheduling extra activities
- Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, e.g. due to a medical condition
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation

3.2 Good Practice

At Ryan McNeill School of Music we undertake to:

- Register each child / young person (name, address, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact)
- Promote awareness of our Child Protection Policy among primary carers, students, staff and visitors
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures
- Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs
- Report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow reporting procedures
- Promote awareness of the School of Music's anti-bullying policy
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis
- Provide appropriate training where necessary
- Report and record any incidents and accidents
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly
- Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e. Don't "do nothing"
- Don't let a problem get out of control
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child / young person and if you do, then make sure that primary carers are informed
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you have said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.

3.3 Inappropriate Behaviour

- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and / or verbal language
- Don't single out a particular child / young person for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention
- Don't allow / engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Don't hit or physically chastise any child / young person
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children / young people e.g. outside of structured organizational activities

3.4 Physical Contact

- Seek consent of child / young person in relation to any physical contact (except in an emergency or dangerous situation)
- Any physical contact should be wholly appropriate to the activity in question
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch

3.5 Health and Safety

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised
- Manage any dangerous materials
- Provide a safe environment
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly

4.0 Reporting of Suspected or Disclosed Abuse

4.1 Designated Person

The School of Music Director, Ryan McNeill, has been designated as the person to contact if you have an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's or young person's safety and welfare. It is the responsibility of the Designated Person to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also the responsibility of the Designated Person to liaise with the Health Service Executive or Gardaí where appropriate.

Ryan McNeill can be contacted at Ryan McNeill School of Music on 085-7799462

4.2 Recording Procedures

A Child Protection incident file is kept in the School of Music, under the secured control of the School of Music Director.

Where abuse is suspected, a written record of all available information should be made. This record should include details of signs of physical or emotional injury, any comments by the child concerned. This report should be signed and dated and given to the Designated Person, who will file this in the incident file. The following information should be recorded:

- Suspicions
- Concerns
- Worrying observations
- Behavioural changes
- Actions and outcomes

4.3 Dealing with a disclosure

- When making a disclosure to a member of staff, the child / young person is likely to be distressed and feel that the member of staff may be the only person they can trust. Great care should be taken not to damage that trust.
- Stay calm and reassure the child / young person that it was right to make the disclosure.
- No judgmental statements should be made against the person against whom the allegation is made.
- Avoid questioning unless meaning is unclear. If necessary, use open, non-specific questions.
- Don't promise confidentiality.
- Indicate next steps, such as informing the Designated Person, parents, HSE or possibly the Gardaí. The explanation should be age-appropriate.
- Record the disclosure immediately, as far as possible in the child's own words.
- Report to the Designated Person.

4.4 Reporting Procedures

In situations where Music Centre personnel suspect that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, they should ensure that such concerns are reported according to the procedure outlined below.

Reporting to the Designated Person

- The Designated Person will act as a liaison with outside agencies and as a resource person to any staff member who has child protection concerns.
- Where abuse is suspected, a written record of all available information should be made. This record should include details of signs of physical or emotional injury, any comments by the child concerned. Information should be factual. Any opinion expressed should be supported by facts. This report should be signed and dated and given to the Designated Person.
- The report will be stored in the Child Protection incident file.
- The most appropriate person should discuss the concern or consult with the primary carers. Parents, carers or responsible adults should be made aware of a report to the Health Service Executive unless this is likely to put the child / young person at further risk.
- The Designated Person may contact the Health Service Executive Duty Social Work Department for an informal consultation prior to making a report.
- Information will be shared on a strictly “need to know” basis (see Confidentiality Statement below).
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern as outlined above, the Designated Person will contact the Duty Social Worker in the Health Service Executive area using the standard reporting form available from the Health Service Executive. Reports to the Duty Social Worker can initially be made verbally and then followed by the standard report form. Reports should be made to the Health Service Executive without delay.
- If the Designated Person is not available, the local Duty Social Worker of the Health Service Executive should be contacted directly.
- In case of emergencies outside of Health Service Executive Social Work Department hours, the Gardaí should be contacted. In situations that threaten the immediate safety of a child / young person, it may be necessary to contact the Gardaí.

5.0 Confidentiality Statement

Ryan McNeill School of Music is committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a “need to know” basis in order to safeguard the child / young person.
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality.
- We cannot guarantee confidentiality where the best interests of the child or young person are at risk.
- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and / or a report is being made to the Health Service Executive, unless doing so could put the child / young person at further risk.
- Images of a child / young person will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent / carer (however, we cannot guarantee that cameras / videos will not be used at public performances).
- Procedures will be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

6.0 Recruiting and Selecting Staff

Ryan McNeill School of Music will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job.
- Posts will be advertised widely.
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel.
- Candidates will be required to submit a detailed CV and letter of application.
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form.
- Two written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary.
- Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two representatives through an interview process.
- No person who would be deemed a “risk” will be employed.
- Some exclusions would include but not be limited to:
 - o Any child related convictions.
 - o Refusal to sign declaration form.
 - o Insufficient documentary evidence of identification.
 - o Concealing information on suitability to working with children.
- There will be a relevant probationary period of three months.
- All candidates will be required to consent to Garda clearance.

7.0 Staff Management and Supervision

7.1 Staff Management Policy Statement

To protect staff, and children / young people, we undertake that:

New staff will:

- Take part in a mandatory induction training session.
- Be made aware of the School of Music's code of conduct, child protection procedures and the identity and role of who has been designated to deal with issues of concern.
- Undergo a probationary trial period of three months.

All staff will:

- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices.
- Be expected to have read and signed the Child Protection Policy.

8.0 Involvement of Primary Carers

Policy statement on the involvement of primary carers.

Ryan McNeill School of Music is committed to being open with all primary carers.

We undertake to:

- Advise primary carers of our child protection policy.
- Issue contact / consent forms where relevant.
- Comply with health and safety practices.
- Operate child-centered policies in accordance with best practice.
- Adhere to our recruitment guidelines.
- Ensure as far as possible that all activities are age-appropriate.
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parents, carers or responsible adults where appropriate.

If we have concerns about the welfare of a child / young person, we will:

- Respond to the needs of the child / young person.
- Inform the primary carers on an ongoing basis unless this action puts the child / young person at further risk.
- Where there are child protection and welfare concerns we are obliged to pass these on to the Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí.
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child / young person and inform primary carers as appropriate.

As a child-centered organization, we are committed to putting the interest of the child / young person first. To that end we will:

- Contact the local Health Service Executive and Gardaí where there is a child protection welfare concern.
- Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organization to ensure the safety of their children.
- Have a designated contact person available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child / young person's welfare.

9.0 Dealing With Allegations Against Staff

In the event of allegations being made against an employee, the protection of the child / young person is the first and paramount consideration.

The organization has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child / young person and the employee.

An allegation against an employee should be assessed promptly and carefully. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, a formal report to the Health Service Executive should be made. The reporting procedures in Section 4.4 above should be followed.

Ryan McNeill School of Music will take protective measures appropriate to the level of risk while not unreasonably penalising the member of staff, unless necessary to protect the child / young person.

- In respect of the child / young person, the Designated person (Ryan McNeill) will deal with issues related to the child / young person.
- In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made, the Designated Person (Ryan McNeill) should be contacted.
- The first priority is to ensure that no child / young person is exposed to unnecessary risk.
- The reporting procedures outlined in Section 4 of these guidelines should be followed. Both the primary carers and child / young person should be informed of actions planned and taken. The child / young person should be dealt with in an age appropriate manner.
- The staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation.
- The staff member should be given the opportunity to respond.
- The Director of the School of Music should be informed as soon as possible.
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with the Health Service Executive and Gardaí.
- After consultation, the Director of the School should advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

10.0 Complaints and Comments Procedure

Ryan McNeill School of Music understands that from time to time, complaints or comments regarding the activities of the School of Music may be received.

Ryan McNeill School of Music is committed to the fostering of good relations between students, carers, staff and management. It is hoped that the majority of complaints or comments can be addressed informally and in a spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit.

Primary carers are encouraged wherever possible to resolve problems directly with the relevant teacher. Where the primary carer does not wish to approach the teacher directly, the procedure is as follows:

In the event of complaints or comments being received:

- Complaints or comments will be responded to within two weeks.
- Complaints or comments should be directed to the Director of the School.
- Verbal and / or written complaints or comments will be logged and responded to.
- Where a complaint or comment is made against the work practices of a particular individual, the individual will be notified of the nature of the complaint or comment.
- The individual will be offered the opportunity to respond.
- No anonymous complaints or comments will be dealt with.

11.0 Accidents Procedure

Ryan McNeill School of Music has a Health and Safety Statement including a risk assessment of each area of operation. This is available from the Music Centre office, and is periodically circulated to staff.

- Up to date contact details are kept of all children / young people involved in the organization.
- External organisations with whom the School of Music has dealings must provide proof that they have public liability insurance.
- Children and young / people must be advised of risks of dangerous material.

An accident / incident book is available and details of any accidents/ incidents should be recorded in this book promptly and accurately.

Appendix 1 – Declaration Form

Declaration Form

Confidential

Declaration form for those working with children and young people.

Surname: _____ First Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

Any other name(s) previously known as: _____

Is there any reason that you would be considered unsuitable to work with children and young people?

Yes / No /

If yes, please outline the reason below:

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? Yes / No /

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s):

Do you consent to the seeking of Garda clearance? Yes / No /

Signed: _____ Date: _____