

# The Academy of Russian Ballet

## Child Protection and Welfare

Date of last review July 15, 2011

The Academy of Russian Ballet is committed to a child-centred 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:

- ▶ Code of behaviour for all staff;
- ▶ Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse;
- ▶ Confidentiality;
- ▶ Recruitment and selecting staff;
- ▶ Managing and supervising staff;
- ▶ Involvement of primary carers;
- ▶ Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff;
- ▶ Complaints and comments;
- ▶ Incidents and accidents.

## Code of behaviour for all staff

Our Code of behaviour for staff is categorized under these headings:

1. Child-centred approach;
2. Good practice;
3. Inappropriate behaviour;
4. Physical contact;

5. Health and safety.

**1. Our staff act with a child-centred approach, specifically they:**

- ▶ Treat all children and young people equally;
- ▶ 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 (physical and verbal);
- ▶ Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere;
- ▶ 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;
- ▶ Agree group 'contract' before beginning session;
- ▶ Encourage feedback from group;
- ▶ Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials;
- ▶ Lead by example;
- ▶ Be aware of a child's or young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities, e.g., school or exams;
- ▶ Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, due to a medical condition for example;
- ▶ Create an atmosphere of trust;
- ▶ Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation.

**2. Our staff operate best practice as follows:**

- ▶ Register each child/young person's name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance and emergency contact.
- ▶ Make primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures;

- ▶ Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures;
- ▶ Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs;
- ▶ Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically;
- ▶ Report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow reporting procedures;
- ▶ The anti-bullying policy encourages children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of anti-bullying policy.
- ▶ Observe appropriate dress and behaviour;
- ▶ Evaluate work practices on a regular basis;
- ▶ Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers;
- ▶ 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 involved; observe appropriate gender balance for residential; ;
- ▶ Ensure clear communication between artist and organisations; have guidelines and a prompt sheet for artists;
- ▶ Have a written agreement with any external organisation that an artist is working with;
- ▶ Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e., don't 'do nothing';
- ▶ Don't let a problem get out of control;
- ▶ Avoid taking a session on your own. If this is not possible then it should be in an open environment with the full knowledge and consent of primary carers;
- ▶ 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 said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.

### **3. Staff guidelines about inappropriate Behaviour**

- ▶ Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people;
- ▶ Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language<sup>4</sup>.
- ▶ 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 children/young people;
- ▶ Don't socialise inappropriately with children/young people, e.g., outside of structured organisational activities.

### **4. Staff guidelines of physical contact**

- ▶ Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation);
- ▶ Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch;
- ▶ Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises.

### **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.

## **Who to contact about issues related to child protection and welfare.**

Monica Loughman 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 this 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. Monica Loughman can be contacted on 086 7761110. Aine McNamara has been designated as deputy to Monica Loughman and can be contacted on 086 8012246

## **Confidentiality statement**

The Academy of Russian Ballet 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 total 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 in relation to the use of images of children/young people;
- ▶ Procedures will also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

## Recruitment and selection policy statement

We 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 (paid or voluntary);
- ▶ Posts will be advertised;
- ▶ We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel;
- ▶ Candidates will be required to complete an application form;
- ▶ Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form;
- ▶ At least two written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary;
- ▶ Staff will be selected through an interview process;
- ▶ No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed;
- ▶ Some of the exclusions would include: any child-related convictions; refusal to sign application form and declaration form; insufficient documentary evidence of identification; concealing information on one's suitability to working with children;
- ▶ There will be a relevant probationary period;
- ▶ All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought.

## Staff management policy statement

To protect both staff (paid and voluntary) and children/young people, we undertake that:

### New staff will:

- ▶ Take part in a mandatory induction training session;

- ▶ Be made aware of the organisation'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 or trial period.

#### **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 Statement;
- ▶ Be provided with child protection training.

### **Policy statement on the involvement of primary carers**

We are committed to being open with all primary carers and undertake to:

- ▶ Advise primary carers of our child protection policy via our website [ballerina.ie](http://ballerina.ie);
- ▶ Inform primary carers and schools about our activities;
- ▶ Issue contact/consent forms where relevant;
- ▶ Comply with health and safety practices;
- ▶ Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice;
- ▶ Ensure as far as possible that the activities are age-appropriate;
- ▶ Involve of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate.

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

- ▶ Respond to the needs of the child or young person;
- ▶ Inform the primary carers on an on-going basis unless this action puts the child or 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-centred organisation, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will:**

- ▶ Contact 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 organisation to ensure the safety of their children;

## **The following procedures will be followed with respect to an allegation against staff**

1. In respect of the child/young person, Monica Loughman will deal with issues related to the child/young person.
2. In respect of the person against whom the allegation is made Monica Loughman will deal with issues related to the staff member.

### **Specifically our policies dictate that:**

- ▶ The first priority is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk;
- ▶ If allegations are made against the Designated Person, then the Deputy Designated Person should be contacted;
- ▶ All procedures outlined in these guidelines will be followed. Both the primary carers and child/young person will 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 and given the opportunity to respond;
- ▶ Monica Loughman will be informed as soon as possible;
- ▶ Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with Health Service Executive and Gardaí;

- ▶ After consultation, Monica Loughman will advise the person accused and agreed procedures will be followed.

## **Complaints and Comments Procedure**

- ▶ Complaints or comments will be responded to within 4 weeks;
- ▶ Monica Loughman has responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person;
- ▶ Verbal complaints will be requested in writing such that they can be responded to.

## **Accidents procedure**

- ▶ External organisations must provide proof that they have public liability insurance;
- ▶ Suitable first-aid boxes are available and their location known;
- ▶ Children and young people must be advised of risks of dangerous material;