

Joan Denise Moriarty  
School of Dance

Child Protection Policy

The Studio  
40 John Street Lower  
Cork

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance aims to provide an environment of safety and enjoyment for children who take part in activities organised by or associated with our dance school. We believe that all children have the right to be protected from abuse and/or harm at all times and in all situations. To ensure that a culture of safety is a central part of our dance school we will adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and Children First Act 2015. Our Child Protection Policy and the series of Good Practice Guidelines that support it are reviewed annually to ensure they remain in line with current legislation and best practice.

### **The Aims of the Policy**

The aim of the policy is to safeguard the personal safety of all children who use the facilities or services of Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance through actively promoting awareness, good practice and appropriate and effective procedures.

- Code of Conduct
- Good Recruitment and Vetting Procedures
- Staff Training
- Reporting Guidelines
- Recognising Signs and Symptoms of Abuse
- Recognising potential opportunities for harm or danger
- Dealing with Disclosures
- Accident/Incident Procedure
- Photography/Performance Policy
- Methods of Recording

### **The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance's Policy Statement of Child Protection**

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance confirms its commitment to ensuring that children under the age of 18 are protected and kept safe from harm while they are being supervised by staff, workshop facilitators and volunteers in The Studio or at any venue where associated projects are being conducted.

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance will endeavour to protect children by:

- Adopting and applying a Code of Behaviour for staff, volunteers and facilitators based on established Child Protection guidelines.
- Adopting and applying a Code of Safe Teaching Practice for staff volunteer and facilitators abased on established and recognised teaching methodologies and practices.

- Fostering an environment where children can feel safe to voice their concerns about their own or other children's safety.
- Responding swiftly to all suspicions, allegations or events.
- Nominating a Designated Manager to co-ordinate our Child Protection Policy.
- Ensuring that all employees, facilitators and volunteers or agents are familiar with our Child Protection Policy and are expected to follow this policy and implement the guidelines and procedures laid down in the policy.

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are any changes in legislation, Government directives or if any weaknesses are detected in the policy.

### **Supervision of Children**

Children should supervised at all times while on the premises or in our care.

Where children are in our care outside of The Studio then adult supervision of an appropriate ratio must be in place.

Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment should have constant adult supervision.

Any activity including class work, rehearsal or performance should be carried out only under the direction and supervision of an appropriately qualified individual.

Any dangerous behaviour by children will not be allowed.

### **Codes of Behaviour**

#### **All staff, facilitators and volunteers should:**

- Treat everyone with respect
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Set a good example
- Treat all children equally respecting the differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation.
- Respect children's right to personal privacy
- Discuss boundaries of behaviour and sanctions as appropriate to the activity with children and their primary carers.
- Explain to children why any activity may involve physical contact and be clear that the child is comfortable with the level of contact.
- Be vigilant in case an innocent action might be misinterpreted.
- Not have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with a child in their care.
- Avoid situations where they are left alone with a child.

- Don't single out a particular child for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule or unwelcome focus or attention.
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children, e.g. outside of structured studio activities.
- Where possible parents or guardians should supervise toilet arrangements for their own children.
- Where possible separate toilet facilities should be reserved for children's use only.
- Except in the case of emergency, staff should not be alone in a vehicle with a child.

## **Codes of Practice**

### **All staff, facilitators and volunteers should:**

- Ensure that the physical space in which they work is appropriate to the activity.
- Ensure that all participants are suitably equipped for the activity in progress in terms of clothing, footwear and protective garments.
- Be cognisant of children's limitations.
- Work at level that is appropriate to the age and physical ability and gender of the child.
- Avoid any creative work that could be considered age inappropriate. Where the specificities of a creative work call for age inappropriate use of language or gesture of activities, prior parental/primary carer agreement must be obtained.
- Take care to follow the accepted physical steps of warm up, activity and cool down.
- Evaluate their work and practices on a regular basis.
- Maintain an awareness of current trends and developments with regard to safe practice in their field.
- Report and record any incidents or accidents.

## **Physical Restraint**

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance staff or volunteers must never physically restrain a child except in the following situations:

- To prevent physical injury to the child, to other children or to other staff members.
- To prevent damage to property
- To prevent the child committing a criminal offence

If physical restraint is deemed necessary it must always be appropriate and reasonable.

## **Recruitment and Selection Guidelines**

When recruiting for staff The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance is responsible for insuring that applicants complete an application which:

- Asks the applicant to list any convictions or cautions they may have.
- Asks for the applicants to consent to Garda clearance
- Point out that a refusal to grant consent for such a clearance would be sufficient grounds for the Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance not to progress any further with the application.
- Provide two independent reference contacts that are recent, relevant and can be confirmed verbally and in writing.

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance will also undertake:

- To clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the applicant.
- Employ only those persons with relevant and current qualifications suited to their defined role.

## **Induction and Training for Staff**

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance need to ensure that once recruited, all staff should be well informed, trained, supervised and supported so that they are less likely to become involved in actions or practices which can be open to misinterpretation or cause harm or injury.

This process should cover the following:

- Induction should cover The Child Protection Policy, Code of Behaviour and Health and Safety Practices.
- The Probationary Period will be six months and all new staff will be reviewed after this period.
- Supervision and Support: receive an adequate level of supervision and be assisted in supplementing any training/education needs.

All staff will be trained in issues relating to:

- Customer care: This includes familiarisation with Child Protection Policy, Codes of Behaviour and Safe Teaching Practices.
- Reporting Procedures: Action to be taken if an employee suspect Child Abuse/Inappropriate Behaviour/Unsafe Practices.

## **Involvement of primary carers**

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance is committed to being open with all primary carers and to this end we undertake to:

- Advise primary carers of the existence of our Child Protection Plan
- Regularly inform primary carers of activities and potential activities within the School.
- Issue consent forms where relevant
- Comply with health and safety practices.
- Adhere to our recruitment policies.
- Operate in accordance with best practice.
- Ensure as far as possible that activities are age and ability appropriate.
- Encourage communication with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child's welfare.

**Where we have concerns about the welfare of a child, we will:**

- Respond to the needs of the child.
- Inform primary carers unless such an action puts the child 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 Gardai.

In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child and inform primary carers as appropriate.

**How to recognise inappropriate behaviour between an adult and a child or a vulnerable adult:**

Signs and symptoms:

- Inappropriate physical contact between an adult and a child
- Adults behaving suspiciously: hanging around the toilet or changing rooms when there is no reason for them to be there.
- Indulging in gratuitous horseplay with a child.
- Using inappropriate language in the presence of a child.
- Specific indication from a child that he/she has been abused.
- Evidence such as injury consistent with abuse.

**Dealing with Disclosure**

**In the event of a child making allegations or disclosure of abuse staff should:**

- Remain calm and allow the child to complete any accusation/disclosure
- Don't use any leading questions or prompt for details
- Offer reassurance but do not undertake to keep the information secret.
- Explain to the child what your next course of action will be (with due consideration to the child's age)

- Make a written record of the facts of the allegations or incidents including such details as time, date and persons involved.
- Inform the Designated Officer/Deputy of the event.

### **Dealing with allegations against staff**

1. Sharon Manning will deal with issues related to the child.
2. Sharon Manning will deal with issues related to the staff member.

### **Reporting Procedures**

All staff should be made aware that allegations can be made and that there is a procedure to deal with that laid down in the Child Protection Policy. In all circumstances all allegations should be reported to the Designated Officer.

The Designated Officer is Sharon Manning, The Studio, 40 John Street Lower, Cork.  
Tel: 085 7848018

The Deputy Designated Officer Alex Archer, The Studio 40 John Street Lower, Cork.  
Tel: 087 7169592

### **Following a disclosure or allegation a decision will be taken by The Designated Officer with regard to:**

Informing the primary carer of the allegation. (In circumstances where it is deemed necessary the Designated Officer may contact the HSE prior to contacting the primary carer.).

### **Disciplinary Procedure**

In accordance with the outcome of the formal investigations:

- Dismissal may occur
- The Gardai may be informed
- The HSE may be informed.

### **Confidentiality**

In the interest of safe guarding the child, information will only be made available on a need to know basis.

Primary Carers and children have the right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is made to the HSE, unless doing so constitutes further risk to the involved.

## **Accidents procedure**

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance will ensure:

- That a comprehensive register of children involved in our programmes is kept at all times.
- An accident/incident register is available for all staff.
- That first aid kits are available to all staff.
- That any external organisation with whom we deal provides proof of public liability insurance.
- That all accident/incidents are recorded promptly as outlined in the reporting procedures.

## **Child Protection and Photography**

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance needs to balance its need to have photographs for press and publicity purposes against its requirement to provide a safe environment and a level of confidentiality for children. There is also the consideration that parents or relatives may want to take photographs for the family album. A blanket prohibition is therefore considered too extreme. We are aware of the potential that exists for the misuse of photographic material and has developed a policy to meet this threat. This policy is based on the twin pillars of staff vigilance and carer consent. Staff will be present at all times when press photographs are being taken and press photographs will only be taken with prior carer consent.

## **Child Protection and Performance Work**

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance will occasionally provide children for performance work with outside producing companies or venues. The first priority in such situations is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. In such cases, the requirements of our Child Protection Policy will be made fully known to such production companies and venues. In any case where a production company or venue is unable to meet the requirements of safe practices outlined in this policy we will undertake to breach the gap in these practices. Where this arrangement cannot be facilitated, we will in accordance with our declared policies, withdraw the children from the event until suitable procedures are put in place.

## **Summary**

The Joan Denise Moriarty School of Dance's Child Protection Policy reflects the concerns and needs of an organisation where the involvement of children is central to its role in arts education and training. The policy document has identified the appropriate Codes of Behaviour and Practice for our staff when dealing with children and the

appropriate reporting procedures to be followed if a suspicion of allegation of abuse or incident of bad practice occurs.

Staff training in The Child Protection Policy and Procedures is vital, not just for the safety of the children, but also because it will equip staff with the correct information and promote confidence that the Child Protection Policy works in their interest too. Used properly, the Policy should provide a model of best practice thereby achieving its aim of providing a safe and secure environment for children.