



This is the Child Protection Policy of

## The RJ Academy of Singing and Dramatic Arts

21<sup>st</sup> March 2010

### Policy Statement

The RJ Academy has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in RJ Academy from harm. All children have the right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The RJ Academy will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in The RJ Academy through adherence to the child protection guidelines adopted by The RJ Academy.

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

### Policy Aims

The aim of The RJ Academy child protection policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of The RJ Academy.
- Allow all staff, teachers and choreographers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Our policy applies to all staff; teachers and choreographers who work for The RJ Academy.

There are four main elements to our policy

1. Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking suitability of teachers and choreographers to work with children.
2. Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or

suspected cases, of abuse.

3. Supporting pupils who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan.

4. Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

The RJ Academy has implemented the following documents as part of our Child Protection Policy.

- **Good Practice Guidelines**
- **Practices to be avoided**
- **Practices never to be sanctioned**
- **Recruitment guideline**
- **Photographers and images of children**
- **The RJ Academy Code of Conduct**
- **Responding to allegations or suspicions**

### **Good Practice Guidelines**

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good Practice means:

- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with students (e.g it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child)
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to
- Always working in an open environment encouraging open communication.
- Ensuring any form of manual/physical support required should be provided openly. It is difficult to maintain hand positions when the child is constantly moving.

- Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the waiting room.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of the students.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of students - avoiding excessive training and not pushing them against their will.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of treatment given
- Making performing arts fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.

### **Practices to be avoided**

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child's parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or apparent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

- Encourage parents to sit in on the first private lesson to build a trust and rapport.
- Avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event or activity

### **Practices never to be sanctioned:**

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Share a room with a child
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun

- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised

### **Recruitment Guidelines**

**The RJ Academy** recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

All RJ Academy teachers will be CRB checked to an enhanced level. In the very rare instances where we are running a master class with a professional performer who is not a teacher and therefore does not hold an enhanced CRB, another member of RJ Academy staff (CRB Checked) will be present at all times.

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 Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport and driving licence with photo)
- Interview and Induction
- All employees will be required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive induction, during which:
  - A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full (including sections on CRB and self-disclosures)
  - Their qualifications should be substantiated
  - The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified
  - Child protection policies are explained and training needs are identified.
  - They will sign up to the The RJ Academy child protection policy.

## Photographs and Images of Children

There is evidence that some people have used entertainment events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled dancers in vulnerable positions.

Videoing as a teaching aid: there is no intention to prevent teachers using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid and record of work created. However, performers and their parents/carers should be made aware that this is part of the coaching programme and their consent obtained, and such films be stored safely.

Photographs may be taken with prior consent of each parent / carer for archive and/or promotional purposes. When used for promotional purposes any images must follow the following guidelines:

- Suitable clothing is being worn
- Promoting The RJ Academy as a provider of high quality professional teaching.

## The RJ Academy Code of Conduct.

- Respect the dignity and spirit of all singers / performers / children.
- Treat all performers fairly.
- Establish supportive, positive environments to encourage healthy competition, skill development, fun and achievement.
- Avoid contact or conduct that may be interpreted as having sexual connotations.
- Do not take part in or tolerate behaviour that frightens, embarrasses or demoralizes a performer or that negativity affects their self esteem.
- Do not tolerate ANY acts of aggression or violence.
- Work towards eliminating harassment and abuse from the performing environment.
- Be prepared to intervene if a child or young person under 18 is being abused or neglected.
- Practice fair play both during and outside of all performance / singing activities. "Fair Play" is defined as showing considerate regard for performers, staff, parents and RJ Academy management.

- To ensure that the music is suitable for the age group to be taught.
- To wear suitable clothing to represent the style of class being taught and to match the companies image.
- To ensure that he / she ascertains where the fire exits are, any assembly point (where relevant), fire alarms and where help can be enlisted to ensure the safety of the students and the teacher.
- To behave in a professional, mature and appropriate manner whilst on school premises or at a venue.
- Adhere to this RJ Academy code of conduct.

### **Responding to allegations or suspicions**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for RJ Academy 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 by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

Fabulous Footwork will assure all staff / volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or 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:

1. A criminal investigation
2. A child protection investigation
3. A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

### **Action if there are concerns**

#### **1. Concerns about poor practice**

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the designated / Club Child Protection officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the RJ Academy Child protection officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the social services who will decide how to deal with 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 RJ Academy 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.

RJ Academy child protection officer will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police. The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.

If RJ Academy Child Protection officer is the subject of the suspicion / allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate manager or in his/her absence 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 RJ Academy Child Protection Officer
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Social services / police.

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child.) Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure.)

## **Internal Enquiries and Suspension**

The Fabulous Footwork Child Protection Officer will make and immediate decision about whether and 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 inquiries the Fabulous Footwork 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 RJ Academy Disciplinary committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance 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, 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 CV212PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, email: bac@bacp.co.uk, Internet: <http://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 previous abuse may be some time after the event (e.g by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children.)

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, either within or outside the school, 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. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

### **Action if Bullying is suspected**

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in “Responding to suspicions or allegations” above.

### **Action to help the victim and prevent bullying in dance**

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children 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. Create an open environment.



- 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 club 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's parents
- Insist on the return of "borrowed" items and that the bully (ie) compensate the victim.
- Provide support for the victims coach.
- 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
- Most "low level" incidents will be dealt with at the time by teachers and volunteers. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to deal with it, incidents should be referred to the designated / club child protection officer as in "responding to suspicious or allegations" above.

### **3.Concerns outside the immediate dancing / singing environment (e.g a parent or carer)**

Report your concerns to the RJ Academy 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 club 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 club child protection officer will decide how to involve the parents / carers.

Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.

#### **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 a 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?