



## Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy 2021

This document provides details of Gems Performing Arts and Gems Holiday Clubs Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy. The policy informs staff, schools and parents of our safeguarding practises and procedures.

### Key Staff:

- 1) Head Designated Safeguarding Leader; Melissa McKeigue  
[Melissa@gemsperformingarts.com](mailto:Melissa@gemsperformingarts.com) (Centre Manager)
- 2) Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leader; Scott Turner  
[scott@gemsperformingarts.com](mailto:scott@gemsperformingarts.com) (Teacher)

Our core principles on safeguarding are:

- To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children
- To provide a safe and secure environment for children to learn, develop and grow
- To build a team of teachers who can help children to develop through safe and inspiring techniques

## 1) Policy Statement, Principles & Aims

### a. Policy

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff regardless of their role within the organisation.

### b. Principles

- Gems will ensure that the welfare of children is given paramount consideration when developing and delivering all workshop content
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicious behaviour or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm in accordance with this guidance
- All pupils and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support from the Key Staff. This will be offered in line with the terms set out in this policy.

### c. Aims

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their statutory responsibilities to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children
- To encourage an open conversation with staff to ensure they feel confident to report concerns
- To ensure consistent good practice across all Gems classes and workshops
- To demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding children and protecting those who are at risk

## 2) Roles & Responsibilities

Every member of Gems has an equal responsibility to report any concerns they may have around child safety. Staff are required to report any incident directly to Melissa McKeigue, who will take the appropriate action in accordance with this document.

With regards to school workshops and after school clubs, all Gems teachers will be notified who the designated safeguarding teacher is within each school they teach at. All concerns will be reported directly to the school and to Melissa McKeigue. Any report will then be followed up with the appropriate action taken.

### **3) Support**

Support for those involved in a child care issue should be obtained through the local authority appropriate to the location in which the family live. Gems will endeavour to ensure families receive appropriate levels of support through the official channels.

### **4) Complaints Procedure**

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a child or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a child that initially does not reach the threshold for child protection action. Poor practice examples include unfairly singling out a child, using sarcasm or humiliation as a form of control, bullying or belittling a child or discriminating against them in some way. Complaints should be reported directly to Melissa McKeigue.

### **5) Whistle Blowing**

All staff have a responsibility to report their concerns to Melissa McKeigue. If there is a conflict of interests then issues should be reported to the Principal, Emma Drysdale or the local authority

With regard to after school clubs and school workshops, any concerns will be raised directly with the school's designated Safeguarding Leader via Melissa McKeigue.

### **6) Allegations against staff**

All staff are required to provide an up to date DBS certificate, relevant proof of identification, a CV with prior working with children experience plus two references. Staff will be interviewed and all checks carried out before the first day of teaching.

Should an allegation against a member of staff be made, this will be investigated by Melissa McKeigue and where appropriate, reported to the local authority.

### **7) Staff Training**

It is important that all staff are given access to the appropriate resources to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse and neglect and to know what to do if they have a concern. When working with Gems, all Staff are given a Safeguarding Policy and will sign a declaration stating that they will abide by our policy. We also direct them to the DFE guidelines on the government website to ensure they fully understand their responsibilities when working with children. All teachers attend Safeguarding training every 2 years.

Should a member of staff need additional information or further clarification of any policy or procedure they are required to contact Emma Drysdale or Melissa McKeigue for assistance.

With regard to school workshops and after school clubs, Gems are happy to adhere to any additional safeguarding policy documents, practises and procedures from individual schools, if applicable. Gems will consent teachers and staff to attend any safeguarding meetings, talks and training required by schools as part of their own guidelines.

### **8) Photography & Images**

When photographic or video footage is recorded Gems will:

- Seek parental consent for any images or footage to be taken for marketing purposes
- Seek parental consent for any images or footage to be published online, where their child is recognisable/can be seen clearly
- Only use the child's first name with an image
- Ensure that children are appropriately dressed
- Encourage children to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them

With regards to school workshops and after school clubs, permission is requested from firstly the school, and then parents, prior to any images or video footage being captured.

## **9) Mobile Phones**

Using mobile phones or similar devices are not permitted during Gems classes unless a genuine reason is specified and approved by a teacher e.g. calling a parent.

## **10) Safeguarding & Child Protection Procedures;**

We recognise that child abuse does happen and can take its form in a number of ways including: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child (this used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness).

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only for meeting the needs of another person. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing or shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision, including the use of inadequate care-takers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Bullying**

While bullying between children is not a separate category of abuse and neglect, it is a very serious issue that can cause considerable anxiety and distress. All incidences of bullying should be reported and will be dealt with by Emma. If a child continues to bully other children he or she will be asked to leave the class or workshop.

### **Indicators of Abuse**

Staff are reminded they are responsible for reporting any concerns to Melissa McKeigue.

A child who is being abused and/or neglected may:

- Have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- Show signs of pain or discomfort
- Keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- Be concerned about changing into a costume
- Look unkempt and uncared for
- Change their eating habits
- Have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- Appear fearful
- Be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety

- Self-harm
  - Frequently miss classes or arrive late
  - Show signs of not wanting to go home
  - Display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
  - Challenge authority
  - Be constantly tired or preoccupied
  - Be wary of physical contact
  - Be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
  - Display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age
- Staff should be aware that individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. Any indicators should be noted and viewed as part of a jigsaw, with each piece of information used to help the local authority decide how to proceed. It is very important that staff report their concerns – as ‘absolute proof’ is not required to suggest that the child is at risk.

### **Taking action**

Key points to remember for taking action are:

- Report your concern to Melissa McKeigue.
  - If Melissa McKeigue does not take appropriate action contact the local authority
  - Do not start your own investigation
  - Share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family
  - Complete a record of concern
  - Seek support for yourself if you are distressed.
  - In an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, for example, call 999
- With regards to school workshops and after school clubs, any concerns should be reported to the schools DSL and Melissa McKeigue.

### **If a child discloses information to you**

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being neglected and or abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual, their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell, they may have lost all trust in adults, or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault.

If a child talks to you about any risks to their safety or wellbeing you will need to let them know that **you must** pass the information on – you are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which you do this is a matter for professional judgement. If you jump in immediately the child may think that you do not want to listen, if you leave it till the very end of the conversation, the child may feel that you have misled them into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

### **During your conversation with the child:**

- Allow them to speak freely.
- Remain calm and do not over react – the child may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting you.
- Give reassuring nods or words of comfort – ‘I’m so sorry this has happened’, ‘I want to help’, ‘This isn’t your fault’, ‘You are doing the right thing in talking to me’.
- Do not be afraid of silences – remember how hard this must be for the child.
- Under no circumstances ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what does the child’s mother think about all this.
- At an appropriate time tell the child that in order to help them you must pass the information on.
- Do not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused.
- Tell the child what will happen next. The child may agree to go with you to see the company management. Otherwise let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the session.
- If possible, record the child’s words, the time and the date of the conversation.
- Report verbally to the designated person.
- Write up your conversation as soon as possible on the record of concern form and hand it to the designated person.

- Seek support if you feel distressed.

### **Referral to Children's Social Care**

Gems will make a referral to children's social care if it is believed that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. Our local centre is **Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** in Lewisham, 020 8314 6660. The child (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child.

### **Confidentiality and sharing information**

Child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the child and staff involved but also to ensure that being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence. Staff should only discuss concerns with Melissa McKeigue, who will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with Data Protection Act 1998 principles. Child protection records are normally exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act, which means that children and parents do not have an automatic right to see them. If any member of staff receives a request from a child or parent to see child protection records, they should refer the request to Melissa McKeigue.

The Data Protection Act does not prevent staff from sharing information with relevant agencies, where that information may help to protect a child.

### **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, shall be treated equally and have the same opportunities at Gems. We aspire to create an inclusive environment where every child feels valued and all needs are met. Gems staff have a responsibility to ensure our programme is varied and where all cultures are celebrated.

### **Managing the Policy**

The Principal and Manager will ensure that safeguarding young people or vulnerable adults is particularly considered by:

- Monitoring the Safeguarding Policy
- Keeping Safeguarding policies under regular review (every 3 years minimum)
- Regular communication with the designated person for safeguarding
- Regular training for all staff and researching any updates to Government policies.

### **Supporting Children's Wellbeing Post COVID-19**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak may have caused significant mental health or wellbeing difficulties for some children and we acknowledge that we may need to offer some children extra support especially those children who have found the long period at home hard to manage or have developed anxieties related to the virus. We appreciate some children may also have experienced bereavements in their immediate family or wider circle of friends or family or had increased or new caring responsibilities. We hope to provide a safe environment where children can share their experiences with trusted adults. We especially support our children of BAME families as they may have been more severely affected.