



**Safeguarding and Protection Policy
for
Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

MEPA COLLEGE

SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING POLICY FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Safeguarding Statement

MEPA COLLEGE is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. All reasonable steps will be taken to promote safe practices and to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse and exploitation.

MEPA COLLEGE acknowledges its duty of care to act appropriately to any allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse. All staff and volunteers will work together to encourage the development of an ethos which embraces difference and diversity and respects the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

MEPA COLLEGE recognises its duty of care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014, the Children Act 1989 and working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.

MEPA COLLEGE will ensure that:

1. The welfare of every student no matter what age or ability is paramount.
2. All Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
3. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

MEPA COLLEGE will ensure that:

1. Everyone will be treated with respect and dignity
2. The welfare of each child, young person and vulnerable adult will always be put first.
3. Enthusiastic and constructive criticism will be given to pupils rather than negative criticism
4. Bullying will not be accepted or condoned.
5. All adult members will provide a positive role model
6. Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate behaviour
7. It will comply with health and safety legislation
8. It will keep you informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
9. It will undertake relevant professional development and training
10. It will ensure all contact and medical details for every student is up to date and available at the place of teaching or performance.
11. All staff will receive dedicated safeguarding training.

MEPA COLLEGE has a Designated Safeguarding Leader who is in charge of ensuring that the child, young person and vulnerable adult protection policy is adhered to. The Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL) is Emma Finch and she can be contacted on efinch@mepatraining.com

In implementing this policy MEPA COLLEGE will:

1. Implement our recruitment / enrolment procedures for appointing staff, volunteers and helpers to ensure that reasonable steps are taken not to appoint a person who is unsuitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults or who is disqualified from working with children
2. Ensure that all staff, volunteers and helpers in our group are aware of their responsibility to protect each and every student.
3. Promote the rights for children, young people and vulnerable adults to be listened to and to be taken seriously so that they are able to express their views, thoughts and concerns.
4. Ensure that staff, volunteers and helpers are aware of, and adhere to our code of conduct and child, young people and vulnerable adult protection policy and procedures.
5. Ensure that all staff, volunteers and helpers understand the need to report child, young people and vulnerable adult protection concerns about a student or a worker's conduct towards another student.
6. Ensure that staff, volunteers and helpers understand their responsibility to refer any protection concerns to the DSL.
7. The DSL will refer any child, young person or vulnerable adult protection concerns to the Maidstone Borough Council Social Work Department in line with our Child and Young Person and Vulnerable Adult protection procedures.
8. Ensure that staff, volunteers and helpers are provided with support and the opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in relation to child, young people and vulnerable adult's protection issues.
9. Children, young people and vulnerable adults, parents and staff will be informed of who the DSL is and be able to raise any safeguarding concerns and know these will be taken seriously.

All adults have a role to play in relation to:

- Protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse
- Promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Preventing children, young people and vulnerable adults from being harmed

The role of MEPA in situations where there are child, young people or vulnerable adult protection concerns is NOT to investigate but to recognise and refer.

Designation Safeguarding Leader: Emma Finch

Is responsible for:

- Liaising with other agencies or professionals
- Ensuring that locally established procedures are followed including reporting and referral processes
- Acting as a consultant for staff to discuss concerns
- Making referrals as necessary
- Maintaining a confidential recording system
- Organising training for all staff

General Strategies

This section gives an opportunity for staff to identify the specific ways in which child, young people and vulnerable adults protection issues are addressed within MEPA, policies and guidance or through school/community initiatives.

What to do if you think a child, young person or vulnerable adult could be experiencing abuse and/or neglect

Definition of safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's, young people or vulnerable adults health or development;
- ensuring that children, young people and vulnerable adults are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children, young people and vulnerable adults to have the best life chances.

Child, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Protection

Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children, young people or vulnerable adults who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Recognising the signs & symptoms of abuse:

Abuse comes under the main headings of

- 1) **Physical abuse**
- 2) **Sexual abuse**
- 3) **Emotional abuse**
- 4) **Neglect**

See 'What to do if you're worried a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being abused: advice for practitioners'
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2>

All staff should be given a copy of this document with a copy of your safeguarding policy and sign to say they've read both of them.

Suspicion of Abuse

- You may observe signs or symptoms which may indicate a child, young person or vulnerable adult is either suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm:
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults whose behaviour changes – they may become aggressive, challenging, disruptive, withdrawn or clingy, or they might have difficulty sleeping or start wetting the bed;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults with clothes which are ill-fitting and/or dirty;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults with consistently poor hygiene;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who make strong efforts to avoid specific family members or friends, without an obvious reason;
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults who don't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities;
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults who are having problems at school, for example, a sudden lack of concentration and learning or they appear to be tired and hungry;
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults who talk about being left home alone, with inappropriate carers or with strangers;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who reach developmental milestones, such as learning to speak or walk, late, with no medical reason;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are regularly missing from school or education;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are reluctant to go home after school;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who drink alcohol regularly from an early age;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are concerned for younger siblings without explaining why;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who shy away from being touched or flinch at sudden movements.

1) Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child, young person or vulnerable adult. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical abuse can happen in any family, but may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child, young person or vulnerable adult. Physical abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Some of the following signs may be indicators of physical abuse:

- | Children, young person or vulnerable adult with frequent injuries;
- | Children, young person or vulnerable adult with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones;
- | Children, young people or vulnerable adults with unexplained: bruises or cuts; burns or scalds; or bite marks.

In the performance sector, physical abuse could also include adult's coercion into or conspiring with children, young people or vulnerable adults to excessive physical exercise and training and/or deprivation of sufficient rest and sustenance. Parents and other adults should also be alert to self-abuse including cutting and eating disorders.

2) Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child, young person or vulnerable adult without consent. You should be aware that many children and young people who are victims of sexual abuse do not recognise themselves as such. A child may not understand what is happening and may not even understand that it is wrong. Sexual abuse can have a long-term impact on mental health. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children, young people or vulnerable adults in the production of sexual images, forcing children, young people or vulnerable adults to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children, young people or vulnerable adults to behave in sexually inappropriate way or grooming a child, young person or vulnerable adult in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children and young people. Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual abuse:

- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who ask others to behave sexually or play sexual games; and
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy

Child, young people and vulnerable adults' sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children, young people and vulnerable adults are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child, young person or vulnerable adult may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child, young people and vulnerable adults' sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children, young people and vulnerable adults who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing from home, care and education at some point.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation:

- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and

- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who regularly miss school or education or don't take part in education.

3) Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, young person or vulnerable adult. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child, young person or vulnerable adult's emotional development. Although the effects of emotional abuse might take a long time to be recognisable, practitioners will be in a position to observe it, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child, young person or vulnerable adult. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child, young person or vulnerable adult that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child, young person or vulnerable adult opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve serious bullying including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones by a child's peers. Some of the following signs may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong;
- Parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, young person or vulnerable adult - giving that person the 'cold shoulder';
- Parents or carers blaming their problems on their child, young person or vulnerable adult; and
- Parents or carers who humiliate their child, young person or vulnerable adult for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons. In the performance sector this will also include trainers and mentors in loco parentis.

4) Neglect:

Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's, young person or vulnerable adults basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child, young person or vulnerable adult's health or development. Children, young people and vulnerable adults who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse. It is important that practitioners remain alert and do not miss opportunities to take timely action.

However, while you may be concerned about a child, young person or vulnerable adult neglect is not always straightforward to identify. Neglect may occur if a parent becomes physically or mentally unable to care for them. A parent may also have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, which could impair their ability to keep a child, young person or vulnerable adults safe or result in them prioritising buying drugs, or alcohol, over food, clothing or warmth. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal drug or alcohol abuse. Some of the following signs may be indicators of neglect:

- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are left hungry or dirty;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are left without adequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are living in dangerous conditions, i.e. around drugs, alcohol or violence;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm;
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults who fail to receive basic health care;
- Parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their child, young person or vulnerable adult is ill or are injured.

Other safeguarding issues can include:

- Forced marriage/honour based violence/ female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Gangs and youth violence
- Gender based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Mental health
- Private fostering
- Radicalisation/extremism 12
- Sexting/grooming and other E safety issues
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Trafficking
- For more information use following link to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015 the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

RECORD KEEPING:

Staff can play a vital role in helping children, young people and vulnerable adults in need or at risk by effective monitoring and record keeping. Any incident or behavioural change in a child, young person or vulnerable adult that gives cause for concern should be recorded on an incident sheet, copies of which are kept in the office. It is important that records are factual and reflect the words used by the child, young person or vulnerable adult. Opinions should not be given unless there is some form of evidence base, which can also be quoted. Records must be signed and dated with timings if appropriate. It is important to remember that any issues are confidential, and staff should know only on a 'need to know' basis.

INFORMATION TO BE RECORDED

- Child's name and date of birth
- Child in normal context e.g. behaviour, attitude, (has there been an extreme change)
- The incident(s) which give rise for concern with date(s) and time(s)
- A record of what the child or young person has said
- If recording bruising/injuries indicate position, colour, size, shape and time on body map.
- Action taken

These basic details are vital to the information gathering process and do not constitute an investigation. Written information should be passed to the DSL, who should always be kept informed of any significant issues.

Storage of Records

MEPA COLLEGE will ensure that records relating to concerns for the welfare or safety of children are kept separate from other files and are stored securely. Information will be shared on a strictly need to know basis and in line with child protection policy guidance.

Referrals to Social Services:

It is the responsibility of the DSL to decide when to make a referral to the Social Services Department. To help with this decision s/he may choose to consult (anonymously if appropriate) with the Social Services Children and Families Duty Service, who offer opportunities for consultation as part of the Child in need / child protection process. Issues discussed during consultations may include the urgency and gravity of the concerns for a child, young person or vulnerable adult and the extent to which parents / carers are made aware of these. Some concerns may need to be monitored over a period of time before a decision to refer to Social Services is made. **In all but the most exceptional cases parents/carers will be made aware of the concerns felt for a child or young person at the earliest possible stage and in the event of this becoming necessary, their consent to a referral to Social Services will be sought.**

Referrals to Social Services will be made in writing where time allows for this. In situations where there are felt to be urgent or grave concerns a telephone referral will be made and followed up in writing.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult is referred, the DSL will ensure that relevant staff(s) are informed of this.

If after consultation with the designated member of the production team, the person who raised concerns feels that appropriate action is not being taken in respect of his or her concerns s/he should consult with or refer directly to Social Services. Mandy Ellen Performing Arts should be informed of this decision.

Safer Recruitment

All staff and volunteers must go through a recruitment process which takes into account safeguarding issues as follows:

- | A DBS check for the Child Workforce that is enhanced with barring.
- | A reference of which must be a professional reference.
- | The interview process must include questions about safeguarding and sharing the questions the organisations safeguarding policy and expectations
- | Relevant qualifications and experience in order to practice safely

Concerns involving members of staff:

Any concerns that involve allegations against a member of staff should be referred immediately to the DSL, who will seek further consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer or Social Services to discuss and agree further action to be taken in respect of the child, young person or vulnerable adult and the member of staff.

Code of Practice

All staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with relation to child, young person or vulnerable adult protection. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults. Physical intervention should only be used when the child, young person or vulnerable adult is endangering him/herself or others and such events should be recorded and signed by a witness.

All staff should work towards providing an environment and atmosphere for children, young people and vulnerable adults to enable them to feel safe to talk. However, staff should never promise to keep certain information confidential. It must be explained that staff have certain duties to help keep that child, young person or vulnerable adult safe, which may involve informing others.

Supervision and Support

Any members of staff affected by issues arising from concerns for children, young people or vulnerable adults welfare or safety can seek support from the DSL.

The DSL can put staff and parents in touch with outside agencies for professional support if they so wish.

Training Opportunities

The DSL is responsible for ensuring staff including him/herself receive training in the area of child, young people and vulnerable adults protection. Please contact Emma for more information and training opportunities

Monitoring and Review

All personnel will have a copy of this policy and will have the opportunity to consider and discuss its contents.

The policy forms part of MEPA'S development and will be reviewed annually.

All staff should have access to this policy and sign to the effect that they have read and understood its content.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur, you should report this immediately and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed.

- If you accidentally harm a performer
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- If a student seems to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a student misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of photographic/filming equipment at performances/events

There is evidence that some people have used performing/training events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children, young people and vulnerable adults in vulnerable positions.

Videoing as a teacher:

There is no intention to prevent teachers using video equipment as legitimate training/learning aid. However, performers and their parent/carers should be made aware that this is part of the teaching programme and their consent must be obtained, and such films should be stored safely.

E-Safety

Most of our children, young people and vulnerable adults will use mobile phones and computers. They are a source of fun, entertainment and education. However, we know that some men, women and young people will use these technologies to harm children. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and e-mails, to enticing children, young people and vulnerable adults to engage in sexually harmful conversations, webcam photography or face to face meetings.

| All staff/ volunteers must not communicate with students via their phone or on social media. Communication should just be with the parent/carer or via email.

| Staff should not be 'friends' on social media with any pupil.

| Cyber bullying by students or staff via texts and e-mail will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying.

| Mobile phones with cameras should not be permitted in the changing rooms except for emergency communication with the designated members of staff. No photos are to be taken by anyone on any device backstage

Useful Contact Telephone Numbers

Police	01622 690690
Police Special Investigation / Domestic Violence units	01622 690690
Local Authority Designated Officer	kentchildrenslado@kent.gov.uk 03000 41 08 88
Kent Social Services (Children)	social.services@kent.gov.uk 03000 41 11 11