

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURES

### INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare Schools Foundation (SSF) works directly with children and young people and therefore takes the issue of child protection very seriously. We are also aware that organisations working with children can be the target of those who may wish to harm children. In order to safeguard against this, we have a child protection policy to ensure all those working with us follow best practice and ensure that the welfare of children is paramount in every aspect of our work. We want to create an environment of safety and mutual respect, where child protection is everyone's responsibility. We review this policy at least annually in order to meet with all current legislation and best practice.

We define "children" as young people under the age of 18 years.

### Policy Principles

SSF will seek to safeguard children by ensuring staff, consultants and all schools and organisations working with us that we

- value them, listen to and respect them.
- adopt child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct.
- ensure that all members of staff engaged directly (core staff, Cast Workshop Hosts and Practitioners, Stage Directors and Stage Managers) to work with children will be the subject of an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau, or from the Disclosures and Barring Service (DBS), which deems them suitable to work with children, prior to any contact with children taking place.
- provide two or more staff for every activity we organise with children.
- share information about safeguarding children and good practice with children, teachers, staff and volunteers.
- share information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- provide effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- ensure all our staff have agreed to comply with SSF's Child Protection Policy.
- adopt the principles of this policy in relation to online engagement (e.g. by appropriate use of social networking websites).

### Schools and Organisations Participating in SSF

All schools and organisations participating in SSF are required to abide by our Chaperoning and Supervision terms and conditions. In addition all schools/organisations participating in any activity in any venue organised by SSF must:

- appoint a Group Leader who will make themselves known to the SSF staff on arrival at any SSF event or activity
- keep a register of all children attending the activity. This should include details of their name and address, date of birth and next of kin.
- keep a register of paid staff and volunteers working with/chaperoning children.

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- remain responsible for the children in their care at all times and, be responsible for providing adequate chaperones (paying attention to numbers of appropriate gender and experience). Chaperones cannot be other students from the school, even if they are over eighteen.
- SSF's chaperone ratios are:
  - For primary schools 10:1 pupils to adults
  - For secondary schools 12:1 pupils to adults
- not leave any child or children in their care unattended at any time.
- not permit a person under the age of 18 to be left in sole charge of any children of any age.
- be aware that SSF staff cannot and will not act as pupil chaperones at any time.
- provide all appropriate and adequate insurance arrangements for all the children and staff.
- ensure they comply with legislation in relation to children taking part.

### **Data Protection**

SSF are committed to complying with The Data Protection Act (1998) and to upholding the principles of good information handling practice. All information relating to individuals will be kept securely and for no longer than required.

SSF will not permit any photographs or video footage to be taken without the appropriate consent being in place.

### **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR AND GOOD PRACTICE**

SSF requires all its staff and volunteers, staff from any sub-contracted organisations, as well as any staff from participating schools and organisations to follow this code of behaviour and good practice at all times, when engaged in any SSF activity that involves contact with children.

#### **Purpose**

This code has been developed to provide advice which will not only help to protect children, but will also help identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse being made against individuals.

Following this good practice code will also help to protect SSF by reducing the possibility of anyone using their role within the organisation to gain access to children in order to abuse them.

When working with children all staff and volunteers are considered to be acting in a position of trust. It is therefore important that staff, volunteers, and staff from sub-contracted and participating organisations are aware that they may be seen as role models by children and must act in an appropriate manner at all times and follow the code of conduct.

#### **When working with children it is important to:**

- always follow SSF's Child Protection Policy
- treat everyone with dignity and respect putting the welfare of each participant before the goals of the activity
- actively involve children in planning activities wherever possible
- treat children fairly and without prejudice
- value and take children's contributions seriously
- ensure that feedback is encouraging and constructive.

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- always ensure language is appropriate and not offensive or discriminatory, and not make sexually suggestive comments, even in fun.
- always avoid favouritism
- always ensure equipment is used appropriately and for the purpose it was designed for
- ensure any contact with children is appropriate and in relation to the work of the activity
- provide examples of good conduct you wish others to follow

**All staff and volunteers must:**

- keep an appropriate distance from children and not engage in any inappropriate physical contact
- work in an open environment, avoid any activity with children behind closed doors, or in private or unobserved situations e.g. accompanying a child to the toilet
- ensure another adult is present when working with children
- not take receive or pass on contact details from children nor let children have your personal contact details e.g. mobile number or address
- not to be-friend a child on social media
- not to take a photo of a child or allow anyone to photograph children, unless it is for specific agreed purposes, and where consent from the parent/guardian has been given
- not arrange any contact with children met through SSF activities outside of those activities
- only touch a child when it is absolutely necessary and only after permission has been given by the child. In this case be clear, tell the child where you are going to touch them and how e.g. "I will help you up onto this step by placing my hand on the centre of your back." When comforting a child remember it is more appropriate to give a child a glass of water or a tissue, than a hug.
- kindly discourage all types of physical conduct that a child may wish to initiate (e.g., a hug).

**Staff who breach this code of conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures. Any breach of this code involving a volunteer or member of staff from another organisation may result in cancellation of their contract or ability to perform with SSF. Serious breaches of this code may also result in a referral being made to a statutory agency such as the Police or Children's Services Department.**

**PROCEDURES**

SSF is not directly responsible for the protection of children attending any of the activities that they organise with the schools/organisations who participate in the Festival. The protection of any children participating in any activities organised by SSF is solely the responsibility of the schools/organisations.

SSF will inform the Group Leader of the situation in the event that any of the procedures detailed below need to be followed. In the event that the Group Leader is the source of the problem SSF will inform the appropriate authority.

If someone believes a child or young person may be in immediate danger, always dial 999 for police assistance. If someone believes that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, then they must notify an SSF staff member, who will then take appropriate action.

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### **Accidents and Injuries**

If any child sustains an accident or injury whilst participating in any SSF activity at any of the venues, the SSF staff present enter a record of the accident in the venue's Accident Book and provide a copy to the SSF Office. The record will be countersigned by the person responsible for the child, and a member of staff from the venue. SSF will keep a record of the accident for a minimum of 12 months.

If a child or member of a vulnerable group arrives for an SSF activity with an obvious physical injury, a record will be made by an SSF member of staff and the Group Leader will be required to counter-sign. This record will be used if a formal allegation is made later as a record that the individual did not sustain the injury whilst engaged in an SSF activity.

### **Action to Take**

SSF take any allegation or potential threat concerning the welfare of children with the upmost seriousness. The following procedures ensure that any incidents are dealt with quickly and correctly. It is the responsibility of the authorities to determine whether abuse has occurred.

#### **If a young person discloses an abuse allegation to you:**

1. Let the child know that you will need to tell someone else what they are going to say. Keep the door open
2. If they still want to speak let the child speak without interrupting them, look at them directly and accept what they say. Do not press them for information. Do not pass judgment but neither should you make the child feel guilty or isolated. Be aware that they may have been threatened.
3. Let the child know what you are going to do next, who you are going to tell, why and roughly what will happen next.
4. Finish on a positive note.
5. Ensure no situation arises which could cause further concern.

#### **Action to take immediately**

1. Contact the SSF Office (020 7601 1800) and speak to the HR Consultant, the CEO or a Director in that order.
2. Make written notes of the facts as you know them, including:
  - the young person's name and address
  - the Group Leader's details
  - relevant phone numbers: head teacher, child's parent or guardian
  - what is said to have happened, or what was seen
  - when it occurred
  - who else was there
  - what was said by those involved
  - whether there is any actual evidence e.g., bruises, bleeding, changed behaviour
  - who has been told about it
  - who was concerned
  - was the child able to say what happened
  - whether the Group Leader/parents/guardians/carers have been advised

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Give a copy to SSF HR. If the allegation is about you follow the same steps.  
If independent advice is needed contact the NSPCC - for a free 24hour Child Protection Helpline, 0808 800 5000

**Any suspicious behavior will be passed to the local Police Child Protection Unit or the local Social Services within 24 hours of the allegations being made.**

## **DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE**

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scolding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent/guardian/carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after.

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child(ren) that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child 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 or non-penetrative acts, as well as touching of any part of the body, clothed or unclothed. They may include noncontact 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 and/or psychological needs. It may involve a parent/guardian/carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, 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.

## **SIGNS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE**

### **The signs of physical abuse may include:-**

- unexplained bruising
- marks or injuries
- bruises that reflect hand marks or fingertips
- cigarette burns
- bite marks
- broken bones

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- scalds

**Changes in behaviour can also indicate physical abuse:-**

- fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- flinching when approached or touched
- depression withdrawn behaviour

It is important to remember that children and young adults collect cuts and bruises in their daily life. It is important that these can be readily explained.

**The signs of sexual abuse may include:-**

- stomach pains
- discomfort when walking or sitting down

**Changes in behaviour that might indicate sexual abuse include:-**

- sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- running away
- eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- saying they have a secret they cannot tell anybody about
- substance or alcohol abuse suddenly
- having unexplained sources of money
- not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults

**Some indicators of neglect may include:-**

- looking badly presented with old, torn clothing
- always hungry and looking for food
- not being expected to be at home when it seems reasonable that they should be
- adults not seeming to know or be interested in what is happening to them
- becoming thin and under-nourished
- not having what they need for their studies
- not receiving medical attention when it seems appropriate

**Emotional abuse can be difficult to identify but changes in behaviour may include:-**

- fear of making mistakes
- sudden speech disorders
- self-harm
- fear of parent being approached concerning their behaviour

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