



# **CHILD SAFE POLICY**

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# INTRODUCTION

*Reflections Academy of Dance is committed to providing a safe space for all children - through detailed policy, ongoing staff training, and a rigorous and transparent reporting process'*

**Kiandra Harman**

**Artistic Director, Reflections Academy of Dance | Child Safety Officer**

Dance is an unregulated industry, and anyone can open a dance school. That's why it's critical parents understand what happens at their studio and what the staff are doing to ensure the safety of their child.

In July 2022, the Victorian Government announced Australia's first mandatory guidelines for child safety standards for all organisations that supervise children. There are 11 Standards every organisation are required to meet - these are outlined in this document, as well as our response and implementation plan.

Reflections Academy of Dance's Child Safe Policy was developed through consultation with parents. We are committed to continue this approach - in this update, we are extending this consultation to the students, as they are directly impacted and supported by this policy.

## WHAT IS CONTAINED IN OUR CHILD SAFE POLICY?

- Outline and response to Victorian Mandatory Child Safe Standards
- Your commitment to our Child Safe Policy (See See Appendix 1 & Appendix 2)



# OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY



**All children attending Reflections Academy of Dance have the right to be safe, respected and protected from harm. Children should be made aware of, and feel confident in, their rights and responsibility.**

Reflections Academy of Dance is fiercely committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children that interact with our organisation; as students, siblings or friends of students, or audience members of performances. The welfare of children entrusted in our care is our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse. We will take all necessary steps to prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect, including:

- physical abuse: purposefully injuring or threatening to injure a child
- emotional abuse: an attack on a child's self-esteem through bullying, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating a child neglect: harming a child by failing to provide basic physical or emotional necessities sexual abuse: any sexual act or sexual threat.

## WHO DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO?

This policy protects all children and young people in attendance at Reflections Academy of Dance. Any adult person (18 and over) that may work or interact with children at any time must comply with this policy, including:

- teachers
- administration staff
- parents on site at the studio or at an event
- volunteers at performances, or on site to help with concert preparation

## Notes:

In this policy, the term 'staff member' relates to any person occupying the above role, regardless of their employment status with Reflections Academy of Dance (ie permanent, casual or volunteer).

The term 'parents' applies to parents, carers and legal guardians of children at Reflections Academy of Dance. Where children are in the care of our staff, but in another venue (such as a theatre for a performance), they will also be protected by that venue's Child Safe Policy.



## RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

Reflections Academy of Dance takes all reasonable steps to ensure we engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This involves maintaining a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process.

It is our policy to:

- interview and conduct thorough referee checks on all staff (with their most recent supervisors)
- obtain and keep a record of Working with Children checks for all staff (this process includes listing Academy of Dance as an employer so we are immediately notified of any changes to the status of any staff member in relation to their Working With Children check)
- ensure all staff have current first aid certificates
- develop clear duty statements and job descriptions for roles that involve work with children that state clearly our commitment to providing safe environments for children
- ensure all volunteers at performances are suitably experienced and qualified to care for the safety and wellbeing of children in accordance with their age and needs. We will only accept volunteers who have children attending Reflections Academy of Dance and with current Working with Children checks

## SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Before staff commence work at Reflections Academy of Dance, they are provided documentation that outline our Child Safe Policy. We ensure staff are informed of, and updated on our Child Safe Policy including:

- inducting new staff to our Child Safe Policy, and other relevant policies and procedures regarding the care and/or supervision of children and young people
- ensuring staff attend (either face to face or online) periodical information sessions as they become available, to remain up to date with knowledge of child protection, nature and signs of child abuse, cultural competency, regulation updates and other matters that affect children
- liaison with the organisation's Child Safety Officer to be the first point of contact to provide advice and support to staff on the safety and wellbeing of children
- ensuring staff feel encouraged and empowered to report any complaints, concerns or perceived risks to child safety to the Child Safety Officer or other relevant management position, or the Victorian Police.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU



**Reflections Academy of Dance policies and procedures put children and young people at the centre - we are committed to the transparency, reporting and response for suspected or actual incidents of abuse.**

We are committed to encouraging staff, children and parents to raise any concerns or provide their views on the wellbeing of children involved with our organisation.

We keep staff, students, parents and external stakeholders (eg theatres) informed of our Child Safety Policy and relevant procedures by:

- ensuring staff have read, understood, and are committed to their obligations under our Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct, and any other relevant policies and procedures before they commence work with our organisation
- making relevant documents easily accessible by providing them on our website, distributing them to staff and having copies available on request
- providing children and parents with easy to understand information about our Child Safe Policy, through newsletters, posters and on social media.

We believe staff, parents and children should feel enabled, empowered and supported to safely raise any concern or complaints about any perceived risk to a child's safety or signs of abuse. We have developed a procedure to respond to any complaint of abuse or conduct in not keeping with this policy and Code of Conduct, including to take disciplinary action or rectify issues when necessary.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Kiandra Harman (Artistic Director) is the Reflections Academy of Dance Child Safe Officer, responsible for being the first point of contact to provide advice and support to students, parents and staff regarding the safety and wellbeing of children engaged with the organisation. This includes being the first point of contact for dealing with any complaint of conduct not in keeping with this policy and the Code of Conduct.

Our Child Safety Policy is reviewed regularly - every 6 months internally, and 12 months with students/parents - however we will update policy/procedures at any time as required. We commit to listening, and incorporating where possible, feedback from children, parents and staff into the ongoing updates of this policy.

# BREACHES OF THE CHILD SAFE POLICY



The following are examples of the different breaches of our Child Safe Policy and our process in response to these types of breaches.

MINOR BREACH EXAMPLES	RESPONSE
<b>Students touching each other without consent (eg unwanted hugs)</b>	In-class education with staff reminding children about consent, and discouraging personal contact. Ongoing incidence will be referred to Admin Manager/Director and parent called to discuss

MAJOR BREACH EXAMPLES	RESPONSE
<b>Student assaulted by another student</b>	Immediate suspension of student and parents of both children called. Police may be called depending on incident
<b>Student assaulted by staff member</b>	Police will be called and staff member immediately removed from premises until police investigation complete.

## YOUR RIGHTS

In the case of a suspected incident of child abuse, or a breach of our Child Safe Policy you can report it to:

- Any staff member on site (which will be passed on to the Directors)
- Child Safe Officer (Kiandra Harman)
- The Victorian Police by dialling 000

# MANDATORY CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

as outlined by the Commission for Children and Young People





# The 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children are respected and valued.
2. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
4. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
7. Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.
8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.



# Implementing the Child Safe Standards



## *Reflections Academy of Dance - Action Plan*

### STANDARD 1

- Include acknowledgement of country at commencement of all events
- Remove cultural appropriation from programming/events eg concert dances
- Create signage in front of facility with acknowledgment of country
- Engage cultural consultant to support program development and provide feedback/advice on concert plans
- Provide support for education pathway for Aboriginal students into full time training and/or company employment

### STANDARD 2

- Leaders, staff, volunteers, members and children in the organisation champion and model a child safe culture. They express support for keeping children safe, take action when they have concerns about children's safety and prioritise the safety of children as part of everyday practice.
- Senior leaders regularly review the organisation's performance in delivering child safety and wellbeing.

### STANDARD 3

- Staff and volunteers are supported to develop knowledge and skills to help children participate, express their views and raise their concerns.
- The organisation supports children to develop social connections and friendships with their peers, build skills in children to support their peers and challenge bullying or isolating behaviour between children.

### STANDARD 4

- Staff and volunteers are provided with information to help them understand, recognise and act on signs of child abuse or harm.
- Opportunities are created for families and community members to provide feedback on the organisation's policies, procedures and practices including the organisation's approach to child safety and wellbeing.

### STANDARD 5

- Staff and volunteers are provided with information and guidance about children's diverse circumstances, how to identify factors that can increase a child's vulnerability to harm, and how to promote equity and safety for all children
- Leaders set clear expectations around achieving equity and respect for diversity.

# Implementing the Child Safe Standards cont.



## *Reflections Academy of Dance - Action Plan*

### STANDARD 6

- Employment advertising includes the organisation's commitment to child safety and wellbeing.
- Pre-employment screening practices including interviewing, referee checks, Working with Children Check and other registration or background checking
- Induction documents for staff and volunteers include the Code of Conduct, the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and information about the organisation's child safety practices and complaints process as well as reporting, record keeping and information sharing obligations.

### STANDARD 7

- Records are kept of complaints made to the organisation, including concerns raised about the safety of children and disclosures about alleged abuse or harm of children, and actions taken to respond.
- The organisation makes information about how to make a complaint available and accessible to everyone involved with the organisation.

### STANDARD 8

- Training is provided to staff and volunteers on the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy on induction and at regular intervals.
- Training is provided to staff and volunteers that supports their ability to identify signs of child abuse and harm, respond to issues of child safety including internal and external reporting requirements, notifying families and carers and managing risks to children, support a person disclosing child harm, create culturally safe environments in the organisation.

### STANDARD 9

- Risk assessment and management plans are informed by and responsive to the views and concerns of staff, volunteers and children. Plans show that the organisation has balanced the need to manage the risk of harm and abuse against children's rights to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.
- When negotiating contracts with third parties, contracts include terms that allow the organisation to take action if the third party does not meet expected child safety and wellbeing standards.

# Implementing the Child Safe Standards cont.



## *Reflections Academy of Dance - Action Plan*

STANDARD 9 cont.

- If appropriate, staff, volunteers, parents, carers and children are provided with information about online safety and risks in the online environment, such as online grooming, cyber bullying and sexting. Support is given to reporting negative experiences or concerns.

STANDARD 10

- Complaints, concerns, safety incidents or significant breaches of policy (such as the Code of Conduct) are examined to understand what caused the problem and whether there are any flaws in the organisation's policies, procedures and practices that contributed to the problem. Where flaws or failings are identified, improvements are made to prevent the problem from happening again.
- Reports about the findings and actions taken in response to reviews of the organisation's child safe practices are shared with staff, volunteers, children, families and communities.

STANDARD 11

- Regular consultation on child safety with everyone involved in your organisation is undertaken.
- The organisation uses input from consultations and available information about creating child safety and wellbeing to help develop, review and update policies and procedures related to child safety.
- The organisation's policies and procedures cover all the Child Safe Standards and address the risks to the safety of children that are specific to the organisation and its environment.
- Policies and procedures are easy to understand and can be accessed easily.

# APPENDIX 1



## YOUR COMMITMENT TO OUR CHILD SAFE POLICY

Our Directors place students first in all policy development, hiring processes and ongoing training of staff. Staff at all levels as well as volunteers visiting onsite or at an event are committed to, and bound by the following conduct.

All staff are responsible for the safety, and protection of children by:

- Adhering to, and advocating for our Child Safe Policy
- Taking reasonable steps to ensure children and young people are safe at all times
- Treating staff, parents and students with respect at all times
- Reporting any allegations of misconduct or abuse immediately to the parent of the child as well as the Child Safe Officer, Directors of the organisation, or if required, the Victorian Police

All staff must NOT:

- Discriminate against a child based on the protected classes (eg race, disability, gender)
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- Ignore or disregard the Child Safe Policy

# APPENDIX 2



## YOUR COMMITMENT TO OUR CHILD SAFE POLICY

While we can do all we can in our studio to protect children and young people, we also need commitment from parents and students on site to keep children safe from harm.

All students **MUST**:

- Treat staff members, teachers and all other students with respect
- Not threaten, or abuse (verbally, emotionally or physically) other students, or staff
- Not bully another child. To understand what IS and what IS NOT bullying, please visit Kids Helpline online.

All students **SHOULD**:

- Read this document (where age appropriate) with a parent or guardian to ensure they understand the commitments of our organisation to protect all children and young people and their role in upholding this policy
- Let their parent or staff member know if there is something happening in the studio that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable

All parents **MUST NOT**:

- Threaten, or abuse (verbally, emotionally or physically) other students, parents or staff
- Video or photograph other people's children. We provide as much opportunity for you to take home costumes or provide viewing of classes, videos of performances so you do not need to take any photos or videos onsite or at our events.
- Ignore or disregard our Code of Conduct



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