

## Thames Music Theatre

### Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Thames Music Theatre is an amateur organisation that is run by a management committee of adult volunteers. The members of TMT are between the ages of ten and eighteen.

TMT is committed to safeguard the welfare of all its children and young people, and we will take all reasonable steps to protect them from neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse. We intend to create an environment in which all young people feel safe and supported and where any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to.

TMT recognises a child or young person as anyone up to the age of 18.

TMT's Designated Safeguarding Officer is **Lara Parker**.

Telephone number: **07764 756715**

Email: [safeguarding@thamesmt.org](mailto:safeguarding@thamesmt.org)

#### Suitability of adult volunteers

One TMT director is a trained chaperone, and all directors hold enhanced DBS certificates. Any adults showing an interest in joining TMT will have to undertake a DBS check before they can join.

We have a named committee member responsible for ensuring that all chaperones bring their licences to the theatre. All other parent helpers who do not have a licence will only help alongside a licenced chaperone and never be left alone with a group of children.

All directors have read the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and know who the DSO is. They are aware of the safeguarding procedures and are clear on how to respond appropriately to any concerns. The DSO will ensure that all are reminded of the safeguarding procedures every time we begin a new production.

#### Good practice during rehearsals and show week

- Before rehearsals begin for a new show, parents are asked to fill in and sign a medical form about their child, so that all supervising adults are aware of any allergies or other medical conditions of the children they are responsible for.
- Rehearsal rotas are sent out to parents on a regular basis giving information about rehearsal dates and times, and stating which members of the cast will be needed. Most communication between the producers of the show and the parents is done by email.
- During lunchbreak teenagers of 13 plus are allowed out on their own with written parental permission. Children aged 10 to 12 are allowed out in groups of three with written permission.
- There are at least two supervisors (of which one is usually the Director) present at each rehearsal. We ensure that children are supervised at all times during rehearsals. If there is inadequate cover for a rehearsal, then it will be cancelled. We make use of licenced chaperones to ensure that all children are always supervised within the correct adult/child ratios. There will always be a minimum of one chaperone to every twelve children in performances.

- During rehearsals, where possible, supervising adults should not be left alone with individual children or small groups, and activities should either be supervised by two adults or by one adult in an area visible to other adults.
- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from the children, and will only touch children, when necessary, in relation to the particular activity. Adults will seek the consent of the child prior to any physical contact and the purpose of the contact will be made clear. The only exception to this will be in an emergency, where physical contact may be required to prevent injury to the child, other children or an adult. In this case, the details of the situation should be written down in the incident book and signed and dated and kept confidential. The parent should be informed and asked to sign the book.
- As the children arrive for rehearsals a register is completed so that the supervising adults know exactly which children are present and which are absent. There is also a list of contact names and phone numbers kept for each child in case of an emergency. As the children leave at the end of the rehearsal, an adult will be at the door – no child is allowed to go until their parent/carer has arrived. There is a register for the children to sign in and out of and an adult is on hand to check this is done.
- A risk assessment sheet is filled in before each rehearsal begins, to ensure that the environment is safe for the children. This is done by one of the supervising adults attending the rehearsal and then signed to confirm it has been completed. There are two different risk assessments for rehearsals – one for the school and one for the theatre.
- Children are always advised of the appropriate clothing and footwear needed at rehearsals. If a child is injured during a rehearsal or a show, first aid will be administered as needed, with reference to information provided by parents regarding allergies etc. A first aid kit is always available during rehearsals, and this is regularly checked and replenished when necessary. A book is kept at every rehearsal and used to record any accident. Details must include the name of the child, and the date and time of the accident. It must also include the type of injury, where and why it happened, and the treatment carried out. Parents will always be informed in an accident and will be asked to sign the book. Regular checking of the accident records will form part of the basis for risk assessment.
- The register, the consent forms, the medical forms, the emergency contact details for each child, the Accident book, the Incident book, and the Risk Assessments are all kept in one folder which is easily accessible to all adults during rehearsals and is kept securely stored in between rehearsals. All the records that are specific to each production will be retained by TMT for six months after the last performance and stored securely.
- When the children are rehearsing and performing at the theatre during Show week, we are very careful to ensure that the age and gender of the children is considered when the changing room facilities are being arranged. There are always licensed chaperones in attendance in the changing rooms to ensure that everything is in order.

#### Cameras and mobile phones

We are aware phones are a necessity in most adult lives and very common with young people too. We are also aware of our responsibility regarding the use of cameras and mobile phones in relation to safeguarding children and staff.

To minimise risk to both children and staff mobile phones must be used with extreme caution. Committee members and the production team must keep phone use to an absolute minimum during the time spent with children, with use for essential/emergency purposes only. Photographs of groups of children should be for use of TMT only.

- Permission is gained from all parents/carers granting us permission to take photographs of children for marketing and other business purposes. Consent is required under the Data Protection Act 1998 as images are personal data. All images are to be stored and disposed of in line with the Data Protection Act 1998
- Young people are told at the first rehearsal about acceptable mobile phone usage and regularly reminded during the production. Video footage is not permitted, and photographs may only be taken with the express consent of the other people involved.
- No young person, chaperone, committee member or designated photographer may ever take photographs backstage when people are changing. They must always be supervised.
- Cameras will only be used when at least one other adult is present.
- If a video of a production is made, it may be made available for private use.

### Child licensing

As the rehearsal process for each production gets underway, TMT apply for the Body of Persons Approval (BOPA) from Kingston County Council.

### What is child abuse?

There are four types of child abuse.:

Physical abuse: Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It may also include fabricating the symptoms of an illness or deliberately causing an illness in a child.

Neglect: Severe and persistent neglect of a child, such as depriving them of food, clothing, warmth and medical care.

Emotional abuse: Persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Sexual abuse: Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, where the child may or may not be aware of what is happening.

### Responding appropriately to suspicions of abuse.

Any adult who sees signs of abuse, and suspects that abuse may have taken place must report it to the DSO as soon as possible, and all concerns must be written down.

If a child confides in an adult, that adult should remain calm and approachable. That adult should listen carefully and only ask questions for clarification – not leading questions. No promise of secrecy should be given, but it should be made clear that the information will be shared with others who will help. The child should be reassured and told what will happen next.

It is very important to write down and record as much detail as possible whether it be your own concerns or a child's disclosure of abuse. This will be a specific and confidential record that should be stored securely and only shared with those who need to know.

The record will include:

- The name, address and age of the child.
- Timed and dated observations, describing objectively the child's behaviour/appearance, without comment or interpretation.
- Where possible, the exact words spoken by the child.
- Name and signature of the recorder and the date.

After informing the DSO and after discussion, the child's parents should be the first point of reference. If they are not able to allay any legitimate anxieties and there are ongoing concerns, then the DSO will refer the situation to Kingston Children's Services by calling the Customer Service Centre. The child's full name and date of birth will be needed. In exceptional circumstances, Children's Services may be the first point of reference.

If one of the adult volunteers is accused of any form of child abuse, that adult will be suspended immediately until an investigation is concluded and will be excluded from any activities with the children. The DSO will be informed and having ensured that all details of the incident have been recorded in writing, they will refer the situation to Kingston's Children's Services by calling the Customer Service Centre and also refer it to the Local Authority Designated Officer or LADO.

If there are any grounds to suspect the DSO, this must be reported to a member of the Management Committee, and they will take on the responsibilities of the DSO.

### Bullying

Any form of bullying is unacceptable.

We aim to foster an ethos within the group where bullying is seen to be inappropriate and wrong. If we become aware that an incident has occurred, we will take it very seriously and investigate it.

We are aware that bullying, whether it be physical or verbal, is more likely to occur during less structured times, for instance during break times. We ensure that we have the same high level of supervision during these times and the supervising adults are always alert to any signs of bullying.

Specific incidents of bullying are dealt with on an individual basis and always confidentially. Firstly, the adult dealing with the incident should record the details in writing in the incident book. The details recorded should include the name of the adult dealing with the incident, the date, time and location of the incident, a description of what happened, and any action taken. It should then be signed and dated by the adult. They should then inform another member of the committee and the bullying behaviour will be investigated.

Secondly, the parents of both parties should be informed and if appropriate, invited to discuss the issue with the adult dealing with the incident. If it is considered appropriate to include the relevant children in the discussion, that should occur too. This may resolve the situation with no more action needed.

Thirdly, if it becomes necessary, sanctions should be used because of the bullying behaviour, and in very serious situations suspension or exclusion need to be considered.

### How Committee members and other adults can safeguard themselves and each other.

A key element is prevention, i.e. how they can prevent placing themselves in vulnerable positions and leaving themselves open to false or mistaken allegations.

### Grooming

The Committee understands the concept of child grooming within the context of the four categories of abuse (sexual, physical, neglect and emotional); i.e. the act of deliberately establishing a close and trusting personal relationship with the aim of abuse.

Committee members will not:

- Spend any money on a child/group of children, or purchase gifts for them e.g. thank you presents without the prior consent of other committee members.
- Demonstrate any signs of favouritism towards an individual child.
- Spend time alone with a child outside of working hours that they have met through TMT e.g. taking a child alone in their car. Friendships and relationships already established outside of TMT may create exceptions to this.
- We encourage “whistle blowing”, i.e. maintaining an open line of communication to eliminate any risk, and to ensure that a member’s innocent actions cannot be misconstrued. Committee members must act on any concerns by speaking to their DSO.

### Inclusion

TMT welcomes all and promotes equal opportunities and diversity amongst its membership. Discriminating against anyone based on race, gender, ethnic origin, disability, physical difference, socio-economic background or language is unacceptable.

### Social Media

TMT has its own official Facebook page which we encourage our members and our committee members to use responsibly and positively. We actively discourage any negative use of our Facebook page either through commenting or the use of photos.

We aim to have the lines of communication with our children and young people open, so that they would feel able to approach an adult and discuss anything they feel uncomfortable with on a social media site, and to report any abuse they may have encountered.

This policy and procedure will be reviewed annually by the Management Committee and updated as appropriate.

*Thames Music Theatre gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Berkhamsted Youth Theatre in the formation of this policy.*