

Child Protection Policy

Dance Concepts

Dance Concepts is committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children and young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount. We will adhere to the recommendations of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, published by the Department of Health and Children.

We have implemented procedures covering:

1. Code of Practice for Staff:

- Child Centred Approach
- Good Practice
- Inappropriate Behaviour
- Physical Contact
- Health & Safety
- Photography and Filming
- Implementation of Code

2. Code of Behaviour for children and young people:

- Code of Conduct
- Rules of the Studio

3. Safe Recruitment and Selection Policy Statement

4. Confidentiality Statement

Code of Practice for Staff

The following code of practice must be adopted by anyone working with children and young people hired by Dance Concepts. The aim is to ensure that the creativity and individuality of each child is accommodated while acknowledging the right of each child to education in a relatively disruption free environment.

Child-Centred Approach

- Treat all children and young people equally
- Listen to and respect children and young people
- Involve children and young people in decision-making, as appropriate
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability)
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal)
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere
- Offer constructive criticism when needed
- Treat all children and young people as individuals
- Respect a child's or young person's personal space
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and young people and their primary carers
- Agree group 'contract' before beginning session
- Encourage feedback from group
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials
- Lead by example
- Be aware of a child's or young person's other commitments when scheduling rehearsals or activities, e.g., school or exams
- Be cognisant of a child's or young person's limitations, due to a medical condition for example
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation

Good Practice

- Register each child/young person (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact).
- Make primary carers, children/young people, visitors and facilitators aware of the Child Protection Policy and procedures.
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all staff aware of these procedures.
- Be inclusive of children and young people with special needs.
- Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically
- Report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow reporting procedures.

- Encourage children and young people to report any bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of anti- bullying policy.
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis
- Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers
- Report and record any incidents and accidents
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly
- Keep primary carers informed of any issues that concern their children
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved.
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e., don't 'do nothing'
- Don't let a problem get out of control
- Avoid if at all possible giving a lift to a child/young person and if you do then make sure that primary carers are informed.
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in a sensitive manner.

Inappropriate Behaviour

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people.
- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and/or verbal language.
- Don't single out a particular child/young person for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, or unwelcome focus or attention.
- Don't allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Don't hit or physically chastise children/young people.
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children/young people, e.g., outside of structured organisational activities.

Physical Contact

- Seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation).
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch.
- Check with children/young people about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises.

Health & Safety

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised
- Manage any dangerous materials
- Provide a safe environment
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly

Photography and Filming

- Images of children posted to our website and facebook page will be identified by their first name only.
- To reduce the risk of inappropriate use of images only images deemed suitable will be used.
- Anyone with any complaints about images posted on our website and facebook page can speak to the child protection officer and the images will be removed.
- Anyone concerned about inappropriate use of images can report the matter to the child protection officer and procedures will be followed to report the matter to the appropriate authority.
- The expectations for parents and spectators who wish to take photographs or film at an event are to avoid inappropriate or intrusive photography. Any child or parent who has concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography must report their concerns to the child protection officer who will act in the same manner as they would with any other child protection concern.

Implementation of the Code

All teachers/persons working for Dance Concepts who work with children and young people will be informed of Dance Concepts Child Protection Policy and requested to sign a letter of understanding. Failure to sign the policy will result in contracts being cancelled.

Codes of Behaviour for Children & Young People

Code of Conduct

- Students should focus in sessions, be enthusiastic, committed and interested in learning.
- Students should act in a respectful and supportive manner to staff and fellow students at all times.
- Students should support, encourage and work sensibly with fellow students at all times.
- Students are the responsibility of the teacher when in the studio, during class time only.
- If something is not understood, students should ask a member of staff who would be happy to spend time explaining.
- Parents and Students should inform teachers of any injury or illness prior to the beginning of class.
- Students should inform the teacher immediately if they are injured or fall ill during a session.
- Students are expected to attend and participate in class when possible.
- Teachers at Dance Concepts are always happy to discuss any queries parents may have. However, to make the best use of the student's class time we would ask that you contact us outside of class hours.
- It is advised that friends do not accompany students to class to observe. We cannot be responsible for children and teens that are not registered participants of the Dance School.
- Dance Concepts is not responsible for lost or stolen articles.
- If an injury occurs while on the premises, it is understood and agreed that Dance Concepts will not be legally liable or held financially responsible in any way.

Confidentiality Statement

Dance Concepts are committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child/young person
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality
- We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child or young person are at risk
- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the Health Service Executive, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk
- Images of a child/young person will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent/carer (however, we cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances)
- Procedures will be put in place in relation to the use of images of children/young people
- Procedures will also be put in place for the recording and storing of information in line with our confidentiality policy.

Safe Recruitment and Selection Policy

Dance Concepts will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following principles:

- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for every job (paid or voluntary)
- Posts will be advertised widely
- We will endeavour to select the most suitably qualified personnel
- Candidates will be required to complete an application form
- Candidates will be asked to sign a declaration form
- At least two written references that are recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed will be necessary
- Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two (or more) representatives through an interview process
- No person who would be deemed to constitute a 'risk' will be employed
- Some of the exclusions would include:
 - any child-related convictions
 - refusal to sign application form and declaration form
 - insufficient documentary evidence of identification
 - concealing information on one's suitability to working with children
- All staff will be required to consent to Garda clearance, and where available, this will be sought.

Online Child Protection and Safety:

Best practice and guidelines for teaching and engaging with children online.

Dance Concepts are following guidelines issued by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in relation to child protection issues around online classes and workshops.

With regard to hosting live, online classes we will:

- Ensure that we have prepared all the relevant documentation and consent from parents and guardians. Consent from parents and guardians will be required for all live online activity
- Dance Concepts will ensure security around accessing live Zoom workshops, links and passwords will only be sent to parents/guardians once the relevant documents have been received.

