

WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD

SAFEGUARDING POLICY: BOY CHORISTERS

Introduction

The purpose of a Safeguarding Policy is to ensure, as far as is practical, that the College provides a safe and secure environment for children whilst they are in our care, and that any problems which are identified are dealt with properly. Whilst the College would wish to do this in any case, it is required to have one by law (Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006) and this document has been compiled after study of 'best practice' in a number of organisations.

Scope of the policy

The Boys of the Worcester Choir are at all times under the auspices of the School's safeguarding policy and decisions upon how to deal with safeguarding matters should be taken in accordance with its instructions and advice. Those in College concerned with the Choristers adhere to the safeguarding policy of Christ Church Cathedral School, where the choristers are pupils, with which this policy is consistent. This policy and that of the Cathedral School have been adopted by the Chapel Committee of Worcester College. This policy deals with arrangements peculiar to pupils in their role as Worcester College choristers.

The boy choristers, who are all pupils of Christ Church Cathedral School, sing in the College chapel twice a week and attend two weekly rehearsals in College. In addition, the Organ Scholars rehearse the boys in the School on three, or occasionally four, mornings a week and on Friday evenings. When the choristers are out of School, a member of School staff will accompany them from the moment they leave school until the time that their parents collect them from Worcester at the end of the service. For the weekday services and rehearsals in College, the boys walk from the School to College under the supervision of the organ scholars and the member of School staff. On Sundays, the choristers' parents bring the boys to the College in time for a rehearsal prior to the service in chapel. The boys are collected from College by their parents both during the week and on Sunday.

The requirements of a Safeguarding policy

Broadly, the requirements of a Safeguarding policy can be categorized under the following headings:

- 1) Provision of a safe and secure environment for children whilst in College.
- 2) Procedures that govern the interaction of members of the College with the boys and describe what to do if something goes wrong or it is discovered there is a cause for concern.
- 3) The designation of responsible officers to oversee the provisions and to act as a link with others interested in the care of the boys.
- 4) Provision of information and training to ensure members or employees of the College who are likely to come into contact with the choristers know what to do and how to behave.
- 5) Periodic review of the policy to ensure that it is up to date and fit for purpose.

I - Provision of a safe and secure environment

The College will seek to provide a suitable environment for the choristers whilst in College so that, as far as can be managed, they come to no harm. The places where the choristers interact with the organ scholars can be divided into three main areas: i) in the School, ii) in transit from the School to College and iii) in College.

i) In School

When in the School, the organ scholars work under the School's Safeguarding policy, and the College's only responsibility is to make sure that the organ scholars are suitable people to have charge of the choristers. Suitability is determined before a scholarship is awarded. The scholar receives instruction and advice on the duties of being an organ scholar at the beginning of tenure and continued suitability is tested by the procedures (described later) for monitoring incidents.

ii) In transit

The choristers walk from School to College on Tuesday evenings. They are collected by the Organ Scholars or the Director of Chapel Music and supervised by a member of school staff. There will always be two people accompanying the pupils. They will walk a designated route to College. The organ scholars and any other accompanying adults are in possession of mobile phones and carry with them the telephone numbers of the School office, of the Director of Chapel Music, and of Worcester College Lodge. Details of the designated route, the appropriate supervision arrangements and the procedures to follow if a problem emerges in transit are supplied to the organ scholars in writing and are detailed in Appendix A.

iii) In College

The College must provide a safe and secure environment for the choristers when they are in the College. The environment is not just the physical space, which must provide for the normal human needs, be comfortable and free from physical danger, but also the supervision and care arrangements, which must be sufficient to guard against the possibilities of physical harm, emotional abuse (bullying) or sexual abuse.

Normal College procedures should ensure the physical space is clean, safe and comfortable. If any deficiencies are identified they should be rectified as soon as possible.

To reduce the possibilities of abuse, DBS disclosures will be required for all people who might themselves be in unsupervised contact with the boys, and everyone concerned will be made aware of the personal consequences of any abuse. Supervision should be arranged so that no one is in sole contact with the choristers except for short periods of time.

The College Designated Safeguarding Lead keeps a written record of all the regular activities with the choristers, and of the supervision arrangements surrounding them. He/she also maintains the list of people who are subject to DBS checks or equivalent legally required screening procedures.

2 - What to do if something goes wrong or there is a cause for concern

The procedure for the physical environment was outlined above, but the route of reporting is through the Designated Safeguarding Lead, whose role is described below.

Problems with the care of the choristers can arise in three ways.

The first is if the procedures go wrong or we fall short in our physical care of the children, eg the boys are left unsupervised for a time, or a child has an accident. This we can rectify if the lapse is noted and if necessary the procedures changed or monitored more closely.

The second is if a child approaches someone and wants to tell him or her something. The latest legislation (Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006) requires us to pay attention and act if a child gives us cause for concern, for example: if they are being abused at home, or they have had inappropriate contact with someone (not necessarily in College). Given the scale of the possible consequences of this to the child and the people accused, these instances must be handled carefully and properly from the start to cover the interests of both the child and the person who might be harming the child. There is an accepted way of doing this which is detailed in appendix B. All adult members of the choir are notified of the appropriate procedures to follow in the event that they are approached by a child wishing to tell them something. The College DSL should inform the Cathedral School's DSL who is the Academic Deputy Mrs Anna Fairhurst or the DDSL Mr Nick Harrison as soon as possible and certainly within 24 hours in accordance with the procedures laid down in the School's safeguarding policy.

The third is when someone observes something that gives them cause for concern. This could be a possible weakness in our current practices or them becoming worried about someone's behaviour or condition.

This process requires, and it is the most sensible way of administering the policy, the appointment of two officers, who amongst other duties receive the notifications of all of these issues.

3 - The responsible officers

There is a single person, called the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)– in the case of Worcester College, The Chaplain, The Revd Marcus Green, who is responsible for administering and monitoring the policy and for acting as the link to the external care authorities and with the Cathedral School when a case for concern is discovered. An additional officer, the Designated Safeguarding Lead – (in Worcester College, Ms Georgina Heywood) - is responsible for the strategic development of this policy, audit and reporting to the ultimate point of responsibility, which is the College's Governing Body. This officer substitutes for the DSO if the concern centres round him or her, and vice versa. The duties and responsibilities for these officers are given in appendix C.

4 - Training of supervisors and other staff

If the system is to work properly members of College in regular contact with the choristers should be advised how to behave in their presence. The best way of dealing with this is to have a code of conduct and a formal induction session for each of the categories of people who will come into contact with the boys at which the procedures and code of conduct can be explained. The code of conduct, which is used by many similar institutions, is given in appendix D.

5 – Periodic review

All matters relating to the care and supervision of the boy choristers are kept under constant review by the Chapel Committee, which meets on a termly basis; any changes to Safeguarding policy are ratified by this committee, after appropriate consultation with the School. The Designated Safeguarding Officer-(The Chaplain) and The Designated safeguarding Lead (Ms Georgina Heywood) also maintain regular contact outside formally constituted meetings. An annual report is made to the Chapel Committee by the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) at its Trinity Term meeting; this report is then passed to the Governing Body to be considered under Chapel Business.

Reviewed Headmaster 15th November 2023; sent to Worcester Chaplain on that date
Accepted by Worcester College DSO 20th November 2023

Appendix A – Route taken by the Choristers in transit from CCCS to Worcester College

Turn left out of School along Brewer St

Turn right at the end of Brewer St (**check chorister numbers before crossing**) and walk up the right hand side of St Ebbes St

Cross Queen St by Westgate centre main entrance (**check chorister numbers before crossing**)

Turn left towards New Road

Walk down New Road to main junction and one way system

Turn right onto Worcester St and cross by traffic lights at bottom of George St (**check chorister numbers before crossing**)

Arrive at College (**check numbers on arrival**)

One adult should always precede the group, the other should follow it

Both organ scholars and/or other accompanying adults must carry a working mobile phone with them at all times when responsible for the boys. The numbers of the School office, of Worcester Lodge, The Director of Chapel Music and of the College Chaplain must be stored in these phones.

In the event of a boy becoming lost, the organ scholars must notify The Director of Chapel Music, the Chaplain and the School office IMMEDIATELY. The main group of boys should continue to College on the normal route, and wait in the Chapel with the adult accompanying them. The other accompanying adult should retrace the route of the journey back to School. In addition to the usual advice about personal safety, the boys must be instructed to wait, if necessary, at the crossing point nearest the place where they became detached from the group: they are NOT to attempt to cross roads unaccompanied, or to make their own way to College or back to School.

The School office and the Director of Chapel Music and the Chaplain must be kept informed of the progress and outcome of events on a regular basis until all the boys are accounted for. It is of particular importance that they are notified without delay if the boy cannot be found.

In the event of any situation which involves a threat to the personal safety of the boys, they should be taken to the nearest safe location (hotel lobby, restaurant, shop, College premises etc) and the police called without delay; the Director of Chapel music, the Chaplain and the School office should then be notified.

Appendix B

Procedure to be followed when a chorister asks to speak to an adult.

1. If a chorister has asked if they can talk to you, try to listen to them immediately but if it is really not possible to talk at that time, make arrangements to meet with them as soon as possible.
2. If you are approached by a chorister wanting to talk you should listen positively and reassure the chorister that he is not doing anything wrong (*he might have been asked 'not to tell' etc.*)
3. Let the chorister know that **you cannot promise to keep everything confidential** and that you may have to pass on information to the College DSO, College DSL or the School's DSL, tell him who this is, and why, if you have concerns that they may be 'at risk'.
4. Remember that an allegation of child abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal investigation, so don't do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation. You should avoid jumping to conclusions and asking leading questions or putting words into the chorister's mouth. Usually it is best to listen as much as possible without interrupting and let the child relay things as they feel comfortable to do so - this could be a very difficult and worrying conversation for them. It is not your responsibility to investigate the concerns, only to refer them to the DSO (the Chaplain,) or, if the allegation concerns him or her, DSL and vice versa). This will be passed on to the School's DSL
5. Write a record of the conversation as soon as possible afterwards distinguishing clearly between fact, observation, allegation and opinion, then sign and date the record
6. Notify and pass the report on to the College DSO (The Chaplain) or, if the allegation concerns the Director of Chapel Music, or Chaplain, to the DSL as soon as possible.

On receipt of the notice of concern the DSO (Chaplain) must contact the School's DSL and any further actions will be taken in accordance with School policies and in consultation with the School's DSL; no further investigation will be made before contacting OSCB

Appendix C - College Officers and responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding-Officer. Duties and Responsibilities are:

- To have overall responsibility for Chapel activities and children involved
- To ensure adequate training for those who have contact with children in Chapel activities
- To work closely with the Chaplain, Organ Scholars and the Senior Nominated Officer (Chair of the Chapel Committee) on Safeguarding
- To keep a written record of all regular activities with the choristers and of the supervision arrangements surrounding them
- To maintain a list of people who are subject to DBS (e.g. organ scholars and choir) or equivalent legally required screening procedures
- To administer and monitor the Safeguarding Policy
- To act as a link to external authorities when a case for concern is discovered
- In the case of a complaint, to act according to the School Safeguarding Policy and in consultation with the Oxford Schools' Safeguarding Board
- To substitute for the Senior Nominated Officer if a concern centres around him/her and vice versa
- To work with the School's DSL in all matters of safeguarding

Designated Safeguarding Lead. Duties and Responsibilities are:

- Strategic development of this policy
- To audit and report to the ultimate point of responsibility (Governing Body of the College)
- To substitute for the Designated Safeguarding Officer if a concern centres upon him/her, and vice versa

- **Appendix D – Code of Conduct for Members of the Choir (originally drafted by Jesus College Cambridge)**

Code of Conduct – Working with Children

YOU MUST ...

- treat all children and young people with respect
- provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow
- ensure that, whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during your organisation's activities with children, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy
- encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- be aware that even caring physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted
- recognise that special caution is required in moments when you are discussing sensitive issues with children

YOU MUST NOT ...

- have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with young people
- allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour
- make suggestive / derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children
- jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues
- show favouritism to any individual
- rely on your good name or that of the College to protect you
- believe "It could never happen to me"
- take a chance when common sense, policy and practice suggest a more prudent approach.

APPENDIX E Extract from Worcester College Safeguarding Document concerning Child Choristers

14. Children of the Chapel Choir

14.1. The Children of the Chapel Choir interact with College Members regularly, both on and off the College site. The College recognises that as these are particularly young children (of primary school age), they require particular care and attention.

14.2. The DSO liaises closely with Christ Church Cathedral School to ensure compliance with the school's safeguarding guidelines.

14.3. Organ Scholars regularly rehearse with the choristers on the site of Christ Church Cathedral School. At all times, when doing so, the Organ Scholars are subject to Christ Church Cathedral School's safeguarding policy.

14.4. Organ Scholars will be subject to DBS Disclosure checks prior to beginning their duties, and will undertake the OSCB's 'Generalist Safeguarding' course.

14.5. The choristers regularly walk from Christ Church Cathedral School to the College. This activity is carried out under the supervision of a member of staff from Christ Church Cathedral School, who is responsible for ensuring adequate safeguarding ratios for supervision of the children, as well as for all aspects of their safety while in transit to the College.

14.6. If College Members are requested to accompany the member of staff from Christ Church Cathedral School, they do so under the direction of the school's member of staff at all times both ordinarily and if a problem should arise.

14.7. All College Members accompanying the choristers will carry with them working mobile phones and be in possession of the contact details of the Christ Church Cathedral School office, the Director of Chapel Music, the DSO and Worcester College Lodge.

14.8. The choristers sing in the College Chapel and attend rehearsals in College. The children's parents and / or guardians are normally expected to bring and collect them from rehearsals and services (unless they are being escorted to the College by Christ Church Cathedral School as outlined in 14.3). Attendance is taken at regular intervals, and as they arrive and leave the College site.

14.9. The children are appropriately supervised at all times while they are on the College site, and appropriate checks and training are provided to those providing this supervision.

14.10. All concerns relating to the children should be addressed immediately to the DSO, who will escalate them appropriately either by contacting emergency services, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Social Services, the child's parents or legal guardians or the DSL / DSD. Where appropriate, the DSO may contact Christ Church Cathedral School. All concerns should be reported to the DSL who will maintain appropriate records. In an emergency, dial 999.

14.11. In the event that a child is not collected as expected by a nominated parent or guardian, the DSO should be notified immediately. The parents / guardians and Christ Church Cathedral School should be contacted, and the child should remain with the DSO in a public area of the College (e.g. the Porters' Lodge) until they are collected. Under no circumstances should a child be left unattended, or in the care of a member of staff who has not undergone adequate checks and training in the safeguarding of children.