

P22 Contextual Safeguarding at The Purcell School: An Overview of Specific Considerations

There can be no question that a specialist music school is an environment quite unlike any other. The nature of the provision, the diversity of the student body, the lack of traditional year group divisions, the relative “informality” of a creative environment/creative working, and the large number of part-time visiting staff, all require specific consideration in terms of safeguarding students from potential risk. Whilst this Child Protection Policy, together with an accompanying suite of complementary policies, outlines the School’s response to safeguarding in a more general sense, this appendix seeks to outline some of these environment-specific considerations and how the School meets the specific needs of the students in this environment.

One-to-One Instrumental Tuition

At the very heart of specialist music education lies a high proportion of one-to-one tuition in first, second (and in some cases, third) study instruments. This significant amount of individual time and care offers considerable advantages for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our students: many concerns are raised, and interventions made, because an instrumental teacher has noted a change in a student’s performance or demeanour. Furthermore, students build close trusting relationships with their instrumental teachers which often enables them to disclose their concerns to their instrumental teacher more readily than they might do with other staff. Where the relationship works well it is based on mutual respect, a shared understanding of the teacher’s role and provides a high quality and valuable opportunity for individualised pastoral care of the student. As such, alongside the delivery of an exceptional musical education, instrumental teachers are both critical to, and uniquely placed in respect of, the School’s safeguarding and well-being practices.

However, this level of unsupervised individual contact also brings with it an increased risk of abuse. It is important to stress that, in the case of The Purcell School, historic allegations of abuse have not involved allegations concerning instrumental teachers delivering one-to-one music tuition at the School. Nevertheless, the recent IICSA investigation heard shocking evidence and testimony from victims of historic abuse within specialist music schools, highlighting how an abuser can manipulate and exploit this unique teaching situation for their own ends. Students are therefore in a potentially more vulnerable position compared with those who do not access one-to-one tuition to such a degree. Aside from the potential for physical, emotional, sexual abuse and grooming, there is a power imbalance between student and teacher in these situations in which the student often has significant admiration for their teacher and/or believe the teacher has significant influence over their progression and career route, which may lead a young person being reluctant to raise concerns about their teacher’s conduct or, indeed, feeling less able to resist the attentions of a determined groomer or abuser. Instrumental teachers therefore occupy a unique position of trust and must be mindful of how they are likely to be perceived by their students and this awareness must translate into the setting of clear boundaries, and practice of the highest professional standards.

To mitigate these risks the School insists upon the following actions:

- All instrumental staff are recruited through an open, competitive recruitment process according to strict Safer Recruitment practice. All applicants are required to teach an observed lesson and attend a formal interview at which their knowledge of and instincts

for good safeguarding practice is explored. Many applicants for these posts are distinguished freelance musicians who work in many different professional contexts, performing and teaching, often internationally. As such, effective scrutiny of employment history is more challenging than the conventional vetting and due diligence process for academic teaching staff with consistent employment record in UK schools. In such cases, panels will ask sufficient questions to satisfy themselves that the applicant has undertaken work consistent with a music industry professional and will follow up any evidence of extended or regular touring abroad to ensure there is a credible and reasonable purpose for such activity. All statutory checks are undertaken before staff may begin teaching. In the rare circumstances when teaching needs to start before all checks have been completed, a risk assessment will be put in place and the new staff member will be accompanied at all times; they will not be allowed to teach one-to-one sessions (or, indeed, any sessions) without supervision.

- The School will not allow Instrumental Teachers to nominate deputies where they anticipate a period of absence (for example, if the teacher is due to be away on tour). In these circumstances, the recruitment process will be conducted in full.
- All Instrumental staff are required to complete annual Safeguarding update training and Level 1 Safeguarding training every three years in line with all other staff. All staff are required to complete the prescribed update reading on an annual basis and must engage with *MyConcern* in order to complete this. All new instrumental staff have an individual training session with the DSL on their first day prior to undertaking any teaching.
- All Instrumental Staff have access to (and habitually use) *MyConcern* to log safeguarding concerns. New staff are trained in the use of this.
- All Instrumental Staff are provided with the School's Instrumental Teachers Handbook which outlines in detail the School's safeguarding procedures, and expectations, and gives valuable advice and guidance on conduct. The Handbook is updated annually to ensure it remains relevant and in line with the latest KCSiE.
- All Instrumental Staff receive the weekly Staff Newsletter which always includes a safeguarding training section. This ensures that our part time staff receive the same information as full time, academic or support staff.
- Instrumental staff are not permitted to give lessons away from the school premises when working for the school. If families make requests to the teacher for continued tuition during school holidays, the teacher is required to seek permission from the School which will then contact the family to ensure they have put satisfactory safeguards in place.
- The working relationship between Instrumental Staff and their students is monitored closely by Instrumental Heads of Department (i.e. Head of Keyboard; Head of Strings; Head of Woodwind etc.). The HoD has responsibility for the musical progress and well-being of the students in their department. They maintain regular contact with their students and will alert the Principal to any concerns if they become aware of them. Parents are encouraged to contact the Director of Music and/or Head of Department, the DSL (Ziggi Szfranski) or other members of the safeguarding team if they have concerns (including low-level) about any aspect of instrumental provision - be that general progress or more serious concerns about the working relationship. HoDs will always investigate and

respond to parents in these circumstances. Where parents remain unhappy, they can refer their concern to the Director of Music and/or the Principal.

- All concerns about the conduct of Instrumental Staff disclosed by a student or colleagues must be reported directly to the Principal who will follow the appropriate procedures outlined in the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy (which includes the management of low level concerns). In all cases, the Principal will be responsible for instigating an investigation and will (with the guidance of the DSL and, if necessary, the LADO) make a judgement about whether the concern reaches the threshold for engaging external agencies. Where it does not, appropriate and proportionate action will be taken and the needs and well-being of the student will always be put first.
- Spaces: The nature of one-to-one tuition often requires students and teachers to work in small spaces in a variety of locations around the site. The risks are obvious. The School mitigates this risk by ensuring that the interior of all practice and teaching rooms is visible from either the corridor, or from outside (or both) by having large windows and door windows. Instrumental lessons are only timetabled in practice rooms in the New Music Block (where the HoD's office is located and other academic teaching staff are based) and the main building (where multiple other adults and SLT are based) to ensure that other staff are always within sight/call. Instrumental lessons are never routinely scheduled after 6pm; where this happens for a specific reason, a risk assessment is undertaken to ensure other staff are available in the vicinity of the lesson and that the lesson takes place in the most public of appropriate rooms.
- Physical Touch: The issue of physical touch in instrumental teaching is a controversial area in which practice varies significantly based on the specific instrument, the immediate needs of the student, and the cultural background of the teacher. The School's policy (stated in the Instrumental Staff Handbook) is that physical touch is not prohibited but should be avoided. Where it is deemed necessary, permission should be sought and an explanation given. Any physical touch must be purposeful and the teacher should withdraw from the student's personal space immediately after the demonstration. Teachers are advised to "read" the non-verbal language of the student which sometimes might suggest they are uncomfortable even having given verbal permission.

Musical Performance, Rehearsal and Inter-Year Working

The nature of the school means that students are engaged in practical, project based learning which, in many cases, mirrors the actuality of working practice within the music profession. Activities such as orchestras, bands, chamber music and many other such activities will require students to work closely with each other and some of the most enriching experiences and significant learning opportunities are facilitated in such contexts.

The traditional division by year group one might encounter in a regular school setting is broken down here by virtue of the need for students to work alongside others of similar ability (rather than age) and as the needs of each musical project require. Furthermore, performance classes and masterclasses are taught by discipline which will also therefore see all age groups within an instrumental department working together. Musicianship classes are streamed by ability and not by age group.

On the one hand, such activity provides significantly positive opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and one of the most impressive aspects of the school is the mutual respect students have for each other irrespective of age. On the other, the opportunities for peer-on-peer bullying and/or abuse are potentially greater given the differing levels of maturity of students working together.

To mitigate these risks the School ensures that all such ensembles etc. are well staffed and that senior members of the music staff are available or on hand to deal with any emerging issues. The small size of the school, combined with its high staff-student ratio ensures close supervision and monitoring of student relationships and conduct. In the course of a week, a student will have individual contact with their instrumental teacher(s), Instrumental Head of Department, Tutor and Houseparent, as well as Practice Supervisors and their usual range of academic classes. Reporting records show that staff are quick to identify potential issues and an appropriate staff member is tasked with resolving them quickly.

During the first term of a new academic year, the School devotes a lot of assembly, tutorial and house time to matters of respect, tolerance, kindness, understanding etc. and how best to live and work together productively and happily. This focus sets the expectation and is reinforced by the teamwork necessary for successful music making.

Student Vulnerability

The School community is extremely diverse and we have a high proportion of students with specific needs, either SEN or EAL. It is therefore essential that the specific needs of such students are considered in any safeguarding strategy. The School has a full time Head of Learning Support who is also a Deputy DSL and a full member of the Safeguarding Team. This ensures that when concerns are raised by, or about, SEN students, the Head of Learning Support is able to immediately see the details on *MyConcern* and offer support and proactive interventions when necessary. The Head of Learning Support is supported by a second SEN specialist (0.8 contract) and the PSHE co-ordinator is both an SEN and EAL specialist. This enables PSHE material and delivery to be managed by someone who thoroughly understands the needs of both SEN and EAL students and can ensure that they understand key concepts in PSHE as they are delivered. All SEN and EAL students work individually with specialists on a weekly basis which allows issues to be discussed in this context when necessary.

The School has significantly increased its counselling provision with the appointment of its own specialist therapist. As a fully qualified Arts Therapist the specific needs of students are known and understood. Because the Therapist is a full member of staff (rather than a contractor, as previously) this has enabled better connectivity between her, Learning Support (where appropriate) and the wider pastoral teams within school (House Staff, School Nurse, Director of Boarding etc.). Students can self refer directly to the Therapist and staff can also refer students. The Therapist reports on a half termly basis alerting staff to the main issues and trends. This feeds directly into the Safeguarding Team meetings and informs individual safety and care plans.

International Students: Guardian Arrangements

The School requires all international families to ensure appropriate guardianship arrangements are in place. The School takes no responsibility for the sourcing or securing of guardians but will signpost families to registered agencies where they encounter problems in finding an appropriate situation. However, the School very proactively scrutinises proposed guardians and will inform parents if it believes the guardian arrangements are unsatisfactory or potentially unsafe.

Similarly, the travel and accommodation arrangements for every holiday and Exeat are monitored and recorded, and the School will refuse to release a student if it believes that such arrangements potentially place the student at risk. The Overseas Coordinator maintains close contact with international families and guardians and acts as a pastoral support for the international student community. Any concerns are flagged immediately with a member of the Safeguarding Team (in this case, most usually the Director of Boarding) who will liaise with other staff to address the needs of the student.

Physical Spaces

Any specialist music environment requires a considerable number of small rooms for personal practice. The number and placement of these rooms has the potential to be exploited for peer-on-peer bullying and/or abuse (especially during the evenings and weekends). Whilst recognising the need for students to have access to such spaces, the School mitigates this risk by ensuring that only those practice rooms which are located within the vicinity of a member of staff/House and have high levels of public visibility are made available for student practice during the evening and weekends. The Supervision Policy outlines the arrangements for the supervision of this activity which is monitored by residential members of SLT, the residential Nurse and a dedicated RGA. Students expect staff to be patrolling the building at regular intervals during these times, which ensures that no area is left unattended for any protracted period of time. CCTV has been upgraded to provide comprehensive coverage of all public areas of the school.

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Paul Hoskins (Director of Music)	Autumn 2021	N/A
Bernard Trafford (Chair of Governors)	Autumn 2021	N/A
Rebecca Mooney (Safeguarding Governor)	Autumn 2021	N/A