Anti-Bullying Policy 2027

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Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): ***Sam Gibbs***
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL): ***Jess Eaton***
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PERFORMERS THEATRE COMPANY

INTRODUCTION AND ANTI-BULLYING COMMITMENT

Performers Theatre Company is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, respectful and supportive environment in which every student can develop their confidence, creativity and abilities without fear of bullying, harassment, intimidation or discrimination.

We believe that every child and young person has the right to participate fully in performing arts activities, feel valued as an individual and be treated with dignity and respect.

Bullying can have a significant impact on a child's emotional wellbeing, confidence, relationships and willingness to participate. It may affect not only the child experiencing bullying but also those witnessing it and the wider organisational community.

Bullying is never an acceptable or inevitable part of growing up, learning or participating in group activities.

Our approach combines positive relationships, clear expectations, appropriate intervention and consistent accountability.

We are kind, but we are not negotiable when it comes to safety and respect.

Performers Theatre Company will:

- Promote a culture of kindness, inclusion and mutual respect.
- Take all reports and concerns about bullying seriously.
- Respond promptly, fairly and proportionately.
- Listen to children and recognise their individual experiences.
- Support children who experience bullying.
- Address harmful behaviour and help children understand its impact.
- Work appropriately with parents, carers and relevant professionals.
- Maintain accurate records and monitor recurring concerns.
- Escalate safeguarding concerns in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy.
- Review practices to prevent further incidents.

Our organisational values - Enhance, Engage, Empower and Enthuse - underpin this commitment.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes the arrangements adopted by Performers Theatre Company to prevent, identify, report, respond to and monitor bullying.

It aims to ensure that all individuals understand the standards of behaviour expected and the procedures followed when concerns arise.

This policy applies to:

- All children and young people participating in Performers activities.
- Adult students and performers, where relevant.
- Employed and freelance teaching staff.
- The Principal and Leadership Team.
- Volunteers, assistants and work experience students.
- Visiting practitioners, workshop leaders and production personnel.
- Chaperones and individuals acting on behalf of Performers Theatre Company.
- Parents and carers in relation to their conduct towards others within the organisation.

The policy applies during classes, rehearsals, productions, performances, workshops, holiday programmes, backstage activities, off-site events and associated communications.

It may also apply to behaviour occurring outside organised activities where that behaviour affects the safety, welfare or participation of individuals within Performers Theatre Company.

Where conduct involves an adult member of staff, volunteer or another adult working with children, the Staff Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Policy and relevant allegations procedures will also apply.

DEFINITION AND FORMS OF BULLYING

Bullying is behaviour that intentionally or knowingly causes harm, distress, intimidation or humiliation, often involving repetition and an actual or perceived imbalance of power.

An imbalance of power may arise through age, physical strength, confidence, social influence, group dynamics, access to information or another factor that makes it difficult for an individual to protect themselves.

Bullying may be repeated directly or through ongoing consequences, including the repeated sharing of harmful online content.

A single serious incident may not meet the usual definition of repeated bullying but must still be addressed appropriately and may constitute a safeguarding concern.

Physical Bullying

Physical bullying may include:

- Hitting, kicking, pushing or other unwanted physical contact.
- Threatening physical harm.
- Deliberately damaging or taking another person's belongings.
- Physically intimidating or preventing someone from participating.

Verbal Bullying

Verbal bullying may include:

- Name-calling, insults or derogatory comments.
- Threats or intimidation.
- Repeated teasing intended to cause distress.
- Mocking an individual's appearance, abilities, background or identity.
- Humiliating comments about performance, casting or artistic ability.

Emotional and Social Bullying

Emotional or social bullying may include:

- Deliberate and repeated exclusion.
- Spreading rumours or encouraging others to reject someone.
- Manipulating friendships or group relationships.
- Humiliation, intimidation or controlling behaviour.
- Deliberately undermining another person's confidence.
- Using social status or influence to isolate another individual.

Discriminatory Bullying

Discriminatory bullying involves harmful behaviour connected to an individual's identity, characteristics or circumstances.

This may include bullying relating to:

- Race, ethnicity, nationality or culture.
- Religion or belief.
- Disability or additional needs.
- Sex or gender.
- Sexual orientation.
- Gender reassignment.
- Appearance or body image.
- Family circumstances or socioeconomic background.
- Other personal characteristics or perceived differences.

Discriminatory language or behaviour will be challenged even where an individual claims that it was intended as a joke.

Cyberbullying
Cyberbullying involves harmful behaviour through digital communication or technology.

Examples include:
- Abusive messages or comments.
- Humiliating posts, photographs or videos.
- Deliberate exclusion from online groups.
- Impersonation or the creation of false accounts.
- Spreading rumours or private information.
- Repeated unwanted contact.
- Threats, harassment or intimidation.

Cyberbullying may occur outside Performers sessions but can still affect the wellbeing and participation of students.

Sexual Harassment and Harmful Sexual Behaviour
Sexual harassment may include unwanted sexual comments, jokes, gestures, messages or other behaviour of a sexual nature.

Sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour may involve more serious conduct requiring immediate safeguarding action and potentially police or children's social care involvement.

Such behaviour must never be dismissed as banter, flirting or ordinary growing-up behaviour.

Where sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour or other child protection concerns are suspected, the Safeguarding Policy takes precedence over ordinary anti-bullying disciplinary procedures.

RECOGNISING SIGNS OF BULLYING

Children may not always disclose bullying directly.

Staff should remain alert to changes in behaviour or wellbeing that may indicate a concern.

Potential indicators include:
- Reluctance to attend classes, rehearsals or performances.
- Withdrawal from friendships or group activities.
- Reduced confidence or participation.
- Anxiety around particular students or activities.
- Unexplained emotional distress.
- Frequent complaints of feeling unwell.
- Changes in attendance or engagement.
- Unexplained injuries or damaged belongings.
- Fear of using changing rooms or backstage areas.
- Distress associated with online communication.
- Significant changes in mood or behaviour.
- Self-harm or expressions of hopelessness.

These indicators do not automatically establish that bullying has occurred.

Staff must respond sensitively, record relevant concerns and seek appropriate advice rather than making assumptions.

Where there are concerns about a child's immediate safety, mental health or risk of significant harm, safeguarding procedures must be followed without delay.

PREVENTION AND POSITIVE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Preventing bullying is a shared responsibility.

Performers Theatre Company will promote positive behaviour through teaching, leadership, communication and consistent expectations.

Preventative arrangements include:

- Clear Student and Parent/Carer Codes of Conduct.
- Positive reinforcement of respectful behaviour.
- Age-appropriate discussions about kindness, inclusion and relationships.
- Challenging discriminatory or harmful language.
- Appropriate staff supervision.
- Monitoring group dynamics and peer relationships.
- Clear expectations during rehearsals and productions.
- Safe arrangements for changing rooms and backstage spaces.
- Appropriate oversight of student communication.
- Encouraging students to raise concerns.
- Supporting awareness initiatives, including Anti-Bullying Week.

Staff must model the behaviour expected from students.

Humiliation, intimidation, favouritism and inappropriate criticism must not be used as teaching or disciplinary methods.

The organisation recognises that casting decisions, performance opportunities, age differences and friendship groups can influence relationships and power dynamics.

Staff should be alert to these factors and take reasonable steps to prevent exclusion, intimidation or the misuse of influence.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal

Sam Gibbs, as Principal, is responsible for the operational implementation of this policy.

Responsibilities include:

- Promoting a positive organisational culture.
- Ensuring staff understand their responsibilities.
- Overseeing responses to bullying concerns.
- Ensuring appropriate records are maintained.
- Supporting communication with parents and carers.
- Monitoring patterns of behaviour.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of preventative arrangements.
- Ensuring safeguarding concerns are appropriately escalated.

Vice-Principal

Alex Fentiman supports the Principal in maintaining behavioural expectations and responding to concerns.

The Vice-Principal may coordinate responses, support staff and monitor agreed actions where authorised. Where a concern involves the Principal, Alex may act as an independent senior management contact in accordance with the organisation's safeguarding and governance arrangements.

Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy

The DSL and DDSL are responsible for safeguarding coordination where bullying concerns involve actual or potential harm.

They will assess whether a concern requires:

- Immediate protective action.
- Safeguarding advice.
- Early support.
- Referral to children's social care.
- Police involvement.
- Additional monitoring or protective arrangements.

Staff, Volunteers and Chaperones

All staff, volunteers and chaperones must:

- Model respectful behaviour.
- Challenge inappropriate conduct.
- Listen to concerns without prejudgement.
- Take reasonable immediate action to maintain safety.
- Report bullying or suspected bullying promptly.
- Record concerns accurately.
- Follow agreed protective arrangements.
- Avoid conducting independent safeguarding investigations.
- Maintain confidentiality.

Students

Students are expected to:

- Treat others with kindness and respect.
- Avoid bullying, intimidation and discriminatory behaviour.
- Respect personal boundaries.
- Report concerns to a trusted adult.
- Avoid encouraging, sharing or participating in harmful behaviour.
- Cooperate appropriately with staff when concerns arise.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Encourage respectful behaviour.
- Raise concerns promptly and appropriately.
- Support reasonable organisational interventions.
- Avoid confronting other children or families directly about incidents.
- Avoid using social media to escalate disputes involving children.
- Cooperate with agreed measures intended to protect students.

REPORTING BULLYING CONCERNS

Any student, parent, carer, staff member or other individual may raise a concern about bullying.

Concerns may be reported verbally or in writing.

Students may speak to any trusted member of staff, including their teacher, the Principal, Vice-Principal, DSL or DDSL.

Parents and carers may contact the organisation through its established communication channels.

Email: admin@performerstheatrecompany.com

Staff receiving a report must take it seriously and ensure that it is passed promptly to the Principal or appropriate senior member of staff.

Where the concern involves possible abuse, significant harm, sexual violence, exploitation or another safeguarding issue, it must also be reported to the DSL or DDSL without delay.

Where the concern involves the Principal, the matter may be reported directly to Jess Eaton (DDSL) and/or Alex Fentiman (Vice-Principal).

If immediate danger is present, emergency services must be contacted on 999.

No individual is required to wait for internal permission before contacting statutory safeguarding services where a child may be at risk.

Reports must not be dismissed simply because the behaviour occurred outside Performers activities.

RESPONDING TO AND ASSESSING INCIDENTS

All bullying concerns will be considered promptly, fairly and proportionately.

Initial Response

The member of staff receiving the concern must:

1. Listen carefully and remain calm.
2. Take reasonable steps to ensure immediate safety.
3. Avoid minimising or dismissing the concern.
4. Record relevant information accurately.
5. Inform the appropriate senior member of staff.
6. Escalate safeguarding concerns without delay.

Assessment

The Principal or authorised senior member of staff will consider:

- The nature and seriousness of the reported behaviour.
- Whether the behaviour is repeated or ongoing.
- Any imbalance of power.
- The impact on those involved.
- Whether discriminatory behaviour is present.
- Whether immediate protective measures are required.
- Whether safeguarding thresholds may be met.
- Whether previous concerns or patterns exist.

Where appropriate, information may be obtained from the children involved and relevant witnesses.

Discussions must be sensitive, proportionate and undertaken separately where necessary.

Staff must not conduct interviews or enquiries that could compromise a safeguarding or criminal investigation.

Where there is uncertainty about the appropriate response, advice should be sought from the DSL or relevant statutory agency.

Communication

Parents and carers will ordinarily be informed where appropriate, particularly where bullying is substantiated, ongoing or requires significant intervention.

Information will not be shared where doing so could place a child at further risk or prejudice safeguarding enquiries.

Confidential information concerning another child must not be disclosed unnecessarily.

Outcomes

The organisation will determine appropriate action based on the available information.

The outcome, reasons, protective measures and follow-up arrangements must be recorded.

A concern may require action even where the available evidence does not establish that bullying occurred.

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

Bullying may constitute a safeguarding concern where behaviour causes, or creates a risk of, significant physical, emotional or sexual harm.

Child-on-child abuse may include:

- Serious physical violence.
- Sexual violence or sexual harassment.
- Harmful sexual behaviour.
- Coercive or controlling behaviour.
- Discriminatory abuse.
- Threats or intimidation.
- Serious or persistent online abuse.
- Exploitation or other harmful behaviour.

Where such concerns arise, the Safeguarding Policy must be followed.

The DSL or DDSL will consider whether statutory safeguarding advice or referral is necessary.

Children who have experienced harm and children whose behaviour has caused harm may both require safeguarding support.

The organisation must avoid treating serious safeguarding matters solely as behavioural or disciplinary incidents.

Staff must not attempt to mediate serious allegations of abuse or require children to confront one another.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AFFECTED BY BULLYING

Performers Theatre Company recognises that children experiencing bullying may require reassurance, protection and ongoing support.

Support may include:

- Providing a trusted adult with whom the child can speak.
- Listening to the child's wishes and concerns.
- Agreeing appropriate protective arrangements.
- Reviewing supervision or group arrangements.
- Supporting continued participation in activities.
- Considering reasonable adjustments.
- Communicating with parents or carers where appropriate.
- Signposting to additional support services.
- Monitoring the child's wellbeing and confidence.

The child must not be made responsible for resolving the bullying.

Protective measures should avoid unnecessarily disadvantaging the child who has experienced harm.

Staff must not promise complete confidentiality or guarantee that bullying will stop immediately.

Instead, they must explain what action will be taken and how the situation will be monitored.

RESPONDING TO CHILDREN RESPONSIBLE FOR BULLYING

Performers Theatre Company recognises that harmful behaviour must be addressed firmly while considering the age, understanding, circumstances and needs of the child responsible.

Responses may include:

- Explaining why the behaviour is unacceptable.
- Helping the child understand the impact of their actions.
- Establishing clear behavioural expectations.
- Involving parents or carers where appropriate.
- Agreeing a behaviour improvement plan.
- Providing additional supervision.
- Offering appropriate support or guidance.
- Applying proportionate disciplinary measures.
- Considering whether the child may have unmet support or safeguarding needs.

The organisation will distinguish between accountability for behaviour and the individual worth of the child. Restorative approaches may be considered where safe, appropriate and genuinely voluntary.

A child who has experienced bullying must never be pressured into reconciliation, mediation or accepting an apology.

BEHAVIOURAL AND DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

Bullying will be addressed through a proportionate and consistent response.

Depending on the seriousness and circumstances, measures may include:

1. A clear verbal reminder of behavioural expectations.
2. A formal discussion with the student.
3. Communication with parents or carers.
4. Increased monitoring or supervision.
5. A written behaviour agreement.
6. Temporary restrictions or adjustments to participation.
7. Temporary suspension from classes or activities.
8. Removal from a production or programme.
9. Termination of enrolment or participation in serious or persistent cases.

These measures are not a mandatory sequence.

Serious incidents may justify immediate protective action or stronger measures without progressing through earlier stages.

Any decision to suspend or remove a student must be authorised by the Principal or Vice-Principal.

Decisions must take account of the child's age, additional needs, the seriousness of the behaviour, relevant safeguarding considerations and the safety of others.

The reasons for significant disciplinary decisions must be documented.

Where the matter involves a safeguarding allegation, relevant statutory advice must be considered before disciplinary action that could prejudice an external investigation.

CYBERBULLYING AND INCIDENTS OUTSIDE PERFORMERS

Performers Theatre Company recognises that bullying may occur outside organised activities, including through social media, group messaging and personal communication.

Where such behaviour affects the welfare, safety or participation of students, the organisation may take reasonable action within its responsibilities and authority.

This may include:

- Recording the concern.
- Supporting affected students.
- Communicating with parents or carers.
- Reviewing group arrangements.
- Applying appropriate behavioural expectations.
- Seeking safeguarding advice.
- Liaising with a child's school or another organisation where appropriate and lawful.

Performers does not assume responsibility for investigating all disputes occurring outside its activities. However, concerns will not be ignored where there is a relevant safeguarding risk or an impact on the organisation's environment.

Students and families should preserve relevant evidence of cyberbullying where safe to do so, without forwarding or redistributing harmful material.

Where intimate images involving children are concerned, staff must not request, copy, forward or unnecessarily view such material. They must seek appropriate safeguarding advice.

The organisation's mobile phone-free approach during student sessions supports positive engagement and reduces opportunities for inappropriate device use.

This does not remove the need to address online behaviour occurring outside sessions.

EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Performers Theatre Company is committed to preventing discriminatory bullying and ensuring that every student is treated with dignity and respect.

The organisation recognises that some children may face additional vulnerability to bullying or barriers to reporting concerns.

This may include children with disabilities, special educational needs, communication differences, previous experiences of harm or other individual circumstances.

Staff must:

- Consider individual communication and support needs.
- Avoid assumptions about behaviour or understanding.
- Make reasonable adjustments where required.
- Challenge discriminatory language and conduct.
- Consider whether additional support is necessary.
- Ensure that children are not disadvantaged because of protected characteristics or additional needs.

The presence of additional needs does not excuse harmful behaviour, but it may affect the most appropriate support and response.

Decisions must remain proportionate, inclusive and focused on safety.

RECORDING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND MONITORING

All reported bullying concerns must be recorded appropriately within Performers Theatre Company's central Incident Log, maintained securely on Google Drive.

Access to the Incident Log is restricted to authorised members of staff with a legitimate operational need to access the information.

Records should include:

- The date, time and location of the incident.
- The individuals involved.
- The nature of the concern.
- Relevant accounts and observations.
- Any immediate protective action.
- Whether safeguarding advice was sought.
- Communication with parents or carers.
- Decisions made and the reasons for those decisions.
- Actions agreed and individuals responsible for implementation.
- Review dates, follow-up actions and outcomes.

Records must distinguish factual information from opinions or assessments.

Where an incident raises safeguarding concerns, the Safeguarding Policy and associated safeguarding recording procedures must also be followed. Sensitive safeguarding information must be maintained within appropriately restricted records and must not be made accessible to staff who do not require it.

Information must be handled in accordance with the organisation's GDPR Policy, including applicable access, retention and secure disposal arrangements.

The Principal will periodically review recorded incidents to identify patterns of behaviour, repeated concerns, emerging risks and opportunities for improvement.

Where the Principal is the subject of a concern, appropriate independent oversight arrangements must apply, with access to relevant records restricted accordingly.

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS/CARERS

Advice for Students

If you are experiencing bullying:

- Remember that bullying is not acceptable.
- Tell a trusted adult as soon as you feel able.
- Explain what has happened and how it has affected you.
- Ask for support if you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Avoid responding with threats or violence.
- Do not feel pressured to confront the person responsible.
- Keep relevant evidence of online bullying where safe.
- Continue to report concerns if the behaviour does not stop.

You can speak to your teacher, the Principal, Vice-Principal or another trusted member of staff.
If you are worried about someone else, tell a trusted adult
.
You do not need to investigate or resolve the situation yourself.

Advice for Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to:

- Listen calmly if their child reports bullying.
- Reassure their child that their concerns will be taken seriously.
- Report relevant concerns to Performers promptly.
- Share factual information that may assist the organisation.

- Avoid confronting other children or families directly.
- Avoid discussing identifiable children or allegations on social media.
- Work constructively with staff on protective arrangements.
- Inform Performers if concerns continue.

The organisation will respond appropriately and provide updates where possible, while respecting the confidentiality of other individuals.

External Support

Additional support may be available through:
Childline: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk
NSPCC: 0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk
Anti-Bullying Alliance:
www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
Kidscape:
www.kidscape.org.uk
YoungMinds:
www.youngminds.org.uk

Where immediate danger exists, contact emergency services on **999**.

TRAINING, REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY

All staff and relevant volunteers must understand the organisation's expectations concerning bullying, respectful behaviour and safeguarding.

Anti-bullying arrangements will be communicated through induction, staff guidance, Codes of Conduct and relevant training.

The Principal will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:
- Review of bullying records.
- Identification of repeated concerns or patterns.
- Feedback from students, parents and staff.
- Safeguarding and behavioural incident reviews.
- Staff training and awareness.
- Review of preventative arrangements.
- Relevant developments in legislation and guidance.

The policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where significant incidents, organisational changes or relevant legal developments require it.

RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

This policy should be read alongside:
- Governance & Compliance Framework.
- Safeguarding Policy.
- Staff Code of Conduct.
- Staff Handbook.
- Student Code of Conduct.
- Parent/Carer Code of Conduct.
- Social Media Policy.
- Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Complaints Policy.
- GDPR Policy.
- Production and Rehearsal Policy.
- Child Collection Policy.
- Missing Child Procedure.
- Low-Level Concerns Policy, where adopted.

Relevant legislative and guidance considerations include:

- Children Act 1989.
- Children Act 2004.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997, where applicable.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Relevant statutory child safeguarding guidance.
- Relevant Hampshire safeguarding procedures.
- Appropriate national anti-bullying guidance.

School-specific statutory requirements are not automatically applicable to Performers Theatre Company as an independent performing arts provider, although relevant educational guidance may inform good practice.

APPENDIX 1

Bullying Reporting and Response Procedure

Step 1 - Receive the Concern
Listen carefully, take the concern seriously and record the information provided.

Step 2 - Ensure Immediate Safety
Take reasonable protective action where necessary. Contact emergency services if immediate danger exists.

Step 3 - Report Internally
Inform the Principal or appropriate senior member of staff promptly.

Where safeguarding concerns are present, contact the DSL or DDSL without delay.

Where the concern involves the Principal, report to Jess Eaton and/or Alex Fentiman.

Step 4 - Assess the Concern
Consider seriousness, repetition, power imbalance, impact, previous incidents and any safeguarding implications.

Step 5 - Determine Appropriate Action
Agree proportionate protective, supportive and behavioural measures.

Seek statutory safeguarding advice where necessary.

Step 6 - Communicate Appropriately
Inform relevant parents or carers where safe and appropriate, while respecting confidentiality.

Step 7 - Record Decisions
Document the concern, assessment, actions, responsible individuals and review arrangements. Record the concern in the central Incident Log.

Step 8 - Monitor and Review
Check whether the behaviour has stopped, whether protective measures are effective and whether further action is required.

Step 9 - Escalate Where Necessary
Escalate repeated, serious or unresolved concerns through the organisation's safeguarding, complaints or governance procedures, as appropriate.