



Child Protection Policy Statement

Innovations Theatre School is committed to providing the most positive and safe environment possible for all our students, one 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. In line with this, we have implemented procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour for all staff
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment and selecting staff
- Managing and supervising staff
- Involvement of parents and carers
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
- Complaints and comments
- Incidents and accidents

A full copy of this policy is available on request or to view on www.innovations.ie

_____ Date: _____
Robert Holden, Designated Person
Tel: 087 1364219 Email: robert@innovations.ie

_____ Date: _____
Anne Shumate, Deputy Designated Person
Tel: 086 3442916 Email: anneshumate2@gmail.com

This policy was completed August 16th 2018
It will next be reviewed on May 15th 2019

Innovations Theatre School

Safeguarding Policy

Staff Code of Conduct

All staff and volunteers working with Innovations are expected to be aware of and adhere to our code of conduct and receive training in this area.

1. Child-Centred Approach

As part of our duty of care and our policy of nurture and respect for our students, we undertake to:

- 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 in all our activities
- 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 students and their parents/carers
- Agree a group 'contract' when a class is formed and revisit it regularly
- Encourage feedback from the group
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and rehearsal/performance materials, bearing in mind the age of the expected audience as well as the performers
- 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

2. Good Practice

Innovations Theatre School will:

- Keep a register of all students including all relevant information (e.g. Name, age, address, parent/carer contact details, special requirements), subject to our Privacy Policy
- Maintain accurate attendance records
- Communicate quickly and clearly to parents/carers regarding any issues that affect their children
- Provide appropriate training for staff and volunteers
- Record all incidents and accidents, reporting where necessary
- Have emergency procedures in place
- Have reporting procedures in place where there are concerns for a child

All our staff and regular volunteers have been selected according to our recruitment procedures and cleared by the Garda National Vetting Bureau. We provide training and support in child safeguarding and support them in the following good practices:

- Being inclusive of all students and sensitive to any special needs
- Being consistent in attendance, preparation and attitude for all activities
- Observing appropriate dress, language and behaviour

- Communicating all incidents, accidents and concerns to management at the earliest possible opportunity
- Not being alone with a student for excessive amounts of time
- Not having social or personal contact (personal or media-based) with students outside of organised activities, nor giving lifts to students without the express permission of parents/carers
- Being aware of their position of influence and using it responsibly, quickly dealing with any possible misunderstandings or upsets with the students
- Not allowing any offensive or sexualised communication or behaviour to occur, including exposure to online material
- Not showing unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule or other unwelcome focus to any student
- Restricting any physical contact to what is acceptable and useful for the class only, and after checking for agreement with the student. Maintaining a 'child-initiated' policy to any physical displays of affection.
- Not engaging in any form of physical chastisement

3. Health and Safety

Innovations Theatre School will provide a safe environment by:

- Providing adequate supervision for activities, using assistant and student teachers, volunteers and parents as necessary
- Never leaving children unattended or unsupervised
- Having a first aid kit and informed personnel at all activities
- Following emergency, accident and incident procedures, including at least one evacuation drill each year in our school venues
- Assessing for risks, taking appropriate action and giving clear warnings and instructions

4. Accidents & Incidents

If an accident occurs, we will:

- Respond quickly to ensure the safety of the affected student(s) and the welfare of those around them.
- Give any appropriate first aid (checking for allergies/special instructions)
- Contact emergency services if necessary
- Notify parents/carers immediately if necessary, or after class if less serious
- Record the accident and implement any changes deemed appropriate to avoid a similar incident

If there is an incident between students or between a student and staff member, we will:

- Listen to the child's concern first
- Gently but firmly confront any inappropriate behaviour
- Seek to ensure reconciliation and good relationships
- Notify parents/carers at the earliest appropriate time
- Record the incident and watch for any repeats
- Provide extra supervision as necessary

5. Reporting Concerns

Robert Holden is the appointed Designated Person for all matters of child protection and welfare, with Anne Shumate as the Deputy Designated Person.

If you have any concerns about a child's welfare, including suspicion that the child is subject to any form of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or neglect), please communicate them to the Designated Person immediately. They are responsible for advising staff and parents/carers about how to deal with concerns, and for liaising with Tusla and, in emergencies, the Gardaí.

Robert Holden can be contacted at 087 1364219 or robert@innovations.ie

Anne Shumate can be contacted at 086 3442916 or anneshumate2@gmail.com

If neither of these is contactable and you have a serious concern, contact the duty social worker for **Co. Wicklow:** Child & Family Agency, Unit 9, Nutgrove Retail Park, Churchtown, D14 **Tel: 01 9213400**
Co. Wexford: Child & Family Agency, Ely House, Ferrybank, Co. Wexford **Tel: 053 9185680**
Or in emergency/out of hours situations, your local Garda station.

Any suspicions, concerns, worrying observations or behavioural changes will be reported to the Designated Person who will record them in the Incident Book, including and take further action as deemed necessary.

If a student approaches a staff member with a concern or a report, we will:

- Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allowing him or her enough time to say what s/he needs to say
- Not use leading questions or prompt details
- Reassure the child/young person but not promise to keep anything secret
- Not make the child/young person repeat the details unnecessarily
- Explain to the child/young person what will happen next (in an age-appropriate way)

Further action, if necessary, may include:

- Informing the Designated Person and completing a report in the Incident Book
- Communicating with the student's parents/carers
- Contacting Tusla. The initial contact may be for an informal consultation, or move directly to a formal report. Any such contact will be communicated to parents/carers, unless there are grounds to believe this may put the child at further risk
- Noting all actions and outcomes

6. Confidentiality

All information regarding our students and parents/carers will be subject to our Privacy Policy, which also deals with use of images.

Where there is a welfare concern, information will only be passed on in the interests of safeguarding the child, and any information shared in such a report this is not considered a breach of confidentiality. We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child are at risk.

7. Involving Parents/Carers

We undertake to:

- Advise primary carers of our child protection policy
- Inform primary carers and schools of all activities and potential activities
- Issue contact/consent forms where relevant, keeping a register of students for all activities
- Comply with health and safety practices
- Operate child-centred policies in accordance with best practice
- Adhere to our recruitment guidelines
- Ensure as far as possible that the activities are age-appropriate
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parent(s), carer(s) or responsible adult(s), where appropriate

If we have concerns about the welfare of the child/young person, we will:

- Respond to the needs of the child or young person
- Inform the primary carers on an on-going basis unless this action puts the student at further risk
- Where there are child protection and welfare concerns we are obliged to pass these on to the Duty Social Worker and, in an emergency, the Gardaí
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff, we will immediately ensure the safety of the child/young person and inform primary carers as appropriate

As a child-centred organisation, we are committed to putting the interest of the child/young person first. To that end we will:

- Contact Tusla and/or the Gardaí where there is a child protection welfare concern
- Encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organisation to ensure the safety of their children
- Have a designated contact person available for consultation with primary carers in the case of any concern over a child or young person's welfare

8. Allegations against staff

If there is a concern about the conduct of a staff member or volunteer, this should be communicated immediately to the management.

Robert Holden will deal with issues relating to the welfare of the child

Anne Shumate will deal with issues relating to the staff member

If the allegation is against one of these, it should be reported to the other member of the management team.

If the complaint or allegation comes from a child, we will take this seriously and listen to all their concerns. The priority will always be to ensure the protection and welfare of the student, in partnership with the parents/carers.

All details will be recorded according to **5. Reporting Concerns** as above

Complaints will be responded to within one week and appropriate action agreed and taken thereafter

Innovations Theatre School
August 2018