

**ACADEMY
OF
DANCE**

A young girl with blonde hair is smiling and looking at the camera. She is wearing a unicorn-themed costume that includes a headband with a pink horn and ears, a white turtleneck with a pink fur collar, a sequined vest, and pink shorts. A pink banner is overlaid across the middle of the image.

Child Safe Policy

updated June 2023

Introduction

‘Academy of Dance is committed to providing a safe space for all children – through detailed policy, ongoing staff training, and a rigorous and transparent reporting process’

Mike Harrison-Lamond
Director, Academy of Dance | Child Safety Officer

Dance is an unregulated industry, and anyone can open a dance school. That’s why it’s critical parents understand what happens at their studio and what the staff are doing to ensure the safety of their child.

In July 2022, the Victorian Government announced Australia’s first mandatory guidelines for child safety standards for all organisations that supervise children. There are 11 Standards every organisation are required to meet - these are outlined in this document, as well as our response and implementation plan.

Academy of Dance’s Child Safe Policy was developed through consultation with parents. We are committed to continue this approach - in this update, we are extending this consultation to the students, as they are directly impacted and supported by this policy.



OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

All children attending Academy of Dance have the right to be safe, respected and protected from harm. Children should be made aware of, and feel confident in, their rights and responsibility.

Academy of Dance is fiercely committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children that interact with our organisation; as students, siblings or friends of students, or audience members of performances. The welfare of children entrusted in our care is our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse. We will take all necessary steps to prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect, including:

- physical abuse: purposefully injuring or threatening to injure a child
- emotional abuse: an attack on a child's self-esteem through bullying, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating a child
- neglect: harming a child by failing to provide basic physical or emotional necessities
- sexual abuse: any sexual act or sexual threat

WHO DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO?

This policy protects all children and young people in attendance at Academy of Dance. Any adult person (18 and over) that may work or interact with children at any time must comply with this policy, including:

- teachers
- administration staff
- parents on site at the studio or at an event
- volunteers at performances, or on site to help with concert preparation

Notes:

In this policy, the term 'staff member' relates to any person occupying the above role, regardless of their employment status with Academy of Dance (ie permanent, casual or volunteer).

The term 'parents' applies to parents, carers and legal guardians of children at Academy of Dance. Where children are in the care of our staff, but in another venue (such as a theatre for a performance), they will also be protected by that venue's Child Safe Policy.

WHAT IS CONTAINED IN OUR CHILD SAFE POLICY

- Outline and response to Victorian mandatory Child Safe Standards
- Code of Conduct, See Appendix 1
- Studio Rules, See Appendix 2

RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

Academy of Dance takes all reasonable steps to ensure we engage the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This involves maintaining a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process.

It is our policy to:

- interview and conduct thorough referee checks on all staff (with their most recent supervisors)
- obtain and keep a record of Working with Children checks for all staff (this process includes listing Academy of Dance as an employer so we are immediately notified of any changes to the status of any staff member in relation to their Working With Children check)
- ensure all staff have current first aid certificates
- develop clear duty statements and job descriptions for roles that involve work with children that state clearly our commitment to providing safe environments for children
- ensure all volunteers at performances are suitably experienced and qualified to care for the safety and wellbeing of children in accordance with their age and needs. We will only accept volunteers who have children attending Academy of Dance and with current Working with Children checks

SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Before staff commence work at Academy of Dance, they are provided documentation that outline our Child Safe Policy. We ensure staff are informed of, and updated on our Child Safe Policy including:

- inducting new staff to our Child Safe Policy, and other relevant policies and procedures regarding the care and/or supervision of children and young people
- ensuring staff attend (either face to face or online) periodical information sessions as they become available, to remain up to date with knowledge of child protection, nature and signs of child abuse, cultural competency, regulation updates and other matters that affect children
- liaison with the organisation's Child Safety Officer to be the first point of contact to provide advice and support to staff on the safety and wellbeing of children
- ensuring staff feel encouraged and empowered to report any complaints, concerns or perceived risks to child safety to the Child Safety Officer or other relevant management position, or the Victorian Police.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Academy of Dance policies and procedures put children and young people at the centre – we are committed to the transparency, reporting and response for suspected or actual incidents of abuse.

We are committed to encouraging staff, children and parents to raise any concerns or provide their views on the wellbeing of children involved with our organisation.

We keep staff, students, parents and external stakeholders (eg theatres) informed of our Child Safety Policy and relevant procedures by:

- ensuring staff have read, understood, and are committed to their obligations under our Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct, and any other relevant policies and procedures before they commence work with our organisation
- making relevant documents easily accessible by providing them on our website, distributing them to staff and having copies available on request
- providing children and parents with easy to understand information about our Child Safe Policy, through newsletters, posters and on social media.

We believe staff, parents and children should feel enabled, empowered and supported to safely raise any concern or complaints about any perceived risk to a child's safety or signs of abuse. We have developed a procedure to respond to any complaint of abuse or conduct in not keeping with this policy and Code of Conduct, including to take disciplinary action or rectify issues when necessary.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Mike Harrison-Lamond (Director) is the Academy of Dance's Child Safe Officer, responsible for being the first point of contact to provide advice and support to students, parents and staff regarding the safety and wellbeing of children engaged with the organisation. This includes being the first point of contact for dealing with any complaint of conduct not in keeping with this policy and the Code of Conduct.

Our Child Safety Policy is reviewed regularly – every 6 months internally, and 12 months with students/parents – however we will update policy/procedures at any time as required. We commit to listening, and incorporating where possible, feedback from children, parents and staff into the ongoing updates of this policy.

BREACHES OF THE CHILD SAFE POLICY

The following are examples of the different breaches of our Child Safe Policy and our process in response to these types of breaches.

Minor Breach Examples	Response
Students touching each other (eg unwanted hugs)	In-class education with staff reminding children about consent, and discouraging personal contact. Ongoing incidence will be referred to Admin Manager/Director and parent called to discuss
Antisocial behaviour between students (eg name calling/ cliques)	Teachers are trained to identify and minimise behavioural issues during class and reminding students about our studio rules and our commitment to working as a team. Ongoing/escalating issue will involve parent intervention.
Inappropriate language by staff member	Staff will be given a written warning for inappropriate language. Staff will be retrained in their commitment to the Code of Conduct. Further breaches may lead to termination

Major Breach Examples	Response
Student assaulted by another student	Immediate suspension of student and parents of both children called. Police may be called depending on incident
Student assaulted by staff member	Police will be called and staff member immediately removed from premises until police investigation complete.

YOUR RIGHTS

In the case of a suspected incident of child abuse, or a breach of our Child Safe Policy you can report it to:

- Any staff member on site (which will be passed on to the Directors)
- Child Safe Officer (Mike Harrison-Lamond – mike@academyofdance.com.au)
- The Victorian Police by dialling 000



Mandatory Child Safe Standards

as outlined by the Commission for Children and Young People

STANDARD 1

Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children are respected and valued.

Academy of Dance is committed to ensuring all children feel welcome in the space at all times.

From a cultural perspective, our work to ensure Aboriginal children are respected and valued is done through consultation.

The Action Plan below has been developed after speaking with a cultural consultant. This action plan will grow and develop as we find ways to ensure we honour and respect Aboriginal culture in our organisation in a way that is not tokenistic.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Include acknowledgement of country at commencement of all events - **COMPLETE**
- Remove cultural appropriation from programming/events eg concert dances - **COMPLETE**
- Create signage in front of facility with acknowledgment of country - **BY DEC 2023**

Medium term

- Engage cultural consultant to support program development and provide feedback/advice on concert plans - **BY EARLY 2024**
- Staff to complete cultural training - **BY EARLY 2024**

Long term

- Provide support for education pathway for Aboriginal students into full time training and/or company employment - **2024**

STANDARD 2

Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.

Child Safety has always been the centre of our approach to teaching dance, with our Child Safe Policy in its 10th year – long before government standards were mandatory. The child-centric approach in our operation is driven by the Directors of the school.

When staff join Academy of Dance, their onboarding includes mandatory Child Safe Standards training through our partner Keep Kids Safe in Dance. Ongoing training is maintained through the school and staff will be trained in these updated guidelines.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Mandatory Child Safe training through Keep Kids Safe in Dance for all staff - **COMPLETE**
- Create signage in front of facility with commitment to Child Safety - **BY DEC 2023**
- Update Academy website with new accreditations for Child Safety - **BY DEC 2023**

Medium term

- Work with students to create a representative group that other students can talk to - **BY EARLY 2024**
- Update complaint process for families and brief staff on changes - **BY EARLY 2024**

STANDARD 3

Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

We are committed to ensure policies that affect children and young people are developed in consultation with them. Through conversations with current student leaders, as well as using social media and posters around the studio, we are in the process of forming a student representative group that can provide feedback and ideas on how to improve on our Child Safe Policy.

All feedback and/or complaints from students are taken seriously and we will work with them to change policies and processes where possible, or continue conversations with students on how we can work towards goals if immediate changes cannot be made.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Create social media tiles informing students of Standards and to get involved - **BY SEP 2023**
- Create poster at Academy of Dance to outline commitment and to invite registration for representative group - **BY SEP 2023**

Medium term

- Work with students to create a representative group that other students can talk to - **BY EARLY 2024**

Long term

- Invite student representative group to create a scorecard (traffic light system) of how Academy of Dance is supporting their ideas - **2024**

STANDARD 4

Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

It is important to have an effective consultation process for policies affecting children. Our existing Child Safe Policy was created through consultation with parents and with staff who are also parents of the studio. For this update, a newsletter will be sent out and parents/children invited to contribute ideas.

We have an annual review process of all our policies and parents are invited at any stage to provide feedback on policies, or input into process change to make the studio as safe as possible, including attending external events.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Update website with June 2023 Child Safe Policy for review - **BY JUNE 2023**
- Newsletter sent out to invite families to review/input into Child Safe Policy - **BY JUNE 2023**
- Implement changes/ideas into policy through June consultation - **BY DEC 2023**

Medium term

- Create additional avenues for feedback (including anonymous) - **BY EARLY 2024**

STANDARD 5

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

All people are welcome at Academy of Dance and we do not discriminate based on anyone's gender identity, culture, religion, disability, sexuality or age. This starts at the top with our culture, and is one of the first points we raise through our recruitment process with new staff.

We have a code of conduct that applies to staff, students as well as parents and other people visiting the studio. This outlines our expectations for behaviour, and provides assurance to parents that their child will always be safe and supported in our care, and it outlines actions for any breaches of this code of conduct.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Update Code of Conduct for Academy of Dance - **COMPLETE**
- Create signage in front of facility to welcome all students - **BY DEC 2023**

Medium term

- Engage cultural consultant to support program development and provide feedback/advice on concert plans - **BY EARLY 2024**

STANDARD 6

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

Our staff are all thoroughly vetted through our recruitment processes, including those who are coming in on a casual basis (such as a guest teacher, or a cover teacher). All staff in the facility have a Working With Children Check (or teacher equivalent such as VIT card) and First Aid training (minimum HLTAID003). Staff are also required to complete the Keep Kids Safe in Dance training module before commencing work.

We have 25+ teachers on our payroll and most cover teachers can be found within our teaching ranks. By 2024 we will have all classes covered by employed staff, or those external who have been accredited and trained by us prior to setting foot in the studio.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- All staff require Child Safe Standard training before commencing work - **COMPLETE**
- All staff (not just teachers) have Working With Children Checks & First Aid - **COMPLETE**

Medium term

- Cover teachers exclusively drawn from current/previously trained staff, or outside staff are accredited by us by completing the same training our existing staff have - **BY 2024**

STANDARD 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.

Transparency and due process are critical in our approach to our Child Safe Policy. We have a complaints process in place that any child, parent/guardian or concerned person can submit a complaint. We have a Child Safety Officer who oversees all complaints, and parents are informed that they can also approach the police if they are not comfortable talking to a staff member.

Complaints are treated with confidentiality, respect and sincerity to ensure the facility is as safe as possible for children. For minor breaches of this policy or the Code of Conduct, urgent attention is given to fix the issue. For major breaches, immediate action will be taken to keep the children in the facility safe from harm.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Update internal complaints process - **COMPLETE**

Medium term

- Work with Student Representative Group to develop action plan and updated complaints process - **BY MID 2024**

STANDARD 8

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

We understand as Directors that we can't be in every class during the week, which is why we have worked hard to employ the best staff - not only in terms of their skills (whether in teaching or administration or events), but their commitment to our vision and our values in how we run our business. Staff are accredited with extensive training in Child Safe Standards, whether they are here ongoing or they are teaching for a short term contract.

Volunteers at events are never solely responsible for a child - they work as a support person to a staff member who briefs them at the start of their shift about their responsibilities and duty of care. We require all volunteers to have a Working With Children Check, and we generally use volunteers who have worked with us before and understand our requirements.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- All staff require Child Safe Standard training before commencing work - **COMPLETE**
- All staff (not just teachers) have Working With Children Checks & First Aid - **COMPLETE**
- All volunteers must register for Working With Children Check before event - **COMPLETE**

Medium term

- Establish training plan to find any gaps in education and training for staff - **BY EARLY 2024**

Long term

- Implement and complete training - **2024 (yearly process)**

STANDARD 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

Our facility fitout that was completed in 2020 has provided the safest possible physical environment for children and young people - full accessibility, single entry point staffed at all times, sprung floors, temperature control and separate toilet facilities for children and adults.

In terms of online, we have a social media plan that provides guidance to staff. We do not allow staff to post content online without it being approved by one of our leadership team. We also provide guidance to staff about reputation and transparency in their operation of their own social media channels. Our Code of Conduct also puts measures in place to separate staff and children online.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Place ban on photography/filming in studio & events by parents/visitors - **COMPLETE**
- Director check/approve all social media content before posting - **COMPLETE**

Medium term

- Update social media policy - **BY DEC 2023**
- Provide OH&S and Safe Dance Training for all staff - **BY DEC 2023**

STANDARD 10

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

There are two review processes we complete every year for our Child Safe Standards:

- A six month internal check to update on delivery of Action Plan and to check with staff how the plan is working within the studio and at events
- An annual review which we invite parents and students to be a part of. As detailed in Standards 3, 4 and 7, we will work in a more structured setting with parents and students to ensure review is a more dynamic approach, with ideas and feedback offered on an ongoing manner.

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Complete internal review of Child Safe Standards - **COMPLETE**
- Send Child Safe Policy for review (via newsletter and social media) - **BY JUNE 2023**
- Implement changes/ideas into policy through June consultation - **BY DEC 2023**

Medium term

- Work with Student Representative Group to develop action plan on BOTH Child Safe Policy improvements and complaints process - **BY MID 2024**
- Child Safe Policy update provided to all staff - **BEFORE TERM 1, 2024**

Long term

- Internal/External review of policy, including updates and staff training - **ONGOING**

STANDARD 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Our Child Safe Policy is an umbrella policy that provides guidance and support to the following policies we have in place at the studio (the below can be found on our website once the updates of these policies are completed). These policies as a whole are developed to protect children while in the care of our staff.

- Code of Conduct
- COVID Safe Plan
- Filming/Videography policy
- Bullying/Discrimination Policy
- Student Engagement Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Classroom Etiquette Guide
- Privacy Policy

ACADEMY OF DANCE - ACTION PLAN

Short term

- Update of policies at Academy of Dance (including Child Safe Policy) - **BY DEC 2023**

APPENDIX 1 - CODE OF CONDUCT

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Our Directors place students first in all policy development, hiring processes and ongoing training of staff. Staff at all levels as well as volunteers visiting onsite or at an event are committed to, and bound by the following conduct.

All staff are responsible for the safety, and protection of children by:

- Adhering to, and advocating for our Child Safe Policy
- Taking reasonable steps to ensure children and young people are safe at all times
- Treating staff, parents and students with respect at all times
- Listening to, and responding to the needs of children and young people
- Ensuring (where practical) that adults are not left alone with children, or if they are (for example, private lessons) that parents have access to view their child where possible (this may not be possible at competitions)
- Understanding that cameras operate in studios to ensure any concern or allegation of child abuse is documented
- Ensuring they use the adult toilets and not the children's. Staff may assist a child if their parent is not on site (if this happens we will inform parents as a matter of transparency)
- Reporting any allegations of misconduct or abuse immediately to the parent of the child as well as the Child Safe Officer, Directors of the organisation, or if required, the Victorian Police

All staff must NOT:

- Discriminate against a child based on the protected classes (eg race, disability, gender)
- Develop a personal relationship with a child or young person, other than being friendly and supportive within a group environment
- Use physical contact without consent (an example of this is asking a child before providing correction to technique/posture etc). We encourage teachers to use as much verbal instruction as possible
- Do things of a personal nature if the child can do it (such as getting changed or toileting)
- Use inappropriate language in front of children, or subject them to inappropriate music/lyrics in class or costumes that can be viewed as sexualising children
- Have 'favourites' or display behaviour that leads to exclusion within the studio. This does not include using committed and hard-working children to feature within a dance
- Express personal views on religion, cultures, race or sexuality other than promoting the culture of the studio that everyone is valued and respected
- Place a child at risk of abuse (such as taking private lessons in spaces not publicly visible)
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse

APPENDIX 2 - STUDIO RULES

YOUR COMMITMENT TO OUR CHILD SAFE POLICY

While we can do all we can in our studio to protect children and young people, we also need commitment from parents and students on site to keep children safe from harm.

All students MUST:

- Treat staff members, teachers and all other students with respect
- Not threaten, or abuse (verbally, emotionally or physically) other students, or staff
- Not bully another child. To understand what IS and what IS NOT bullying, please view this helpful resource from Kids Helpline: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/bullying>

All students SHOULD:

- Read this document (where age appropriate) with a parent or guardian to ensure they understand the commitments of our organisation to protect all children and young people and their role in upholding this policy
- Let their parent or staff member know if there is something happening in the studio that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable

All parents MUST NOT:

- Wait in the car for drop off and pick up. Children must be accompanied to and from the front of the facility. Children are not to cross the road by themselves or wander down the street alone. We do not have the staff to walk your children to cars.
- Video or photograph other people's children. We provide as much opportunity for you to take home costumes or provide viewing of classes, videos of performances so you do not need to take any photos or videos onsite or at our events
- Enter into a studio unless invited (such as Dance Stars Year 1 with parent participation or Watching Week)
- Use the children's toilet (check the signs on the doors). If you need to get a child changed, you can use the disabled toilet or the parent toilet with your child
- Intimidate or threaten a staff member, other parent or student
- Attend the studio or an event under the influence of drugs or alcohol

ACADEMY OF DANCE

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