



MERTON
COLLEGE
OXFORD

Merton College, Oxford

Merton College Girl Choristers Child Safeguarding Policy

CONTACT DETAILS:

For contact details for the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and others, see the last page of this policy.

Background:

In 2016 Merton College began to admit girls into its Choral Foundation. The Girl Choristers consist of 24 girl choristers and up to 10 probationers usually in school years 4-11. The girls attend a number of different schools in Oxford and the surrounding area. The College has produced this Child Safeguarding Policy for the Choir which has regard to the guidance of the Secretary of State for Education. By this policy the College aims to ensure that it provides a safe environment for Choristers and safeguards their well-being, in particular by protecting them from abuse of any kind. The College also has a separate 'Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures'.

The College will respond without delay to any complaint or allegation of abuse, if appropriate by referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Children's Social Care, and the Police.

Commitments:

In accordance with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy the College is committed to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture.
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church.
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

Preventative Measures:

The College's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is the Domestic Bursar, Mr Tim Lightfoot (tel 01865 276939, tim.lightfoot@merton.ox.ac.uk) who has the leadership responsibility for the College's safeguarding arrangements. The College's Designated Officer for Safeguarding Children with regard to the Girl Choristers (DOSC for the Choir), who has the responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the College's safeguarding arrangements for the Choir, is

the Chapel Administrator, Ms Sarah Cotterill (tel 01865 616724, sarah.cotterill@merton.ox.ac.uk). The DOSC for the Choir is available to speak to parents or Choristers about safeguarding. In the absence of the DSL, the DOSC for the Choir acts as deputy, in consultation with the DOSC for the College.

1. The provisions for special recruitment and training procedures and for the conduct of DBS checks are applied to staff working with children. This includes those who work with the Girl Choristers, such as the Chaplain, Associate Chaplain, Director of Music, Organ Scholars, Verger, Chapel Administrator, visiting teachers and any students engaged to supervise the choristers. The Governing Body and the Domestic Bursar review the application of these provisions with the Chaplain and Director of Music from time to time, to take account of any changed arrangements in College, new risks and new legislation.
2. If a DBS check is delayed, staff and volunteers have no unsupervised contact with Choristers until a satisfactory check is received. Local clergy may be appointed to preside at or assist with choral services only if they have current formal authorisation to exercise their ministry in the Diocese of Oxford by virtue of the Bishop's Licence or its equivalent, or the Bishop's Permission to Officiate, both of which are dependent on a satisfactory DBS check at the Enhanced level and Diocesan records of personal and career history.
3. Specific directives relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children are included in the guidelines which are included in the College Choir Handbook. These set out the parameters of appropriate conduct, contact and communication with Choristers, within or outside official Choir activities. They are intended to be of benefit to all parties.
4. Chorister welfare has a permanent place on the agenda of all meetings of the Chapel and Patronage Committee, providing among other things a regular forum in which to reflect on and discuss practice in the light of experience.
5. This policy is reviewed on an annual basis, at the Trinity Term meeting of the Chapel and Patronage Committee. A copy of the policy is given to Organ Scholars in the context of a mandatory verbal induction, and to the Associate Chaplain, Verger, the Choristers' Singing Teacher, and Chorister Parents. Organ Scholars who give music tuition to children also receive a copy of the Oxford University Safeguarding Code of Practice, and a copy of Part One of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2016). They are required to confirm that they have read at least Part One of the latter guidance.

Procedures in the Event of Complaint or Allegation of Abuse:

1. Within the College, the handling of complaints and allegations relating to Choristers is the responsibility of the Domestic Bursar as the College's DSL (see contact details above and on the last page of this policy). This is made known to Chorister Parents and to Choristers at the time of their entry to the Choir. The Chapel Administrator sends all parents the revised Girl Choristers Handbook, every September, containing information about Child Protection. Parents whose daughters begin to sing in the Choir at some other time of the year receive these materials as soon as the Choristership starts.
2. Parents, Choristers or others who have any concerns at any time relating to the safety of Choristers should contact the College's DOSC for the Choir without delay, who will liaise with the College's DSL (see contact details above and on the last page of this policy). They may also contact the College's DSL directly. Notices are placed at child-eye-level height in the Choir Room in the

College informing Choristers who they should speak to if anything or anyone worries them or makes them feel unsafe.

Children will probably wish to speak to their parents first about anything or anyone that is worrying them or making them feel unsafe. If you are a child or young person reading this and you are worried about your safety in the College or in the Choir, please do not hesitate to speak to your parents. But if for any reason you would rather speak to someone outside of your family, you can speak to Sarah Cotterill (the Chapel Administrator), Leah Collins (the Verger), Mr Nicholas (the Director of Music), Father Simon (the Chaplain), or Father Jarred (the Associate Chaplain). Their contact details are given on the last page of this policy.

Anyone approaching any of these members of staff may be assured that their concerns will be taken seriously and they will not be subjected to any detriment due to making their concerns known. However, where the safety of children is in question, only limited assurances of confidentiality can be given as the matter must be addressed at once through the proper channels.

3. Any member of staff receiving concerns about the safety of Choristers will listen and take notes, making no promises of absolute confidentiality, and refer the matter at once to the Domestic Bursar, who is the College's DSL (see contact details above and on the last page of this policy).
4. On receiving information or a complaint or allegation from parents, a child, or a member of staff, the DSL will take detailed notes of any complaint or allegation brought to him, listening carefully to all that is said, making no promise of absolute confidentiality. (Where handwritten notes are typed up later, the original contemporaneous notes will be retained.) The matter will thereafter be dealt with by the DSL (for the College) in accordance with the procedures and time limits set out in the latest guidance issued by the Secretary of State. This is currently to be found in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (July 2015). This is available to the public on-line. The senior management of the College will be kept informed, in confidence, unless for some reason this would place a child at increased risk of harm.
5. The LADO will be informed within one working day of all allegations that an adult within the College has:
 - behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
 - possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
 - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he may pose a risk of harm to children.

The advice of the LADO will be followed appropriately.

6. Careful notes will be kept of information and advice received, decisions made and the reasoning behind them. In normal circumstances this will be done in full partnership with the Chorister's parents, unless for some reason this would place the child at increased risk of harm.
7. As soon as the LADO advises the DSL for the College that a matter should be referred to Children's Social Care or the Police, the DSL for the College will convene a group including the Warden and the Chaplain with full reference to Diocesan officers and legal authorities as applicable, in order to keep them fully informed.

8. The College will collaborate fully with the statutory agencies concerned with child protection.
9. The College is committed to offering support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
10. The College will care for and monitor any member of the College community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties.

Next review: Trinity Term 2020

Contact Information

The College's DSL	Mr Tim Lightfoot Domestic Bursar tim.lightfoot@merton.ox.ac.uk 01865 276939
The College's DOSC for the Choir	Ms Sarah Cotterill Chapel Administrator
The Chapel Administrator	Ms Sarah Cotterill sarah.cotterill@merton.ox.ac.uk 01865 616724
The Verger	Miss Leah Collins leah.collins@merton.ox.ac.uk 07745 426944
The Director of Music	Mr Benjamin Nicholas benjamin.nicholas@merton.ox.ac.uk 01865 286297
The Chaplain	The Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones simon.jones@merton.ox.ac.uk 01865 276365
Oxfordshire Children's Social Care	01865 323048 (office hours) 0800 833408 (out of hours)
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board LADO	Ms Alison Beasley (Interim) Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 01865 323457
Police Child Protection Unit	01865 335199
NSPCC Helpline	0800 800 5000 (24 hours)

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2016) can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>