

# Tips for Dance Studios, Schools and Initiatives

A SUPPORT DOCUMENT TO THE  
INTRODUCTORY SELF-ASSESSMENT  
TOOL FOR ORGANISATIONS

# TIPS FOR DANCE STUDIOS, SCHOOLS AND INITIATIVES

## A SUPPORT DOCUMENT TO THE INTRODUCTORY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR ORGANISATIONS

**When organisations put actions in place to be child safe, they help build a place where children are valued and feel safer, and where abuse of children is better prevented, responded to, and reported. Being a child safe organisation will help us all create a world where children and young people can both be safe and feel safe.<sup>1</sup>**

If you operate a dance studio, school or initiative (such as a project, event or competition) that involves children, you need to be familiar with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations in Australia. Each state/territory is in a different phase of legislation, adopting the principles as legal standards of compliance. In WA, while there is currently no legal requirement to implement and comply with the principles, it is important for all organisations that engage with

children to proactively work towards implementing child safe practices and procedures to make sure they are keeping children safe.

The Principles apply equally to every single person in an organisation or business working with children - from principals, directors, teachers, examiners and adjudicators, to administrators, volunteers and community organisers - we all have a responsibility to ensure that the spaces we create are safe and supportive for children and young people. Depending on our roles, different people may have different responsibilities related to this work, such as administrators supporting the screening of new staff, principals/owners role-modelling a child safe culture, etc.

<sup>1</sup> ACT Human Rights Commission, [Implementing the Child Safe Standards](#)

# THE 10 NATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Below are the 10 National Principles followed by a breakdown of how this applies to a dance context on the pages that follow. You may wish to use this as a guide while working through the [self-assessment tool](#), to help you clarify the context for dance.

- 1** Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
- 2** Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- 3** Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- 4** Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- 5** People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- 6** Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
- 7** Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- 8** Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- 9** Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
- 10** Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

# PRINCIPLE 1

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

## **In dance:**

Dance studios and businesses can demonstrate their commitment by creating a code of conduct for staff, volunteers, parents and students that outlines expectations and boundaries. This might include areas such as supervision, physical contact, communication and how/where to report concerns. These codes of conduct should be accessible and shared and reviewed regularly.

In a practical sense, embedding child safety and wellbeing into the culture of your dance studio or business is about having a child-focused approach to your work. Dance studio owners or principals have a critical role in promoting best practice in dance and establishing this culture through their actions, and prioritisation of child safety. This means prioritising the needs of each child, ensuring learning programs are developmentally appropriate to the level and age of the child, with appropriate support offered for children with specific or additional needs. This approach centres on best outcomes for young people, supporting a life-long love of dance in a physically, mentally and emotionally safe learning environment.

# PRINCIPLE 2

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

## **In dance:**

This means children and young people are involved in decision-making processes, have ways of providing feedback, are listened to, and their views are respected. It encourages participation and empowerment of young people, creating opportunities for leadership and development.

This principle is about ensuring children and young people have access to accurate information and resources that help them to understand their rights and responsibilities. It also involves creating an environment where young people feel comfortable expressing themselves and can see that their opinions are taken seriously.

## **Some reflections might be:**

- Do children and young people have the opportunity to speak up, give suggestions and participate in their learning?
- Have we provided a method of anonymous feedback for students, such as a suggestion box or white board?
- How are we developing a culture of informed, curious, confident young people?

## PRINCIPLE 3

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

### **In dance:**

This principle requires dance studios/schools to clearly communicate how they ensure child safety and wellbeing with families and communities, providing information in accessible ways such as through a website or newsletter. This also includes involving families and communities in conversations about child safety, and providing opportunities for feedback or input.

### **Some reflections might be:**

- How are we providing families with information about our online and social media policies? Is this communicated regularly?
- How do we inform our community of ways we uphold professional boundaries between staff and students and in all forms of communication, including online?
- What supervision policies and practices does our studio/school have in place?
- What opportunities are we providing families to have a say on the operations of our studio/project? (e.g. schedule, equipment/space, suggestions for improvement, etc.)

## PRINCIPLE 4

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

### **In dance:**

This principle requires organisations to prioritise the safety of children who may be at greater risk of harm. This can include implementing additional safeguards and support for children with disabilities, children from diverse cultural backgrounds, or children who may be experiencing family violence or other challenges. Staff may need additional training or support to ensure children's best interests are prioritised.

### **Some reflections might be:**

- Is our studio/school welcoming to all children, regardless of their circumstances and backgrounds? How do we know?
- Is our team (staff, volunteers) adequately trained and regularly upskilled to support children with specific needs?
- How does the language we use help to promote a fun and inclusive environment?

## PRINCIPLE 5

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

### **In dance:**

This principle requires organisations to carefully select staff and volunteers, assessing qualifications, relevant background, Working With Children Checks and other screening tools such as National Police Clearances, reference checks and attitudes towards the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Staff (including temporary relief or cover teachers) and volunteers should also be made aware of the studio/school's own child safety policies and procedures through an induction process. The physical safety of young people means ensuring all programs are appropriate to the age and skill level of students, and reflects current best practice in dance.

### **Some reflections might be:**

- Have we prioritised child safety in our recruitment process? Do we explicitly check references and history of applicants, and/or ask child safety-related questions during interviews?
- Have our staff had appropriate and regular training or professional development in child safety in dance and understand the expectations of our studio/school?
- Do we communicate the skills, qualifications and backgrounds of our teachers clearly and transparently with our students, families and community?

## PRINCIPLE 6

**Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.**

### **In dance:**

This principle requires organisations to have clear, accessible procedures for raising and responding to concerns and complaints. This might include having information about how to raise concerns through newsletters or on a website, inviting informal feedback regularly from parents and families after class or at the end of term, and a clear record keeping system linked to any decision making. Ideally, these measures are available in child-friendly formats, and young people know their rights to speak up if required. All teaching staff and helpers understand the procedures to respond to feedback and complaints and the importance of creating a safe space for children and young people to raise any concerns.

### **Some reflections might be:**

- Are the roles and responsibilities clear for handling complaints and concerns, including appropriate authorities where relevant?
- Do our staff, volunteers, parents and students understand this process and who they need to contact? How often are we reminding them?
- Are we proactive in converting feedback and complaints into improvement to our policies and practice?

## PRINCIPLE 7

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

### **In dance:**

This principle requires organisations to ensure staff are trained and skilled in the area of child safety and are providing opportunities for ongoing training. This includes knowledge of how to build safe environments for children and young people, understanding children's rights, recognising and responding to signs of harm, and knowing how and when to report to relevant authorities. In dance this relates to many factors including the physical environment (studio space, uniform and any learning tools or props), physical safety (technique, anatomy and injury prevention, appropriate programs and intensity for age/skill level), social and emotional wellbeing (supporting creativity and agency, self-esteem and communication), and many more.

### **Some reflections might be:**

- How are our team (principals, staff and volunteers) demonstrating a child safe environment, and are they supported with regular training or professional learning opportunities?
- Do we create opportunities for staff and volunteers to tell us what training and education they need?
- Are we taking our young people seriously when they communicate their feelings, needs or concerns?
- Have we considered which circumstances and experiences might increase a child's vulnerability to harm?

## PRINCIPLE 8

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

### **In dance:**

This principle requires organisations to proactively identify and assess risks in physical and online environments, implement appropriate mitigation strategies and take steps to minimise the opportunity for children to be harmed. Generally in dance, this is an area that people are keenly aware of, but typically evidence and our reporting procedures are minimal or non-existent. A focus on prevention of harm also considers increased risk with specific roles or activities (such as concerts/competitions, increased intensity or workload, or touring/travelling). Online safety risks may also include boundaries in the marketing and promotion of a studio/school, how individual students are featured, and online communication between staff and students.

### **Some reflections might be:**

- Does our risk management assessment include one-on-one/private lessons or quick change supervision requirements? (E.g., open door or viewing window in private lessons, extra staff or screening parent volunteers in changerooms.)
- Do our online safety policies ask for consent and respect all families' values?
- Does our studio model safe, best practice training appropriate for young bodies and minds?
- Do our teachers/staff follow a policy/procedure about appropriate social media content and communication with children and their families?

## PRINCIPLE 9

**Implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations is regularly reviewed and improved.**

### **In dance:**

This principle requires organisations to regularly assess and improve their child safe practices. This might be an annual review process, for example during staff training or inductions at the beginning of each year; or, a series of checkpoints throughout the year that break up the principles into smaller tasks. Aim to seek feedback from children, young people, parents and families, and staff and volunteers about child safe practices in the organisation and areas that could be improved.

## PRINCIPLE 10

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

### **In dance:**

This principle indicates that organisations must develop and maintain materials that are simple to read, child-friendly, easily available and referred to regularly. Documenting and keeping a record of the ways your studio or school is implementing the 10 National Principles is an important step. In states where these Principles have become legislated standards, it is a legal requirement to provide evidence of compliance. In WA, adopting this practice now will ensure you are prepared and informed to meet potential future requirements in WA to implement the National Principles and to provide a safe and welcoming environment now for all children, prioritising the needs and wellbeing of your students.

## Next Steps

Have you read our Action Plan and familiarised yourself with the 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Self-Assessment Tool alongside this resource? You can access them via our website.

If you have, we recommend reading the Sample Statements of Commitment resource to find out why this is a powerful action for your dance studio or school, and some examples.

Check out our other free resources on our website, or become an Ausdance WA member to get access to the Safeguarding Checklist for Dance Studios and other useful tools in Child Safety via the Member Hub.

Do you have feedback or a particular area you'd like us to focus on next? Let us know by emailing [director.wa@ausdance.org.au](mailto:director.wa@ausdance.org.au)

## Further Information

For more information, and other helpful resources, visit [www.ausdancewa.org.au/advocacy/child-safety/](http://www.ausdancewa.org.au/advocacy/child-safety/)

Join as an Ausdance WA member to have access to more Child Safeguarding tools and resources, including a new Safeguarding Checklist for Dance Studios in development.

## Acknowledgements

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- Child Safe Organisations, Ausdance Queensland, authored by Julie Englefield, 2023
- The Introductory self-assessment tool for organisations, Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018
- Implementing the Child Safe Standards, ACT Human Rights Commission
- A guide for managing high-risk activities, 2025 - Sport Integrity Australia
- Children and Young People Safe Practices Do's and Don'ts, 2023 - Sport Integrity Australia