

Chetham's School of Music
Report of the Independent Safeguarding Commission
for the School Year 2020-21

Introduction

An Independent Safeguarding Commission was established by the Feoffees and what was then the School Committee (now the Governing Body) of Chetham's School of Music in June 2013. The Commission's full Terms of Reference are available for inspection on the School's web-site. These require the Commission to prepare a report to the Feoffees and Governing Body at least once during each academic year. The Commission's current policy is to prepare a report towards the end of each such year, incorporating a summary of its meetings during that year, and to make the report available on the School's website. This is the eighth such report.

Composition

The Commission's members are appointed by the Feoffees and by the Governing Body. Each member serves for three years, subject to possible reappointment.

During the academic year 2020-21, the Commission comprised five members, namely:

Lindsey Kushner QC has been a member of the Commission since May 2017, and Chair since the meeting held on 26 September 2019. Lindsey Kushner is a retired Circuit Judge who, as a practising barrister and Queen's Counsel, and then as a judge, specialised in cases involving the care, welfare and protection of children;

Ms Marie Corran is currently Learning and Assurance Lead with Manchester Safeguarding Partnership (MSP). From 2011-2019, she was Assistant Director of Children's Services Merseyside and Cheshire Locality for Barnardos. Prior to that, she was Head of Strategy Engagement and Commissioning with Stockport Council (2004-2011). Ms Corran attended her first meeting as a member of the Commission on 19 April 2021, and her background and relevant experience is a welcome addition to the Independent Safeguarding Commission;

Mr Mike Devlin, a member of the Commission since June 2020, has over thirty-five years' experience as a solicitor specialising in the law relating to children. He is also Chair of the Safeguarding Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Salford, a position which he has held since 2005;

Ms Roz Hamilton CBE, a member of the Commission since its inaugural meeting in August 2013, has gained very considerable experience of child safety issues during her long career with the Probation Service. She is now Probation Deputy Director Courts in Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service; and

Mr Paul Lee, a member of the Commission since December 2013, is Chairman of the Feoffees of the Hospital and Library in Manchester, founded by Humphrey Chetham. For approximately forty years, until his retirement in 2013, he was a partner and ultimately Senior Partner in the law firm of Addleshaw Goddard. From 2014 to 2015, he served as the High Sheriff of Greater Manchester.

Pressure of work in recent times meant that **Mr John Kelly**, who had been a member of the Commission from December 2013, had been unable to attend any of the Commission's meetings during 2020-21, and his term as a member has now expired.

During the academic year 2020-21, the Commission met on 5 October 2020 and 19 April 2021, both meetings having taken place via Zoom in the light of Covid-19 restrictions. Lindsey Kushner QC, Mr Devlin, Ms Hamilton and Mr Lee attended both meetings, and Ms Corran attended one meeting.

To ensure the independence of the Commission, its Terms of Reference provide that no member of the Governing Body may be a member of the Commission. However, it is obviously important that the Commission should maintain channels of communication with the School, to which end the Terms of Reference also provide that the Commission may invite any non-member to attend its meetings. Joint Principals, Ms Nicola Smith and Mr Tom Redmond, attended both meetings, as did Mr Nigel Shepherd (Chair of the Safeguarding Committee) and Ms Karen Sinclair (secretary to the Commission).

As in previous years, Mrs Barbara Owen, the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), accepted a standing invitation to attend the meetings of the Commission to respond to questions from members of the Commission. Mrs Owen attended both of the Commission's meetings referred to above.

The Commission regards itself as fortunate to be able to draw on the combined wealth of experience of safeguarding matters at the School which Mr Redmond, Miss Smith, Mr Shepherd and Mrs Owen are able to offer. However, the Commission reserves the right to ask any other member of staff to attend any of its future meetings to answer any questions that may arise about safeguarding issues within that member of staff's particular area of responsibility.

Aims and Objectives

The Commission's Terms of Reference provide that the Commission must meet at least twice during each academic year.

The Commission's central aims are to advise, scrutinise, question, monitor, challenge, oversee and provide quality assurance to the School in matters relating to child protection and the safeguarding of children in its care. It should be noted, however, that the Commission is not a decision-making body and takes no part in the management and running of the School. In this regard it differs from, for example, the Governing Body and the Safeguarding Committee of the School.

The Commission is well aware of the need for the School to maintain the highest standards of safeguarding for its students, not least because many of the students are boarders and/or receive individual tuition. The Commission is also well aware of the parental and public concern that would arise in the event of any shortcomings in this regard. It therefore aims to ensure that the School has in place, and properly implements, appropriate and effective policies for the care of its students.

Actions of the Commission

The steps taken by the Commission to achieve its aims and objectives prior to its meeting on 5 October 2020 are set out in detail in the Commission's first seven reports, and it is not proposed to repeat them here. Since then, the following further steps have been taken.

1. The Commission has been provided with substantial documentation bearing on safeguarding matters in general and at the School in particular. The Commission's first seven reports referred to the documentation with which it had been provided prior to 5 October 2020. Since then, the Commission has received and considered further such documentation, including the following:
 - updated versions of the School's : Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy and Procedures (approved by Governing Body 2 October 2020 and updated 12 March 2021); and Safer Recruitment Policy (approved by Governing Body 30 September 2020);

- New, updated or draft policies in progress as reviewed by the Safeguarding Committee, including:
 - Online Activity Policy and Procedures;
 - e-Safety Policy & e-Safety Policy Student Version;
 - Coerced Self-generated Images Policy;
 - Counter Bullying extract;
 - Educational Recommendations Policy;
 - Remote Extracurricular Learning Policy / Remote Learning Risk Assessment;

- revised regulatory requirements, including:
 - check-lists, updates and forms of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), and updates to Statutory Guidance for Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE);
 - Proposed Standards for Boarding Schools (Annex A), Government Consultation;
 - Proposed Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 – Proposed Statutory Guidance for Schools & Colleges, Consultation;

- the minutes of the meetings of the School's Safeguarding Committee held by Zoom on 22 June 2020, 30 November 2020 and 18 March 2021 together with a selection of the papers considered at those meetings, including:
 - DSL's reports to the Safeguarding Committee, June 2020, November 2020 and March 2021, including minutes of meetings of the e-Safety Committee and minutes of the joint meetings of the safeguarding links from the School and Manchester Cathedral;
 - DSL's report on Safeguarding Update Training during academic year 2020/21;
 - ongoing updates concerning the safeguarding of Choristers;
 - Bursar's Reports, June 2020, November 2020 and March 2021, including governance matters, recruitment, DBS checks, Central Register of Appointments, supervision of visitors;
 - reports generated through the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS), including behaviour statistics, incident reports and neutral notifications to June 2020, November 2020 and March 2021;
 - Off-Site, One-to-One and Home Tuition Reports March – June 2020, June – November 2020 and November 2020 – March 2021;
 - reports concerning the final arrangements for Chetham's International Piano Summer School (CIPSS) 2020, debrief following the event and early arrangement for CIPSS 2021;
 - NMS Health Checks and Inspection Preparation reports June 2020, November 2020 and March 2021;

- reports and documentation concerning vicarious liability and related matters, June 2020, November 2020 and March 2021, including draft policy on teacher recommendations;
 - Covid 19 updates plus documentation and risk assessments relation to the partial return to School in June 2020 and full return to School in September 2020;
 - Report prepared by Assistant Principal, Julia Harrison, concerning the School's experience following full return in September 2020, with particular reference to staff and student mental health;
 - Student Wellbeing – report prepared by the Director of Music;
 - Student Mental Health and Wellbeing update March 2021 (now a standing agenda item);
 - Student Forum Minutes, 10 November 2020 and 14 January 2021;
 - ongoing updates to the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), June 2020 and November 2020.
2. Having studied these minutes and documents, the members of the Commission have had the opportunity of questioning Mr Shepherd, Mr Redmond, Miss Smith and Mrs Owen about them, and about a variety of other safeguarding issues. The matters covered have included:
- a review and update of the Commission's Terms of Reference;
 - the successful recruitment of an additional Commission member (Marie Corran);
 - the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, signed off by the Governing Body 2 October 2020 and subsequent update signed off on 12 March 2021;
 - the School's continuing rigorous efforts in relation to:
 - the provision to all members of staff, visiting tutors, Governors and Feoffees of induction and refresher training concerning matters relating to student safeguarding;
 - the safeguarding of its Choristers, in conjunction with Manchester Cathedral;
 - the protection of its pupils from drug dealing activities and anti-social behaviour by certain members of the public in close proximity to the School, through ongoing discussions with Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Police;
 - the continuing challenge to plans for the siting of a vending kiosk close to the School;
 - student wellbeing and mental health, and the instigation of a regular mental health update to the Safeguarding Committee;
 - debrief following Chetham's International Piano Summer School (CIPSS) 2020 and early safeguarding arrangements for the event in 2021;

- progress in relation to the refurbishment of boarding facilities (Millgate Building);
- plans and progress concerning the reopening(s) of School following the national lockdowns of 2020 and 2021;
- reporting generated by the Child Protection Online Monitoring System (CPOMS) and the continued improvement to student behaviour;
- plans to follow up with those affected by historic child sexual abuse at Chetham's;
- the prompt updating of the ever-evolving policies around online tuition necessitated by the Covid-19;
- the School's ongoing discussions around vicarious liability and related matters, including a draft policy on teacher recommendations;
- the very positive tone of the notes from Student Forum meetings;
- the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) which had now been discontinued. The document, formulated in 2013, had served its original purpose, namely to quality assure the plan devised in 2013 in response to allegations of historic child sexual abuse. The contents of the QAF are now duplicated elsewhere and updated on an ongoing basis.

Detailed accounts of the Commission's proceedings in relation to these matters and generally can be found in the minutes of its meetings.

The Commission regards the answers it has received to its extensive enquiries as being of a consistently high and reassuring standard.

Conclusion

The Commission appreciates the need to remain strictly independent and vigilant, and to avoid complacency. That said, it is right to add that the Commission has continued to be highly impressed by the School's attitude and approach to student safeguarding matters. The number and nature of the School's safeguarding policies and the manner in which they are implemented indicate clearly how importantly the School regards the safeguarding of its students. As last year, the Commission's enquiries and observations have detected a thoughtful, thorough and caring approach on the School's part. There is every reason to expect that the current very high standards will be maintained.

Lindsey Kushner QC

Marie Corran

Mike Devlin

Roz Hamilton CBE

Paul Lee OBE

11 October 2021