

Child protection and safeguarding

If you work with children and young people or vulnerable adults then you need to be aware of your responsibilities as a teacher in order to safeguard your pupils and protect yourself from having allegations made against you.

Safeguarding yourself and your pupils

Music teachers may feel vulnerable working with individuals or small groups of pupils. The following advice is to help protect you in your teaching and gives examples of best practice behaviour.

- Any **physical contact** with pupils can be potentially subject to misinterpretation or even malicious allegations. The best advice is to avoid touching your pupils and to develop strategies for teaching through demonstration and modelling.
- Keep all **communication** with pupils on a professional level. Beware of exchanging personal contact details and sharing information on social networking websites.
- Be aware of the **language** that you use when teaching. Swearing, making disparaging or insensitive remarks, the use of suggestive language and terms of endearment are inappropriate in a teaching environment.
- If you have any **concerns** about a child or if a pupil shares any information with you regarding bullying, abuse, personal problems, or you suspect such issues, you should report this to the school, parent/guardian or relevant authority at your earliest opportunity. Do not try to resolve the problem yourself.
- If you feel that your **professional or personal safety** is at risk, inform a member of school staff.
- All teachers should have access to a school's **policy documents** regarding child protection, Special Educational Needs teaching and dealing with difficult pupils.

Case study

Jenny, a school choir director, noticed a change in behaviour in a pupil named Kim. Kim was often angry, frequently disrupted rehearsals and appeared to be losing weight. Concerned, Jenny asked if there was anything wrong; Kim admitted that there were problems at home with her mother who was drinking heavily and becoming volatile and abusive. She asked Jenny not to tell anyone. Jenny had taken part in safeguarding training, which included information on the current legislation, best practice and how to respond to different scenarios. She realised that she couldn't deal with the situation herself and explained to Kim that she had to tell the appropriate authority, who would know what help was available.

Advice from the Musicians' Union

Approach your teaching as a professional and remember that you are the responsible adult. If an incident happens in a lesson, immediately report it to the school or the parent/guardian. If any allegation is made against you, contact your Regional Office straight away for advice and support.

Child Protection Awareness Course developed by Educare in conjunction with the MU: educare.co.uk