

Magdalen College, Oxford

Magdalen College Choir Child Safeguarding Policy

CONTACT DETAILS:

For contact details for the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead, and others, see the list in section 1 of 'Preventative Measures' below, or the fuller list at the end of this policy.

Key documents to which this policy has reference:

The relevant statutory guidance is found in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) September 2025, and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2023 (WT).

Magdalen College School Safeguarding Policy applies to all pupils, including Choristers, at all times.

The Chorister Handbook, circulated to all chorister parents at the start of each year.

Magdalen College Safeguarding Policy

NOTICE TO CHORISTERS

If you are a Chorister reading this policy, and anything or anyone worries you or makes you feel unsafe, please speak to your parents. But if for any reason you would rather not do this, you may contact any of the people listed in this policy (or your house tutor or other staff at the School) and be assured that they are there to help you or point you to help.

Background:

All boys in the College Choir are educated at Magdalen College School, with which the College is closely connected. The College, with the co-operation and support of the School, has produced this Child Safeguarding Policy for the Choir which has regard to the guidance from the Department 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, with the support of the School, will respond without delay to any complaint or allegation of abuse, fully involving Magdalen College School, and then, if appropriate, by referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Children's Social Care, and the Police.

This policy is written with regard to the School's Safeguarding Policy, as the School's Safeguarding Policy is appropriate for School pupils wherever they are, and must always be referred to in addition to this policy.

The College's DSL and School's DSL meet regularly, and at least every term, in order to review the working of this policy. These meetings include assurances that College staff working with School pupils have all appropriate checks and training in place and current.

The wellbeing of the choristers, individually and corporately, is essential to the successful functioning of the Choir, and several people in both College and School are involved in the pastoral care of the choristers.

While choristers, as pupils of Magdalen College School, come under the umbrella of the whole-school safeguarding policies, there are arrangements specific to the chorister experience which require additional attention. Magdalen College Choir has a safeguarding policy which covers these specific areas, in addition to broader matters of safeguarding, drawn from both the School safeguarding policy and that of the College. It is updated annually, following discussions between MCS and Magdalen College, and distributed to all parents at the start of each new academic year. It is also distributed to all Academical Clerks, organists, and other members of the Chapel and Choir department, and displayed on the School and College websites.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead for the College is Mr Albie Ray, the Home Bursar, and for the School is Mr David Bennett, the Director of Safeguarding. They meet regularly to discuss Safeguarding issues specific to the Choir, and regularly attend meetings of the College's Chapel & Choir Committee (made up of the President, the Vice President, the Informator and Dean, two other Fellows of the College, and the Master of the College School).

There is a weekly meeting between the Informator Choristarum, the Assistant Organist, the Chorister Supervisor, the Head and Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the Junior School, the Head of Lower School, the Usher, and the Choir Administrator at which practical matters, progress and workload are discussed, and in which the wellbeing of the group and individuals is raised as a matter of course.

All of those who fall into 'Regulated Activity' in the Choir and Chapel are required to have the usual safeguarding pre-appointment checks before they begin their work. The PA to the Home Bursar arranges Enhanced Disclosure DBS checks for all Chapel staff, clergy, organists and Academical Clerks, who come into contact with the Choristers, and all school staff are subject to full DBS checks. Academical Clerks, organists and Chapel staff all receive annual Safeguarding training.

Check-ins with choristers and probationers take place regularly on an informal basis, but opportunities to offer feedback on Choir and on pastoral issues surrounding membership of the Choir are provided through termly meetings and annual surveys.

Chorister, probationers, and their parents are encouraged to raise any questions concerning the wellbeing of their sons with members of staff with responsibility for the choir within MCS, principally Mr Sellis, Mr Skipwith, Mrs Kelly-Eldridge and Mr Hemingway. Details of how to contact them are given at the end of this policy.

Preventative Measures:

1. **All Choristers who feel unsafe are encouraged to speak to their parents. But if they would rather not do that, the School's Safeguarding team is the first port of call. The School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will liaise as appropriate with the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead.**

The School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is the Director of Safeguarding, Mr David Bennett: dbennett@mcsoxford.org, tel 01865 242191 ext. 248 or 07741 311831. The School's Deputy Safeguarding Officers are (all tel 01865 242191):

Mr Ben White (The Usher): usher@mcsoxford.org

Mr Rob Hemingway (Head of Lower School): rhemingway@mcsoxford.org

Mr Tim Skipwith (Head of Junior School): tskipwith@mcsoxford.org

Mr Tim Cooper (Head of Middle School): tcooper@mcsoxford.org

Ms Sally Pearson (Head of Sixth Form): spearson@mcsoxford.org

These each receive training to enable them to carry out their roles.

The College's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is the Home Bursar, Mr Albert Ray, home.bursar@magd.ox.ac.uk, tel 01865 276050, who has the leadership responsibility for the College's safeguarding arrangements.

The admission of Clerks and Organ Scholars, and the appointment of the Dean of Divinity, Informator Choristarum, Assistant Organist, Chapel Verger, Chapel and Choir PA, and the Choristers' Singing Teacher, is, like appointments to the teaching staff at the School, conditional on the possession of a satisfactory DBS check at the Enhanced level and the receipt of two references which satisfactorily address the question of the candidate's suitability for work with children. If a DBS check is delayed, candidates have no unsupervised contact with Choristers until a satisfactory check is received. Should a difficult or complicated recruitment judgement be called for, with the consent of the applicant to

whom the information relates, the College's DSL shares confidential information specifically relevant to child welfare with the School's DSL. If necessary, consideration would be given to the imposition of supervision conditions on the adult concerned. DBS information is kept separately, not in general personal or academic files. Local clergy, including the Fellows' Chaplain, 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.

2. Specific directives relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children are included in the guidelines which are presented to Clerks and Organ Scholars by the Informator Choristarum. 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. Where a Clerk or Organ Scholar infringes these directives, the Informator Choristarum reserves the right to suspend him or her from all Choir activities, giving full notice of the reason for suspension, with a right to reply. Good pastoral care is to be provided for all concerned but the safety of children is the paramount consideration. If the infringement indicates that there are grounds for concern, advice may be sought from outside agencies in accordance with guidance from the Secretary of State for Education.
3. Chorister welfare has a permanent place on the agenda of all meetings of the Chapel and Choir Committee, providing among other things a regular forum in which to reflect on and discuss practice in the light of experience.
4. This policy, along with the guidelines presented to Clerks and Organ Scholars, is reviewed on an annual basis, at the Michaelmas Term meeting of the Chapel and Choir Committee, and by the School as part of its annual review of safeguarding policy and practice. A copy of the policy is given to Academical Clerks and Organ Scholars in the context of a mandatory verbal induction, and to the Fellows' Chaplain, Chapel Verger, the Choristers' Singing Teacher, and Chorister Parents. Organ Scholars who give music tuition to children also receive a copy of Magdalen College School's Safeguarding Policy, the College's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, the Oxford University Safeguarding Code of Practice, and a copy of Part One of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2025). They are required to confirm that they have read at least Part One (including Annex B) of the latter guidance. They are aware of updated guidance year on year, including with regard to the nature of child-on-child abuse. The College is clear that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed as mere 'banter' or 'having a laugh'. All adults in the Choir should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise

their experiences as harmful. All adults in the Choir should be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation, understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of school settings, inside and outside of home, and online. All adults in the choir should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk. All adults in the choir should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school settings and online.

5. Academical Clerks and other staff associated with the College Choir receive Safeguarding training from the College's DSL on an annual basis.

Procedures in the Event of a Concern, Complaint or Allegation of Abuse:

1. All Safeguarding concerns pertaining to Choristers must be made known to the School's DSL or a deputy. All adults in the choir should maintain an attitude of '**it could happen here**' and should act **immediately** on any concerns.
2. Within the College, the handling of complaints and allegations relating to Choristers is the responsibility of the Home Bursar as the College's DSL (see contact details above and at the end of this policy). This is made known to Chorister Parents and to Choristers at the time of their entry to the Choir. The Home Bursar sends all parents a letter, every September, containing information about Child Protection. Parents whose sons begin to sing in the Choir at some other time of the year receive these materials as soon as the Choristership starts.
3. Parents, Choristers, or others who have any concerns at any time relating to the safety of Choristers should contact the School's DSL and the College's DSL (see contact details above and at the end of this policy). Notices are placed at child-eye-level height in the Choristers' Day Room in the School and the Song School in the College informing Choristers who they should speak to if anything or anyone worries them or makes them feel unsafe.

If anyone feels unable to convey a concern to a Senior Member of College, then the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline should be used: the number is 0800 028 0285. They should also call that number if they have reported a concern and believe that subsequent action which should have been taken under this policy has not been taken.

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 at School, 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 Mr Mark Williams (the Informator Choristarum), Mr Sellis (the Tutor to the Choristers), Mrs Adams (the Supervisor to the Choristers), Mr Skipwith (the Head of Junior School), your tutor, Mr Hemingway (the Head of Lower School), or Mr Bennett (the Director of Safeguarding). Their contact details are given at the end 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.

If a Chorister is in immediate danger, rather than there being a concern about a Chorister, the Police or Social Services should be called immediately. Dial the Police on 999 or Social Services on 0345 0507666 or 0800 833408 (out of hours).

4. 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 Home Bursar, who is the College's DSL, or to the Director of Safeguarding, who is the School's DSL, each of whom will immediately inform the other (see contact details above and at the end of this policy).
5. 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 conjunction with the School's DSL 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' (September 2025). This is available to the public on-line. The senior management of the School and College will be kept informed, in confidence, unless for some reason this would place a child at increased risk of harm.
6. 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.

- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates that they may not be suitable to work with children

The advice of the LADO will be followed appropriately. LADO may be consulted with regard to low level concerns, as defined by KCSIE 2025, as well as concerns which may reach safeguarding threshold.

7. 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.
8. The relationship between the DSL of the College and the DSL of Magdalen College School will be one of full and equal partnership, founded on a presumption of openness and joint decision-making. They meet on a termly basis to allow for the regular exchange of information and the maintenance of a good working relationship. Their over-arching principle is always to act in the best interests of the child. They share responsibility for contact with a Chorister's parents, and will initiate the process by which advice is sought from the LADO and/or matters are referred to Children's Social Care or the Police.
9. As soon as the LADO advises or either the DSL for the College or the DSL for the School feels that a matter should be referred to Children's Social Care or the Police, the DSL for the College and the DSL for the School will together convene a group including the President and the Master with full reference to Diocesan officers and legal authorities as applicable, in order to keep them fully informed.
10. The College and School will collaborate fully with the statutory agencies concerned with child protection.

Next review: Michaelmas Term 2026

Contact Information

The College's DSL

Mr Albie Ray
Home Bursar
Home.bursar@magd.ox.ac.uk
Tel. 01865 276050

The School's DSL

Mr David Bennett
Director of Safeguarding
dbennett@mcsoxford.org
Tel. 01865 242191
07741 311831

The School's Deputy Safeguarding Officers

Mr Rob Hemingway
Head of Lower School
rhemingway@mcsoxford.org
Tel. 01865 242191

Mr Ben White
The Usher
usher@mcsoxford.org

Mr Tim Cooper
Head of Middle School
tcooper@mcsoxford.org

Tel. 01865 242191
Mr Tim Skipwith
Head of Junior School

tskipwith@mcsoxford.org
Tel. 01865 242191

Ms Sally Pearson
Head of Sixth Form
spearson@mcsoxford.org

Tel. 01865 242191

The Tutor to the Choristers

Mr Drew Sellis
dsellis@mcsoxford.org
Tel. 01865 287059

The Supervisor to the Choristers	Mrs Emma Adams eadams@mcsoxford.org Tel. 01865 242191
The Informator Choristarum	Mr Mark Williams mark.williams@magd.ox.ac.uk Tel. 01865 276007
The Dean of Divinity	The Rev'd Dr Andrew Bowyer Andrew.bowyer@magd.ox.ac.uk Tel. 01865 276027
Oxfordshire Children's Social Care (MASH)	Tel. 0345 0507666 Tel. 0800 833408 (Out of Hours)
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) team: Jo Lloyd, Sandra Barratt, Amie Pilcher LADO.SafeguardingChildren@Oxfordshire.gov.uk Tel. 01865 810603
NSPCC Helpline	Tel. 0808 800 5000 (24 hours) or help@nspcc.org.uk
NSPCC Childline (for U18s to call)	0800 1111

APPENDIX 1 – possible indicators of abuse or safeguarding issues

The following list is not exhaustive but these are possible indicators that something concerning is happening in a child's life:

- Physical signs such as unexplained bruising, multiple bruising or burns. Bruises and injuries should be interpreted in the context of the child's medical and social history, developmental stage and the explanation given.
- Behavioural signs, including fearfulness, aggressive behaviour or withdrawal.
- Fearfulness around particular individuals.
- Anxiety or undue fear of making mistakes.
- Regularly complaining of stomach pains or feelings of illness.
- Changes in behaviour.
- Knowledge/use of language beyond a child's age or developmental stage.
- Sexually explicit behaviour/language which is not in line with age or developmental stage.
- Poor hygiene.
- Behaviour which suggests a child may be experiencing a mental health problem.