October 2026

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 2026, and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2026 (WT).

The College also has regard for the 'Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026' which places a duty on schools, colleges and other safeguarding partners to share information proactively where it is relevant to safeguarding or promoting a child's welfare. Magdalen College School Safeguarding Policy applies to all pupils, including Choristers, at all times.

The Chorister Handbook is 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. You may also 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 choristers 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 Children's Social Care, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), 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 the Home Bursar, and for the School the Director of Pastoral Care. 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 College HR department arranges Enhanced Disclosure DBS checks with the Children's Barred List 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 the Tutor to the Choristers, the Head and Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the Junior School, the Head of Lower School. 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. They can also speak to any teachers at the School, in particular, the School's Safeguarding team. 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 Pastoral Care, 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 Tim Skipwith (Head of Junior School):	**tskipwith@mcsoxford.org**
Mrs Christine Kelly-Eldridge (Deputy Head of Junior School):	**ckellyeldridge@mcsoxford.org**
Mr Rob Hemingway (Head of Lower School):	**rhemingway@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, the College's DSL will carry out a risk assessment and put in place mitigations for the adult concerned, in liaison with the School's DSL.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 2026). 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.

6. College and School staff liaise to ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place for the supervision of choristers. This is particularly important given that the life of the Choir differs significantly from ordinary school routines. Much of the supervision of the choristers is carried out by the Supervisor to the Choristers. Particular thought will also be given to appropriate supervision on tours.

7. In keeping with guidance in KCSIE 2026, the Choir is a mobile phone-free environment by default. Staff supervising the Choir will operate according to this principle. In some contexts, this may involve collecting in mobile phones (for example, during tours). In some contexts, this may involve ensuring that choristers' mobile phones are switched off and not carried on their person.

What child-on-child abuse can include

Child-on-child abuse can take many forms, and can happen between choristers of the same or different ages, in person or online, on College or School premises, on tour, or outside either setting. It includes, but is not limited to:

- bullying, including cyberbullying, and prejudice-based bullying relating to race, faith, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity;
- physical abuse, including hitting, kicking, biting or hair-pulling;
- sexual violence and sexual harassment, including sexualised or degrading name-calling, comments or 'jokes', and unwanted physical contact;

- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.

A concern does not need to meet a criminal threshold, or involve an obvious power imbalance, to be taken seriously. Adults in the Choir are alert to the fact that some children may not recognise what has happened to them as abusive, and that apparent consent does not remove the need for a safeguarding response.

What is different about the Choir context

Choristers spend time together in ways that are not typical of an ordinary school day, and this policy recognises that these features of choir life call for particular vigilance:

- choristers of different ages and seniority robe, change and rehearse together in shared spaces;
- choir tours and residential trips involve shared accommodation, less structured free time, and periods when the usual daily supervision of the School is not immediately available;
- there is a wide age-range among choristers, spanning Junior School and Senior School;
- choristers may interact online creating an online dimension to peer relationships that requires the same vigilance as any other safeguarding issue.

Preventative measures specific to the Choir

- A code of expected conduct between choristers is included in the Chorister Handbook and reinforced at induction and before tours.
- Changing, robing and washing arrangements are supervised by an appropriate adult, with visibility maintained and no lone-adult/lone-child situations; younger and older choristers are not left to supervise these arrangements unsupervised.
- On tour, room and accommodation allocation takes account of age and any known vulnerabilities, an appropriate adult is available and identifiable at all times, and choristers are told who to go to if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable, including in relation to another chorister's behaviour.
- Termly meetings and the annual chorister survey explicitly invite choristers to raise concerns about how they are treated by other choristers, not only by adults, and the notices at child-eye-level in the Choristers' Day Room and Song School make clear that this includes anything another chorister does or says.
- Age-appropriate teaching on healthy relationships, consent and respectful behaviour, delivered through the School's PSHE/RSE curriculum.

Responding to a concern about child-on-child abuse

A concern or allegation that one chorister may have harmed, or be at risk of harming, another is treated with the same seriousness, and reported in the same way, as any other safeguarding concern (see 'Procedures in the Event of a Concern, Complaint or Allegation of Abuse' below). In addition:

- the School's DSL (or a deputy) and the College's DSL will consider the needs of both the child who has experienced the behaviour and the child alleged to have carried it out, arranging appropriate support and safeguarding for each;
- a risk and needs assessment will be carried out for the child alleged to have caused harm, as well as for the child harmed;
- contact with the parents of both children is managed by the DSLs or a deputy, in a manner that keeps each child safe and does not compromise any ongoing assessment or investigation;
- referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police will be made in line with guidance in KCSIE 2026 and local threshold documents, regardless of the age of the child alleged to have caused harm; and
- no concern will be dismissed as 'banter', 'part of growing up', an 'initiation ritual' or otherwise minimised because it took place between children rather than involving an adult.

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. You can also speak to the Informator Choristarum, the Tutor to the Choristers, the Supervisor to the Choristers, the Head of Junior School, your tutor, the Head of Lower School, or the Director of Pastoral Care. 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 Pastoral Care, 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 set out in KCSIE 2026 and local safeguarding arrangements. These documents are 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 2026, as well as concerns which may reach the above 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 2027

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 Pastoral Care dbennett@mcsoxford.org Tel. 01865 242191 07741 311831
The School's DDSLs	Mr Ben White The Usher usher@mcsoxford.org Tel. 01865 242191 Mr Tim Skipwith Head of Junior School tskipwith@mcsoxford.org Tel. 01865 242191 Mrs Christine Kelly-Eldridge Deputy Head of Junior School (Pastoral) ckellyeldridge@mcsoxford.org Tel. 01865 242191 Mr Rob Hemingway Head of Lower School rhemingway@mcsoxford.org Tel. 01865 242191 Mr Tim Cooper Head of Middle School tcooper@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	Mr Shabba McDermott
	smcdermott@mcsoxford.org
	Tel. 01865 242191
The Informator Choristarum	Mr Mark Williams
	mark.williams@magd.ox.ac.uk
	Tel. 01865 276007
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:
	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.