



Child Safe Policy

*The Vital Movement Studios Child Safe Policy complies with
Section 8C of the Children's Protection Act 1993.*

Vital movement Studios's Child Safe Policy

1.	Purpose	3
2.	Context	3
3.	Scope	3
4.	Commitment to child safety	4
5.	Children's participation	4
6.	Recruitment practices	4
7.	Code of Conduct	5
8.	Support for employees and volunteers.....	5
9.	Reporting and responding to suspected child abuse and neglect...	6
10.	Strategies to minimise risk.....	7
11.	Harassment/bullying.....	7
12.	Communication.....	8
13.	Related policies and procedures	8

1. Purpose

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of Vital Movement Studios to child safety and establishing and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments.

2. Context

This policy reflects our commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm.

It complies with our obligations under the *Children's Protection Act 1993*, including:

- Section 8B – 8D – child safe environments and criminal history assessments for people working with children; and
- Section 11 – Mandatory reporting.

It also complies with the Child safe environments: Principles of good practice and Child safe environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children issued by the Chief Executive. (Section 8A, *Children's Protection Act 1993*).

3. Scope

This policy, from the date of endorsement, applies to all people involved in the organisation, including:

- employees (permanent and casual)
- volunteers
- contractors
- sub-contractors
- work experience students
- indirect service providers
- any other individual involved in this organisation

Note: In this policy, the term "employee" is intended to cover all persons occupying any position listed above

4. Commitment to child safety

All children who come to Vital Movement Studios have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people accessing our services and the welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where all children are valued and feel safe.

We have appointed a child safety officer as a first point of contact to provide advice and support to children, parents, employees and volunteers regarding the safety and well-being of children in our organisation.

5. Children's participation

Vital Movement Studios encourages and respects the views of children and young people who access our services. We listen to and act upon any concerns that children, young people or their families raise with us. We teach children what they can do if they feel unsafe.

We ensure that children, young people and their families know their rights and how to access the complaints procedures available to them.

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

6. Recruitment practices

Vital Movement Studios takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. We employ a range of screening measures and apply best practice standards in the screening and recruitment of employees and volunteers. We interview and conduct referee checks on all employees.

We conduct criminal history assessment for people working with children, as set out in Section 8B of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*. Criminal history assessments are required for anyone within our organisation that:

- has regular contact with children and is not directly supervised at all times;

- works in close proximity to children on a regular basis and is not directly supervised at all times; or
- supervises or manages persons who:
 - have regular contact with children or
 - work in close proximity to children on a regular basis; or
- has access to sensitive records relating to children or young people.

Exemptions from this requirement may apply in some circumstances.

We ensure that criminal history information is dealt with in accordance with the Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children, issued pursuant to Section 8A, *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

7. Code of Conduct

All members are made aware of, and must abide by, our Code of Conduct. Our Code of Conduct was developed in collaboration with all our employees, volunteers, the children who use our services and their parents.

8. Support for employees and volunteers

Vital Movement Studios seeks to attract and retain the best employees and volunteers. We provide support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. We ensure that employees/volunteers who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their capacity is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child safe environment.

Strategies we have implemented include:

- All new employees undergo induction and receive a copy of our child safe policy and code of conduct.
- All employees receive regular supervision sessions that include a focus on ongoing learning about child protection and other matters that affect children and young people.
- A child safety officer has been appointed as a first point of contact for all child protection matters.

9. Reporting and responding to suspected child abuse and neglect

Information about making appropriate reports of abuse or neglect is available from the Families SA website
<http://www.families.sa.gov.au/childsafef>.

Vital Movement Studios will not tolerate incidents of child abuse.

All employees and volunteers understand their obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line on **13 14 78** as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected.

From time to time we provide opportunities for employees to attend information sessions about these mandatory reporting obligations (*Note: offering formal training for staff and volunteers is not a legal requirement*). We also ensure that employees have access to relevant information resources such as:

- Child safe environment: Guidelines for mandated notifiers and information for organisations (available to view or download from www.families.sa.gov.au/childsafef)
- Families SA reporting child abuse website: <http://www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/default.aspx?tabid=485>
- Free online SMART (Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma) Learning package, developed by the Australian Childhood Foundation: www.childhood.org.au)

We ensure that support is also available for the employee making the report, particularly where an ongoing service is provided to the child, young person and their family.

Supporting children, young people and their families

Child Protection is everyone's responsibility. Vital Movement Studios recognises that even where a report is made, we may still have a role in supporting the child or young person. This support may include:

- Referring the child, young person or their family to other appropriate services
- Displaying information about services that can assist children and their families (such as the Kids Helpline and Youth Healthline) in areas accessed by children and their families.

Dealing with reports or concerns relating to the actions of an employee or volunteer of our organisation

In addition to making a report to the Child Abuse Report Line, employees and volunteers must also report to Vanessa Schar or management if reasonable suspicion is formed that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected by another member, employee, or volunteer.

In response to any report to management concerning a member, employee or volunteer of this organisation, management may determine to take disciplinary action.

Other protective actions may also be introduced to ensure the safety of children and young people within our organisation.

10. Strategies to minimise risk

Policies and procedures may address (but are not limited to):

- Transportation
- Taking images of children
- Supervision of children
- Child safety officer
- Complaints procedures
- Physical contact
- Responsibilities
- Procedure for breaches of policy
- Training\cyber safe guidelines
- Protecting privacy and confidentiality
- Procedures for dealing with situations where a member is being investigated for, or is charged with, a serious criminal offence.

Evaluation of these strategies and the development of additional strategies to minimise and control risks to children and young people occur as part of our ongoing risk management process.

11. Harassment/bullying

Vital Movement Studios opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying. We take this issue seriously and encourage anyone who believes that they, or another person, has been harassed, discriminated against or bullied to raise this issue with Vanessa Schar or management.

12. Communication

Vital Movement Studios will ensure that everyone to whom this policy applies is aware of and has had an opportunity to read the policy.

We also ask employees, volunteers and parents (where appropriate) to sign a written statement indicating that they have read and will abide by our child-safe policy. We retain a copy of all signed statements.

13. Related policies and procedures

VITAL MOVEMENT STUDIOS TEACHERS CODE OF ETHICS

We will make sure that the school and its staff is capable of providing any services claimed.

We will employ teaching staff with the experience, knowledge and/or qualifications required for the range of levels and techniques being taught. Student teachers will be trained and supervised to ensure the school's teaching standards are maintained.

We will provide effective assessment procedures and will ensure that students and parents receive, or have access to, advice when necessary.

We will conform to sound business practice and provide an efficient fee system.

We will ensure that class sizes are suitable to the levels and techniques being taught. Students in each class will be of a similar age and/or standard.

We will ensure that facilities provided:

- conform with minimum safety and space requirements
- have suitable flooring, with a safe surface designed and constructed to minimise risk of injury.

We will use effective and flexible teaching skills to create a productive learning environment. Individual teachers will:

- strive to communicate a love of dance
- show professional attitudes, including punctuality, reliability and responsible care of students

- strive to develop self-discipline and self-motivation in the students
- encourage and support the individual in the class situation
- present general concepts of movement as well as those of a particular dance style.

We will recognise the role of dance in the development of the whole person. They will also seek to recognise and develop each student's potential, whether it lies in dance or in related fields, and offer appropriate guidance for further progress.

We will endeavour to recognise physical anomalies, modifying their teaching and seeking medical advice when necessary. The teaching and choreography must be anatomically safe, and teachers must be prepared to deal with medical emergencies.

We will strive to develop in the students an appreciation of the characteristic style of each specific technique taught.

We will take responsibility for seeking more knowledge in all aspects of their work.

Approved by	Date	Review date

Conducting criminal history assessments

Assessments required for prescribed positions

All employees and volunteers of Vital Movement Studios who occupy a prescribed position (as set out under Section 8B (8) of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*) are required to undergo a criminal history assessment once every three years.

Criminal history assessments are also required prior to the appointment of new employees or members to prescribed positions.

Exemptions from this requirement may apply in some circumstances (see below). However Vital Movement Studios retains the discretion to decide on a case-by-case basis whether any relevant exemptions will be exercised.

This requirement applies to all employees who regularly work with or around children in an unsupervised capacity or have access to prescribed records relating to children.

Procedure for conducting criminal history assessments

Note: The Children's Protection Act 1993 enables organisations to decide the manner in which they will conduct criminal history assessments. Please choose the option below that reflects the method of assessment that your organisation has adopted.

Option 1

A current Letter of Clearance from the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) Screening Unit is a precondition of engagement of employees and volunteers who work in a prescribed position at Vital Movement Studios. The cost of obtaining a Letter of Clearance will be negotiated between Vital Movement Studios and the employee or volunteer.

Prior to the appointment of a new employee/volunteer and then at three yearly intervals, Vital Movement Studios will direct the employee/volunteer to obtain a Letter of Clearance from the Screening Unit as evidence that the applicant does not pose an increased risk of harm to children. Letters of Clearance are obtained for all current employees/volunteers who are working with children once every three years.

Vital Movement Studios may obtain a further criminal history assessment for an employee/volunteer at any time that Vital Movement Studios believes it necessary or desirable for the purpose of maintaining a child safe environment.

The informed written consent of the employee/volunteer is required prior to conducting a criminal history assessment. The Screening Unit's informed consent form is available from www.dfc.sa.gov.au/pub/screening.

Information relating to a person's criminal history and the assessment process is managed securely and confidentially and in accordance with the *Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children* issued pursuant to Section 8A of the *Children's Protection Act 1993*.

Option 2

A satisfactory criminal history assessment is a precondition of working in a prescribed position at Vital Movement Studios.

Prior to the appointment of a new employee/volunteer and then at three yearly intervals, this organisation will direct the employee/volunteer to obtain a National Police Certificate (NPC) from South Australia Police. The cost of obtaining a NPC will be negotiated between Vital Movement Studios and the employee/volunteer.

South Australia Police require the explicit written consent of the applicant prior to the release of criminal history information. The NPC application form is available from http://www.police.sa.gov.au/sapol/services/information_requests/national_police_certificate.jsp.

Where a person has no disclosable criminal history, the assessment is successfully completed and no further action in respect to an assessment is required.

Where an individual does have a criminal history, Vital Movement Studios assesses this information in accordance with Standard 5 of the *Child Safe Environments: Standards for dealing with information obtained about the criminal history of employees and volunteers who work with children*.

Each assessment is conducted on its individual merits and with consideration to the inherent requirements of the position. Principles of procedural fairness and natural justice are applied throughout the decision-making process and the individual is provided an opportunity to confirm or dispute the information contained within the report and to provide contextual information for consideration during the assessment process.

The National Police Certificate will not be retained once a decision has been made regarding the person's suitability to work with children. The National Police Certificate will not be retained beyond three months in any circumstances.

In accordance with its legal requirements, Vital Movement Studios will retain the following information regarding its decision:

- That a criminal history report was obtained
- How the criminal history information affected decision making processes
- Statutory declarations (where applicable)

Vital Movement Studios may obtain a further criminal history assessment for an employee/volunteer at any time that Vital Movement Studios believes it necessary or desirable for the purpose of maintaining a child safe environment.

Other evidence (optional)

Where appropriate, Vital Movement Studios may utilise a number of forms of evidence (obtained within the last three years) to assess a person's suitability to work with children. This includes:

- A National Police Certificate that does not expressly state that it cannot be used as a clearance to work with children
- A Letter of Clearance to work with children from the DCSI Screening Unit
- A valid and current interstate working with children check.

Acceptance of other forms of evidence is at the discretion of Vital Movement Studios and is subject to the person completing a 100-point check to confirm the true identity of the applicant.

Vital Movement Studios may also at its discretion seek a statutory declaration for any *employee(s)* or *volunteer(s)* who have been citizens or permanent residents of a country other than Australia since turning 18 years of age.

Exemptions

The following organisations, persons and positions are exempt from the application of Section 8B of the Act:

(a) an organisation that provides equipment, food or venues for children's parties or events and does not provide any other services;

(b) a person who undertakes work on a voluntary basis to provide a service in his or her capacity as a parent or guardian of a child who is ordinarily provided

with the service;

(c) a person who undertakes work on a voluntary basis to provide a service and who is under 18 years of age;

(d) a person who undertakes work in the course of, or for the purposes of, an

event or activity that takes place over a period of not more than 10 consecutive days or not more than 1 day in any month;

(e) a person appointed as a police officer;

(f) a person who is a registered teacher (within the meaning of the *Teachers*

Registration and Standards Act 2004);

(g) a person who undertakes, or a position that only involves, work that is not for the exclusive benefit of children and is not provided to any child on an individual basis;

(h) a position that only involves prescribed functions because children are employed or engaged to work as volunteers by the person occupying the position or by that person's employer;

(i) a position in which all work involving children is undertaken in the presence of the children's parents or guardians and in which there is ordinarily no physical contact with the children.

Child Protection guidelines for employees and volunteers of Vital Movement Studios

Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for employees and volunteers of this organisation.

All employees and volunteers of this organisation are responsible for promoting the safety and well-being of children and young people by:

- Ensuring the safety and welfare of the child or young person is paramount at all times.
- Treating all children and young people with dignity, equality and respect.
- Adhering to this organisation's child safe policy at all times.
- Listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people within the organisation.
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people within the organisation.
- Ensuring children and young people understand their rights and explaining to the child in age-appropriate language what they can expect when participating in a service, activity or program offered by the organisation.
- Responding quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian.
- Notifying the **Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78** as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected.

Employees/volunteers will not:

- Take part in any unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person.
- Discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people outside of the professional relationship.