WATFORD FESTIVAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY 2026

1 Purpose and function of organisation

The object of the Watford Festival (the Festival) is to advance, promote and encourage the education of the public in the Arts. In particular, it offers an equal opportunity to all members of the community, mainly young people, to take part and benefit from entering classes on a competitive basis with professional adjudication, together with the chance to perform at concerts and finales before a public audience.

2 The Festival environment

The Festival aims to provide a caring environment with the highest possible protection for children and vulnerable adults. It is the policy to ensure, as far as is reasonable and practicable, a safe environment for all attendees to the Festival. The Festival is independent of the venues in which the events take place. Whilst every effort is made to provide a safe environment at all times **children under 18 remain the responsibility of parents, carers, guardians, chaperones and teachers** who should be aware of potential dangers such as doors or uneven surfaces. Performers, teachers, parents, guardians, carers and chaperones should be particularly aware that there may be hazards backstage.

3 To whom does this Policy Apply?

This policy applies to everyone connected with the Festival. It applies especially to children aged 18 or under and recognizes the differing needs of individual children and those from ethnic and other minority groups. It also applies to entrants with special needs or disabilities and to vulnerable adults, where their needs are notified to the festival prior to attendance. The child protection officer or her deputy can be contacted if there is any concern about a situation at a venue.

4 Festival personnel

The administration of the Festival is carried out by the members of the Management Committee, comprising trustees, section leaders and other officers. Relevant members are DBS checked. During Festival events, section leaders are assisted by volunteers who have been recommended to the organisers, and who are considered suitable for the position by the organisers. Their names and addresses and attendance at the festival are recorded. Volunteers **are not** DBS checked. All Festival personnel wear visual identification and at each venue, one person will act as ‘day captain’ to deal with any problem that may arise.

5 Preparation for attendance at the Festival

A copy of the Watford Festival Child Protection Policy can be viewed on the Watford Festival website at **www.watfordfestival.co.uk**. Where parents cannot attend with their children, they must send their child with another responsible adult who will supervise them at all times. **An unaccompanied child aged under 16 will not be allowed to participate in the Festival**.

6 Performance, rehearsal and changing areas

Whilst Festival personnel will always be present in performance areas whilst performances are in progress, warm-up and rehearsal areas will only be monitored or stewarded on an occasional basis. At most venues, changing facilities, whilst restricted, are available for either gender. At larger theatre venues where changing rooms are made available, mixed gender groups may have to share the same facilities. At all venues there are separate toilet facilities for each gender. In all cases, there is no supervision by Festival staff of these changing room and toilet facilities. Children may not be left unattended in these areas, and must be accompanied by a designated adult.

7 Photographs, videotapes and press photography

Apart from press photography as described below, no photography, filming or video recording is permitted in the performance areas. No photos of children may be posted on social media sites without the consent of the child’s parents or guardian. No press photography is allowed without the permission and direction of Festival personnel. It is common practice at the Festival to invite press attendance to

photograph individual or groups of competitors. Written permission will be sought from the accompanying adult of any child included in such photos.

8 Legislation and guidance that supports this Policy

We are committed to following the requirements for UK legislation in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and to following good practice recommendations.

9 Policy review

The Management Committee of the Watford Festival will constantly review this Policy, improving it as necessary.