

Safeguarding Audit Summary

Chetham's School of Music – May 2026

Chetham's School of Music commissioned the Safeguarding and Child Protection Association (SACPA), the Sacpa team included both safeguarding and boarding practitioners, to conduct an independent audit of safeguarding practices. The review took place in May 2026 and considered current statutory guidance and sector best practice.

The audit found that safeguarding at Chetham's is strong, well-led, and embedded across the school community. There is a clear culture of vigilance and care, with staff at all levels demonstrating a strong understanding of their responsibilities. Students report feeling safe, well supported, and part of a close-knit and inclusive community.

While some recommendations for refinement were identified, these are largely developmental and do not detract from the overall positive picture.

A Strong Safeguarding Culture

Safeguarding is clearly prioritised by leaders, staff, and governors. Staff awareness is high, supported by regular training and open communication. The school demonstrates a proactive approach, recognising potential risks and taking steps to manage them effectively.

Effective Leadership and Systems

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and wider safeguarding team provide clear leadership. Safeguarding concerns are handled promptly and appropriately, with well-established processes for recording and managing cases.

The use of a central reporting system, through the dsl email or cpoms, ensures concerns are triaged quickly and followed up thoroughly. Collaboration between safeguarding, pastoral, and learning support teams is strong.

Positive Student Experience

Students consistently describe the school as a safe environment where they feel supported both academically and personally. They value:

- A strong sense of community
- A balance between independence and supervision
- Positive relationships with staff and peers
- Clear expectations around behaviour and safety

Students show good awareness of safeguarding issues, including online safety, personal wellbeing, and how to report concerns.

Safe and Secure Environment

The school site is well managed, with robust security arrangements, including trained security staff and controlled access to buildings. Procedures for events and visitors are well developed. This is especially important due to the City Centre location of the School.

Clear guidance is in place for students' movement around the local area, and regular input from external agencies (such as the police – coffee with the cops) helps students understand local risks. Some further reminders could be given to students regarding 'no go' areas as this was less secure in a small number of students.

Boarding Provision

Boarding is a key strength of the school. Students speak highly of:

- Supportive and approachable house staff
- Comfortable, well-maintained accommodation
- A welcoming and inclusive atmosphere

Boarding staff demonstrate strong awareness of individual student needs, contributing to a positive and supportive environment.

Governance and Oversight

Governors take safeguarding seriously and are actively involved in oversight. They demonstrate a strong understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and maintain effective scrutiny of policies, practices, and emerging risks.

Student Wellbeing and Support

The school provides a wide range of support for students' health and wellbeing. This includes access to counselling, medical care, and pastoral support. Students know where to go for help and feel confident seeking support when needed.

The school is also responsive to the needs of a diverse student population, including those with additional learning needs. Strong communication between staff supports joined-up care for students.

Areas for Development

The audit identified a small number of areas where practice could be further strengthened:

- **Streamlining reporting systems:** Ensuring all staff consistently use the central safeguarding reporting system, rather than outdated paper forms.
- **Visitor management:** Reviewing reception arrangements to minimise any risk of unauthorised access

- **Communication systems:** Improving how important messages are shared with students during the school day such as a timetable change – especially important now the phone ban is in place
- **Record-keeping:** Refining aspects of the Single Central Record and data management processes to ensure GDPR compliance, archiving ex staff
- **Environment enhancements:** Continuing to improve facilities within boarding houses where possible
- **Student feedback:** Considering how opportunities are distributed across student groups and enhancing communication about decision-making

These recommendations are practical and achievable, and the school has already demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement.

Conclusion

The external audit concludes that Chetham's School of Music provides a safe, supportive, and well-managed environment for its students. Safeguarding is embedded in the school's culture, with strong leadership, engaged staff, and confident, well-informed students.

The school is well placed to build on these strengths, address the identified recommendations, and continue providing high-quality care and protection for all students.

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