

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

OPENING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE YEHUDI MENUHIN SCHOOL

1. The Yehudi Menuhin School is an elite specialist music school which was founded in 1963 by world renowned violinist and conductor Yehudi Menuhin. Yehudi Menuhin started the School to provide an environment for children with exceptional musical gifts to pursue and nurture their talents in a supportive, specialist community and to achieve the very highest standards of musical excellence, while providing them with a good general/academic education. The School provides a unique educational programme which is focused on music – half of each pupil’s day is devoted to musical studies.
2. The School is extremely small – it has grown from an initial 15 students to a total of about 85 students aged between 8 and 19 years old, each of whom was selected for admission from countries across the world following a rigorous process of auditions and interviews.
3. Safeguarding is of the highest priority at the Yehudi Menuhin School. This is reflected in the School’s policies and procedures, and even in the classrooms themselves. The School has state of the art specialist music facilities which were opened in 2016. Recognising the particular challenges of child protection in specialist music schools, the teaching and practice rooms were purpose-built to facilitate safeguarding, architecturally designed to enable monitoring and provide safe spaces in which one-on-one instrumental teaching can take place.
4. In May 2019, the School underwent an ISI inspection which found some administrative shortcomings in the School’s safeguarding processes. For example, it found that there were problems with the recording and chasing of staff undertaking

safeguarding training and with the School conducting separate barred list checks in cases where criminal records checks were delayed.

5. As soon as the School was notified of the issues identified in the ISI report, an Action Plan was put into place. Every step in the Action Plan has now been implemented and the School is confident that it is fully compliant with all safeguarding requirements.
6. The shortcomings in the May 2019 ISI inspection were caused in part by the fact that the School has recently been through a period of upheaval, with the resignation of its beloved and long serving Director of Music, significant changes to the School leadership team and the departure in June 2019 of Kate Clanchy, who was the Head of the Yehudi Menuhin School between January 2018 and June 2019.
7. In the course of this hearing, reference will be made to a statement which was drafted by Ms Clanchy on 17 September. There is much in that statement which the School disputes as factually incorrect, including information about the circumstances of her departure from the School, changes to the role of the Head, comments on the former Head and descriptions of particular cases. These are matters which will be dealt with in evidence during the course of the hearing.
8. However, in her statement Ms Clanchy was at pains to confirm that she considered the Yehudi Menuhin School has taken appropriate safeguarding measures. She said, *“I did not encounter anything during my tenure that caused me to suspect any sexual or other significant abuse and the school had appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place... Further, the school liaised effectively with the LADO and CAMHS during my short tenure.”*
9. Music education is at the heart of the Yehudi Menuhin School and musical leadership therefore plays a vital role in its governance. However, we do not see this as a basis for criticism. The School prides itself on its focus on musical excellence. It is not incompatible with careful and rigorous safeguarding and does not detract from it. The Head and the Director of Music have complementary roles in managing staff and students. At the Yehudi Menuhin School, academic, musical and pastoral staff are equal and work in partnership to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the pupils.

10. The Yehudi Menuhin School is unusual in that it has a relatively informal school environment, often described by staff and pupils as being like a family. This is in part because of its size, and in part is deliberately cultivated to ensure a safe and creative learning environment for students. Highly structured learning environments are not always conducive to specialist music schools, where creativity and pastoral support are paramount, and the lifelong friendships and professional relationships which the students of the School develop in this environment are a vital part of the Yehudi Menuhin School.
11. However, this informality does not extend to the application of safeguarding policies and procedures, and you will hear evidence from current and former staff members of the School that its culture is in fact a valuable safeguarding tool. The size of the School, the ratio of staff to students and the relative informality all contribute to a unique safeguarding environment, where staff are able to closely monitor the wellbeing of students and where students have additional pastoral support and avenues available to them for reporting concerns.
12. That this approach is effective in creating a positive and safe learning environment for students is evident from the overall findings of the ISI report. The inspectors concluded that the quality of pupils' academic and other achievements was excellent. Far from their academic work suffering from the School's specialist focus on musical education, the report found that pupils were achieving well above average results in public examinations and their *"attitude to learning is outstanding: concentration, self-discipline, initiative and collaboration underpin all their work"*.
13. The report also found that the quality of pupils' personal development was excellent, that they had maturity, exceptional spiritual awareness, highly developed social skills and that *"a strong appreciation and respect for the diverse cultures from which they come is evident throughout the pupil community"*.
14. And in respect of safeguarding, the overall findings were similarly positive. After spending days conducting an in-depth inspection, interviewing staff and students and inspecting records, the report concluded:

“The School’s arrangements for safeguarding on a day-to-day basis are secure. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they know how to stay safe online. Staff receive regular updates on specific aspects of safeguarding and are aware of how to report concerns. Referrals to external services are prompt and records are maintained correctly.”

15. The School is confident that, following the findings of the ISI report and the full implementation of the action plan, its safeguarding arrangements are secure. But the School approaches this Inquiry in a spirit of cooperation and openness and we therefore welcome any recommendations which the Panel may make in its final report which can assist in meeting the particular safeguarding challenges which specialist music schools face.

16. Finally, pupils of the Yehudi Menuhin School often remain active members of the School community for many years after leaving, and sometimes for all of their lives. It is a source of deep sorrow to the School that any pupil, or any member of our community, has in the past been the victim of sexual abuse at the hands of those entrusted with their care. The contact details of relevant staff members have been posted on the School’s website this morning, should anyone wish to get in touch in relation to safeguarding matters.

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30 September 2019