



Safe Touch Policy

Written September 2022 – Review date September 2026

1.0 Statement

- 1.1 The term Physical contact is used to describe the use of touch for many purposes in numerous different contexts. This is a controversial and complex area. There have been instances where schools have had a no touch policy and totally forbade staff from touching children. This is in fact against all statutory guidance and is not tenable. The Children Act 1989 makes it clear that the paramount consideration in any decision should be in the best interest of the child concerned. Paramount in this context means that it should be the first thing people think about and it takes precedence over other considerations.
- 1.2 Physical contact should always be about meeting the needs of the child. Actions that can be ambiguous are open to misinterpretation. Staff should always think before making any physical contact. They should be clear about why their actions are in the best interest of the child concerned. They should remember that some children like physical contact and some do not. This information should be contained in a child's Positive Handling Plan.
- 1.3 Staff must remember that some children like physical contact and some do not. Staff must also be aware of when a child is seeking touch in an inappropriate manner.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all staff and children working within the School.
- 1.5 This policy is in place to protect children and school staff from allegations under Child Protection procedures, whilst addressing the emotional health and social wellbeing needs of children.

2.0 **Different types of Touch** - There are four different types of touch and physical contact that may be used, these are:

2.1 **Casual / informal / incidental touch**

Staff use touch with pupils as part of a normal relationship, for example comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. This might include putting an arm out to bar an exit from a room, taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or putting an arm around the shoulders. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating.

2.2 **General reparative touch**

This is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child's emotions triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Reparative touch should be part of an EHCP, and used with care.

2.3 **Contact/interactive Play**

Contact play is used by staff adopting a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship. This will only take place when the child has developed a trusting relationship with the adult and when they feel completely comfortable and at ease with this type of contact. Contact play may include an adult chasing and catching the child or an adult and child playing a game of building towers with their hands.

This sort of play releases the following chemicals in the brain:

- Opioids – to calm and soothe and give pleasure;
- Dopamine – to focus, be alert and concentrate;
- BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor) – a brain 'fertiliser' that encourages growth.

2.4 **Positive handling** (calming a dysregulated child)

Staff may use force as is reasonable in all the circumstances in order to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- Committing a criminal offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil);

- Causing personal injury or damage to a person or property;
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

2.5 It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school; -
- When comforting a distressed pupil;
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- To demonstrate exercise or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching;
- To give first aid.
- If a child is at risk of harming themselves e.g. at risk of catching fire if too close to a Bunsen burner or tripping over a chair
- When guiding a child on and off transport e.g. trains or underground tube trains, or to shepherd them on busy streets where there are many dangers of collision or accidents

3.0 **Ways of regulating children's emotions**

3.1 Other means of calming, soothing and containing children's strong emotions include: -

- Slowing one's pace
- Lowering the voice
- Breathing more deeply
- Talking slowly, firmly and quietly in an unhurried, unflustered way
- Providing clear predictable consistently held boundaries.

3.2 Gentle safe holding is appropriate if a child:

- Is hurting himself/herself or others, - (or is likely to hurt himself/herself and/or others)
- Is damaging property
- Is incensed and out of control, so that all verbal attempts to engage him/her have failed. Staff are able to use the safest and gentlest means of holding a child to enable the child to feel safe and soothed, and to bring him or her down from uncontrollable states of hyper-arousal.

3.3 Whilst limits and boundaries in such circumstances can be a vital corrective emotional experience, without such an intervention (holding) the children can be left at risk of actual physical or psychological damage. Such necessary interventions are fully in line with guidelines set out in the Government Document, 'New Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force in School.' (DfEE 1998) and 'Use of Reasonable Force' (2013).

4.0 **Appropriate and inappropriate touch**

4.1 Our policy rests on the belief that every member of staff needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. All staff members need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference.

4.2 All staff need to show themselves to be highly aware of both the damaging and unnecessary uses of touch in an educational context. Touch is not be used:

- To make the adult feel better
- If it is clear that the child does not want to be touched.
- In any form of sexual context

Equally, when a child is in deep distress, staff are trained to know when and how sufficient contact can be provided.

4.3 Guidelines for the use of Safe Touch To ensure touch is only used appropriately:

- Parents/carers will be informed of the school policy on Touch
- Teachers/support staff will be trained in all aspects safe touch.
- Staff members should agree the use of safe touch in discussions with their line manager and

SLT

- Child should be consulted, appropriate to their understanding, and involved in the development of a plan, based on a comprehensive risk assessment. –
- Strategies should be rehearsed and practised (as is possible) with the child in preparation.
- An Individual Behaviour Management Plan or Safety Plan should be completed and its use recorded and monitored.

4.4 TWO Adult rule: No adult should use safe holding when alone with a child. Where touch is used, contact should be brief and gentle, on clothed or publicly visible parts of the body: hands, arms, shoulders, head, hair, shoes.

4.5 Unsafe touch - At no point and under no circumstances should staff members use touch to satisfy their own need for physical contact or reassurance.

4.6 Staff are trained to be fully **aware** of touch that is Invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising or experienced as eroticising in any way whatsoever. **THIS IS NEVER TO BE USED.**


4.7 Serious Breach: If an unsafe touch is used then it would be deemed as the most serious breach of the Code of Conduct warranting the highest level of disciplinary action.

5.0 **Review**

5.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Positive handling policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff code of conduct
- Staff Disciplinary policy

5.2 The policy was written in 2022 and will be reviewed bi-annually. The latest review was completed in September 2024

Formally agreed through SLT compliance:	9 September 2024
Signed Jane Prothero – Head Teacher	
Review Date:	September 2026