

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL



Safe Touch Policy

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Contents:

Statement of intent

1. Legal framework
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. What is safe touch?
4. Types of safe touch
5. Reporting inappropriate touch
6. Reasonable force and Searching Pupils
7. Training of staff
8. Monitoring and review

Statement of intent

At Woodlands Primary School, we understand that appropriate relationships between staff and pupils are paramount in promoting the safeguarding of children.

The DfE's guidance document, 'Use of reasonable force in schools', which was published in 2013, makes clear that there are occasions when physical contact with a pupil, other than reasonable force, is appropriate and necessary.

This Safe Touch Policy has been created with the aim of ensuring that all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities in terms of appropriate and inappropriate touch when involving pupils. The guidance in this document is in line with the Guidance for Safe Working Practice Document (2019)

All children and adults are entitled to work in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected. The school will dedicate itself to ensuring that no one feels threatened or disrespected, in terms of physical contact.

This policy should be read in conjunction with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 document, the school's Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Positive Handling Policy, Intimate Care Policy and national Guidance for Safe Working Practice Document (2019)*

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to the following legislation, including, but not limited to:

- The Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010

1.2. This policy will also have due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE *Use of reasonable force in schools*, 2013
- DfE *Working together to safeguard children*, 2018
- *Guidance for Safe Working Practice Document (2019)*
- DfE *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024*
- *DfE Behaviour in Schools 2022*

1.3. The school will implement this policy in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy, Positive Handling Policy, Intimate Care Policy and Equality Policy.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. All members of staff at our school have a duty of care towards pupils, and must be aware of the boundaries involving physical contact.

2.2. The Headteacher and Safeguarding Lead are responsible for conducting regular safeguarding training for all members of staff and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities, in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

2.3. The Headteacher and Safeguarding Lead are responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of the guidance of safe touch with pupils.

2.4. All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or unsafe at our school as a result of inappropriate touch.

2.5. All members of staff have a responsibility to report any instances of inappropriate touch to the Headteacher/ Safeguarding Lead.

2.6. The Headteacher is responsible for communicating with parents/carers and ensuring that they are aware of this policy.

2.7. The school has a responsibility for ensuring that it creates and promote a culture in which pupils' wishes and feelings are respected.

3. What is safe touch?

- 3.1. For the purpose of this policy, 'safe touch' is defined as physical contact that, if otherwise avoided, would be inhumane, unkind and potentially emotionally or physically damaging for the pupil.
- 3.2. Safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.
- 3.3. The school understands that the following examples are instances of safe touch which may occur between staff and pupils:
 - Comforting an upset or distressed pupil
 - Congratulating or praising a pupil
 - Holding the hand of a pupil to guide them, such as when crossing a road or walking to assembly (age appropriate)
 - Giving first aid to a pupil
 - Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons, administering medicine or when using musical instruments

(Use of Reasonable Force in Schools, DfE, 2013, p.8)

4. Types of safe touch

- 4.1. Staff should ensure that safe touch only occurs in the presence of other adults or responsible children, and that it does not indicate favour towards particular pupils.
- 4.2. Pupils should never be touched in a way that could be misinterpreted as anything other than appropriate adult-child support.
- 4.3. Pupils should not be touched between the waist and mid-thigh, or on/near the chest (unless specifically required during a First Aid procedure or Team Teach physical intervention).
- 4.4. The school recognises that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils can be inappropriate, such as hugging and lap-sitting.

The school places the following restrictions on **hugging**:

- At our school we encourage staff using touch for reward or comfort to use the 'shoulder-hug', rather than a 'front' embrace, which the school would deem inappropriate.
- The shoulder-hug is a sideways hug whereby the member of staff places their hands on the pupil's shoulders. Staff must not put their arms around a child unless they are using agreed Team Teach techniques or protecting the child from danger.
- This type of hug prevents the pupil from turning themselves towards the member of staff (thus engaging in a 'front' embrace).

Lap-sitting is inappropriate and prohibited in KS1/2. Children should be encouraged to sit on a chair next to the adult and a shoulder hug can be used.

In exceptional circumstances a child may only **sit on an adult's knee** for a short period and a specific purpose (e.g. for First Aid) – they should not sit too close to the body and another member of staff must be present.

- 4.5. For pupils within the **Early Years Foundation Stage**, (Nursery, Pre-school and Reception classes) or children with SEND it may be more appropriate on occasion for closer physical contact, while appropriate child-adult relationships are being established. The points above still apply, however, except that sitting on the knee and shoulder-hugs might occur more regularly and be of longer duration, if such support is required by the child.
- 4.6. If a pupil requires assistance with changing clothes, great care must be taken to ensure that all physical contact is specifically and only for the purpose of the operation being carried out (see Intimate Care Policy).
- 4.7. For intimate care (especially toileting), see the school's *Intimate Care Policy*,
- 4.8. The school understands that pupils are not always aware of the boundaries between staff and pupils and thus may try to engage in physical contact such as lap-sitting or inappropriate hugging.
- 4.9. Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff must explain to the pupil that this contact e.g. hugs are for home and that in school we use a shoulder hug instead.
- 4.10. If a member of staff attempts to use one of the safe methods of touch and a pupil is unhappy with this, the member of staff will cease contact immediately in order to respect the pupil's wishes.
- 4.11. Any physical contact should be in response to the child's needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Adults should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

5. Reporting inappropriate touch

- 5.1. If a pupil attempts to engage in any inappropriate touch, the member of staff involved will report this immediately to the Headteacher/Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Safeguarding Lead/DHT in order to prevent any allegations of inappropriate physical contact.
- 5.2. If another member of staff suspects or witnesses inappropriate physical contact, whereby the member of staff is willingly involved, they will report this to the Headteacher/Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Safeguarding Lead/DHT immediately.
- 5.3. The Headteacher/ Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Safeguarding Lead/DHT will keep a written record of all instances of reported inappropriate touch (logged in Low Level Concerns File).
- 5.4. Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the school's *Allegations of Abuse against Staff* policy.
- 5.5. All staff need to be aware of the school's Whistleblowing policy and report any incidents/concerns accordingly.

6. Reasonable force

- 6.1. The school understands that there are times when members of staff must provide physical intervention if a child presents danger to themselves or others.
- 6.2. All staff have the legal power to use reasonable force. In these instances, staff must always explain the reasons for their actions to the pupil and why it was necessary. If possible, Team Teach trained staff should intervene in the first instance using de-escalation strategies and and/or guides/escorts. All incidents should be recorded on CPOMs logged as 'Team Teach – Guide/Escort' or 'Team Teach –restraint'.
- 6.3. Reasonable force may be required in order to control or restrain a pupil in extreme circumstances, such as needing to guide a pupil to safety.
- 6.4. At all times, members of staff must ensure they use reasonable force in such a way as to avoid any injury to the pupil, but the school recognises that in some extreme cases, such as immediate intervention to prevent worse physical injury, this may not be possible. Where Team Teach holds/restraints are used this must be recorded in the bound and numbered book held by the Safeguarding Lead and monitored with the Safeguarding Governor regularly.
- 6.5. The school is able to use reasonable force to:
 - remove disruptive children from the classroom when they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
 - prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
 - prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
 - prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
 - restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

(Use of Reasonable Force in Schools, DfE, 2013, p.5)
- 6.6. Schools cannot use force as a punishment – this is always unlawful.
- 6.7. The Headteacher and authorised staff are able to use reasonable force to search for specified 'prohibited items' (namely: knives and weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images, and any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property). Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules.
- 6.8. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's *Positive Handling Policy*.

7. Training of staff

- 7.1. The Headteacher will provide regular safeguarding training for all members of staff in relation to safe touch.
- 7.2. All staff will be regularly reminded of the methods of safe touch employed by our school, and will communicate this to the pupils they are in contact with.

APPENDIX

Guidance from Safe Working Practice Document

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one pupil, in one set of circumstances, may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child.

This means that staff should:

- Be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the pupil, an observer or any person to whom this action is described
- Never touch a pupil in a way which may be considered indecent
- Always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny
- Never indulge in horseplay or fun fights
- Always allow/encourage pupils, where able, to undertake self-care tasks independently
- Ensure the way they offer comfort to a distressed pupil is age appropriate
- Always tell a colleague when and how they offered comfort to a distressed pupil
- Establish the preferences of pupils
- Consider alternatives, where it is anticipated that a pupil might misinterpret or be uncomfortable with physical contact
- Always explain to the pupil the reason why contact is necessary and what form that contact will take
- Report and record situations which may give rise to concern
- Be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and be sensitive to issues of gender