



# |Safe Touch Policy

Reviewed by Governors Sept 2024

To be reviewed every year unless changes are made before this time.

To be reviewed Sept 2025

Governor print \_\_\_\_\_

Governor signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Safe Touch Policy**

### **Explaining the developmentally necessary experience of safe touch:**

Children learn who they are (and how the world is) within their significant relationships. The quality of the child's relationships with significant adults is key to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Touch is recognised as being a physical way of soothing, calming and containing distress. Berne identified touch as a human 'hunger'<sup>1</sup> necessary for survival and well-being. Many research studies have indicated the necessity of human contact and touch in the healthy development of children. It is a factor in children who experience neglect and 'fail to thrive'<sup>2</sup>.

### **Why have a safe touch policy?**

If children are behaving in unacceptable, threatening, dangerous, aggressive or out of control ways, they have not yet learned how their strongest emotional reactions can be contained, channeled and communicated safely.

In recognition of this, the school ensures that a number of identified staff across the school and in different roles are MAPA trained (Management of Actual or Potential Aggression). In certain circumstances, for example to calm a distressed child or to contain an angry or wild child, MAPA trained staff can use the agreed MAPA holds. In some circumstances, for younger, smaller children it may be required that an adult to pick up the child to carry them. This adult will always be accompanied by a second trained adult. An up to date list of all MAPA trained staff is available in the SLT office and Business Manager's office.

### **Ways of regulating children's emotions.**

Staff are aware of a range of strategies to support pupils in regulating their emotions

- Slowing one's pace
- Lowering the voice
- Breathing more deeply
- Initially matching the pitch and volume of the child's emotional display (shout, cry etc) and then regulating it down
- Talking slowly firmly and quietly in an unhurried unflustered way
- Providing clear predictable consistently held boundaries
- Safe holding or moving of a child using MAPA techniques is appropriate if a child:
  - is hurting himself/herself or others
  - is likely to hurt himself/herself and/or others) or
  - is damaging property, and/or
  - is incensed and out of control, so that all verbal attempts to engage him/her have failed.

Trained staff team members are trained in the safest means of holding a child that is entirely designed to enable the child to calm, and to bring him or her down from uncontrollable states of hyper-arousal. Whilst limits and boundaries in such circumstances can be a vital corrective emotional experience, without such an intervention (holding) the child can be left at risk of actual physical or psychological damage.

Please refer to the school's Physical Intervention Policy for further information.

### **What about other physical contact with pupils?**

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 exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching;
- To give first aid including support changing due to bodily fluids (nose bleeds, vomiting);
- Supporting with toileting (nappy change, toileting accidents).

### **Appropriate and inappropriate touch**

We are highly aware of the current atmosphere where due to fears of abuse, touch as a natural and important form of human connection has been almost vetoed in some school contexts. Our policy rests on the belief that every member of staff needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Hence all staff members need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference. They need to show themselves to be highly aware of both the damaging and unnecessary uses of touch in an educational context.

Where MAPA techniques are deemed necessary to be used, two adults should be present.

Where touch is used, contact, hold and moving a child should be in line with training, on clothed or publicly visible parts of the body: hands, arms, shoulders, head, hair, shoes.

### **Unsafe touch**

- At no point and under no circumstances should staff members use touch to satisfy their own need for physical contact or reassurance.
- No unsafe touch: All staff are trained to be fully cognizant of touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising or experienced as eroticising in any way whatsoever.
- **Serious Breach: Should any such touch be used it would be deemed as the most serious breach of the Code of Ethics warranting the highest level of disciplinary action. If any member has any concern about the handling of children, they should seek a member of SLT immediately. The concern should be recorded accurately on the CPOMS system or cause for concerns form (used by visitors), in a timely manner and reviewed promptly by SLT.**

### **Review**

This policy forms part of our safeguarding policies and procedures and is available for parents to view on our school website. It will be reviewed at least annually.