

Delegated Services and Churchill Primary School

Safe Touch Policy

Date 2025

Date of approval	People involved	Notes	Date of next review
6.1.25	Teaching team and SLT		

Background.

Through the developmentally necessary experience of safe touch, children learn who they are and how the world is in relationship. 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' 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'.

Context.

Our procedures on Safe Touch (sometimes termed 'Safe Holding') has been developed in the context of the local authorities' Child Protection Procedures and Policies and Government guidance and takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and other empirical studies relating to attachment theory and child development. They identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, emotional regulation, mental health and the development of prosocial skills.

Why do we have procedures on touch?

In order to protect children and school staff from allegations under Child Protection procedures many schools, education authorities and academies have adopted 'No Touch' policies. We are adopting an informed, evidence-based approach to allow safe touch, in special cases, as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy emotional growth and learning.

Research shows clearly that healthy prosocial brain development requires access to safe touch as one of the means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, sad or angry child. It is essential for all children to learn the difference between safe and unsafe touch and to experience having their strongest emotions contained, validated, accepted and soothed by a significant adult. 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, channelled and communicated safely.

In recognition of this, under special, agreed and supervised conditions, specially trained staff will consider using safe touch as one of the means available to them, for example, to calm a distressed child, to contain an angry, dysregulated or wild child and/or encourage or affirm for an anxious child or to support a child with low self-esteem. Safe touch used to calm, soothe and regulate a child's emotions is a needed developmental experience. The brain does not develop self – soothing neuronal pathways unless and until this safe emotional regulation has been experienced within a positive relationship with a significant adult.

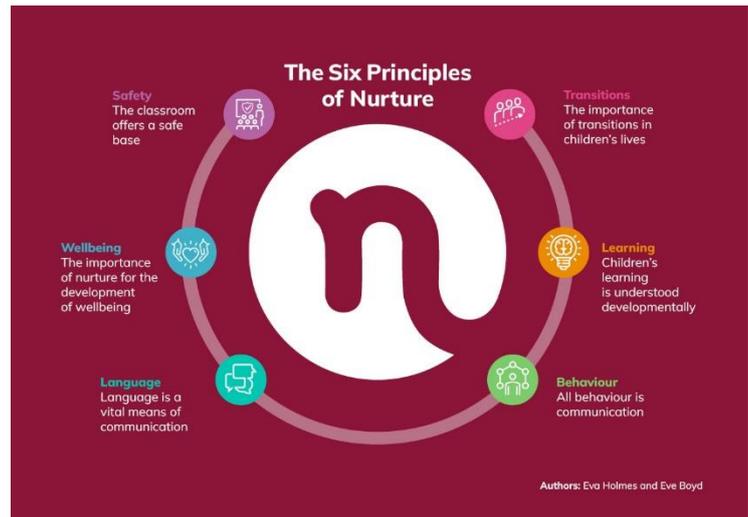
Where children have had insufficient experience of safe touch and calming regulation, this may be a priority to help the brain to develop access to thinking, judging and evaluating mechanisms. Safe touch is one of the key ways of regulating children's emotions, but it is a strategy that fully trained staff will use only under supervision.

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Statement of intent

At Churchill CE Primary School, we understand that appropriate relationships between staff and pupils are paramount to promoting the safeguarding of pupils at our school. We embrace the Nurture UK 6 Principles and through our graduated approach to nurture aim for every child in the school has the opportunity to flourish in their education.



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.

All children are entitled to receive an education in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected. We will dedicate ourselves to ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or disrespected, in terms of physical contact between themselves or a member of staff.

1. Legal framework

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

Equality Act 2010
The Children Act 1989

1.2. This policy also has due regard to government guidance including:

The latest edition of the DfE document 'Keeping children safe in education'
The latest edition of the DfE document Working Together to Safeguard Children'
DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force'

1.3. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Health and Safety Policy
Behaviour Policy
Equality Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

- 2.1. All members of staff at our school have a duty of care towards pupils and will be aware of the boundaries involving physical contact.
- 2.2. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for conducting or organising, recording and refreshing annual safeguarding training for members of staff and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities, in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- 2.3. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) is responsible for ensuring that all staff engage in safe touch with pupils, and only where absolutely necessary.
- 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 DSL/DDSL.
- 2.6. The DSL/DDSL 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 promotes 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. We understand 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
 - Giving first aid to a pupil
 - Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons
 - Administering medicine
 - Using musical instrumentsThis is not an exhaustive list

4. Types of safe touch

- 4.1. We understand that certain types of physical contact in KS1 and KS2 between staff and pupils are inappropriate, such as hugging, lap-sitting and some instances of holding hands.
- 4.2. We recognise that the only appropriate places to touch pupils are on the shoulders, arms and back.
- 4.3. We place the following restrictions on hugging: At our school we encourage staff using touch for reward or comfort to use the 'school-hug', rather than an embrace. The school-hug is a sideways hug whereby the member of staff places their hands on the pupil's shoulders. This type of hug prevents the pupil from turning themselves towards the member of staff and thus engaging in a 'front' embrace, which we consider as inappropriate.
- 4.4.1 We place the following restrictions on holding hands: At our school we understand that there are times when a member of staff will need to hold a pupil's hand, either to guide them or to prevent them from being physically harmed. Within our Reception classes we will hold a pupil's hand when giving guidance, reassurance or to comfort them.
- 4.4.2 We encourage the use of a 'school hand-hold'. This is done by the adult holding their arm out and the pupil wrapping their hand around the staff's lower arm. The adult's hand can then be placed over the child's hand for a little extra security if it is required.
- 4.5. We place the following restrictions on lap-sitting:
- We recognise that all instances of lap-sitting are inappropriate and, therefore, we prohibit this interaction between members of staff and pupils with the exception of reception classes
 - Reception classes will allow pupils to sit on their lap if they require comfort for reassurance, particularly in the case of distress, this type of contact is only made with the consent of the child
 - We understand 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 hand-holding and hugging
 - Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff will explain to the pupil why it is unacceptable and encourage them to engage in the school-hug or school-hand-hold instead, and
 - If a member of staff attempts to use one of the safe methods of touch and a pupil is unhappy with this, particularly with regards to those with SEND, the member of staff will retract immediately in order to respect the pupil's wishes. Appropriate touch involving pupils with SEND will be in line with their EHC plan or IHP.

5. Use of force

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- 5.1 We understand that there are times when members of staff must provide physical intervention when a pupil presents danger to themselves or others or property.
- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. At all times, members of staff will ensure they use reasonable force in such a way as to avoid any injury to the pupil, but we recognise that in some extreme cases, such as immediate intervention to prevent worse physical injury, this may not be possible.
- 5.5. The school can use reasonable force in situations when:
- Disruptive pupils must be removed from the classroom and have previously refused to
 - Members of staff need to control disruptive pupils on school trips, or similar
 - Members of staff must prevent a pupil from leaving a classroom when doing so would lead to a risk of their safety
 - A pupil is attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or damaging property/equipment, and
 - A pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves and a member of staff must intervene to prevent this.
- 5.6 Any occurrences of the use of reasonable force will be reported to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, who will ensure a written record of this is created and communicate it to the pupil's parents/carers.
- 5.7. We will ensure we have considered the risks involved when using reasonable force involving pupils with SEND, particularly recognising the additional vulnerability of this group.
- 5.8 A child who has been involved in an incident where force has been used should be risk assessed and have a positive handling plan (PHP) put in place for them. The PHP should contain known triggers and successful calming techniques. If subsequent incidents occur the PHP and risk assessment should be reviewed.

Review frequency of these documents is driven by outcomes. If subsequent incidents occur, the PHP and risk assessment need to be reviewed more regularly, while if behaviour improves, a longer time scale can be adopted.

6. Reporting inappropriate touch

- 6.1. If a pupil attempts to engage in any inappropriate touching, the member of staff involved will report this immediately to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, in order to prevent

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any allegations of inappropriate physical contact. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will inform the DSL (if different) as soon as is reasonably practicable or a deputy DSL if the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher is DSL.

- 6.2. If another member of staff suspects or witnesses inappropriate physical contact, whereby the member of staff is willingly involved, we expect you to report this to the DSL immediately. If the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher is involved the report will be made to the Chair of Governors or Trustees.
- 6.3. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will ensure a written record is maintained for all instances of reported inappropriate touch.
- 6.4. Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in our (LSPs) Staff Code of Conduct.

7. Training of staff

- 7.1. Our DSL or DDSL will conduct annual safeguarding training or organise it, recording and refreshing it for all members of staff in relation to safe touch, including use of reasonable force.
- 7.2. All staff will be regularly reminded of the methods of safe touch employed by us and will communicate these to the pupils they are in contact with.

8. Monitor and review

- 8.1. This policy is reviewed on an agreed frequency by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher who will make any necessary changes and communicate these to all members of staff.

Signed by the Chair of the Board/ CEO/ Chair of Governors		Signed by the CEO/ Head teacher/ Principal	
Name		Name	
Signed		Signed	
Date of issue		Review Date	
Display points: HSW Noticeboards, online, induction packs.			

Produced by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Delegated Services, as Competent Person

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