



# Physical Contact and Safe Touch Policy

<b>Date of last review:</b>	2023	<b>Review period:</b>	2 Years
<b>Date of next review:</b>	2025	<b>Written by:</b>	Laura Morris
<b>Type of policy:</b>	Non-statutory	<b>Committee:</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>			

## Policy Statement

At our school **We Foster Success** by providing a safe, happy environment in which all pupils can develop and achieve. We also recognise our responsibility and aim to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to safeguard children and staff.

Wyre Forest School is a broad-spectrum special needs school for children aged 3 to 19. Our pupils often seek physical contact as a means of comfort and support. We adopt a 'safe touch' approach as we understand the importance of physical contact but need to ensure this safe, appropriate, and necessary.

## Legislation

Section 175 of The Education Act 2002 poses a duty on educational authorities to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people.

Wyre Forest School fully recognises its moral and statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

## Purpose

This Physical Contact and Safe Touch policy has been developed in the context of the local authorities' Child Protection Procedures and Policies. It considers extensive neurobiological research relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, emotional regulation, and mental health.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all staff carry out safe, confident, and dignified practice when using appropriate, necessary and/or planned touch.

## Aims

The policy aims to ensure:

- A rationale for adopting a 'safe touch' approach is shared with all.
- Staff are aware of appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- Staff carry out safe, confident, and dignified practice when providing physical contact.
- Physical contact is appropriate, necessary and/or planned.
- All physical contact between staff and pupils promotes children's safety and welfare.

## Rationale

At Wyre Forest School we appreciate that all our pupils are unique. We work tirelessly to meet their individual needs, so they develop and progress academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. Our values of enthusiasm, resilience, honesty, teamwork, and trust shine out from all that we do. We have an exciting bespoke Pathway curriculum which supports the use of physical contact and safe touch and enables pupils to learn what is appropriate and inappropriate touch.

Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with our pupils. It can also be key to developing fundamental social and emotional skills, behavioural and attention skills. Whilst offering physical support to those pupils who need it. Touch is important and may be used for any of the following reasons:-

Communication –Touch enables staff and pupils to respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social

connections. This may occur during intensive interaction. Touch cues such as, hand over hand signing, on-body signs- TaSSeLs, physical prompts and Intensive Interaction are aided and developed using supportive touch.

Educational Tasks- Touch can also be used to physically prompt a pupil in educational tasks, such as hand-over-hand support and hand-under-hand support. Play activities may include touch such as, dressing up during role-play, getting on and off trikes etc. Physical support may also be necessary to include a pupil in activities such as; sensory circuits, swimming and Physical Education or to carry out therapy programmes such as; sensory massage, Tac Pac, occupational therapy, and rebound therapy.

Manual Handling of Pupils- Touch is used to support pupils who are physically disabled when using physical equipment to maintain/ develop their physical skills such as, standing frames, walking frames, Acheeva bed, benches, floor time.

Positive Handling- Touch is necessary when using positive handling to keep pupils safe (See Positive Handling Policy).

Emotional support– touch is an effective way to communicate affection and warmth. It can provide comfort and reassurance when pupils are distressed or upset. Cautionary touch should be used with pupils who are sensitive to touch, touch defensive or may have a history of receiving negative touch.

Personal Care- Touch is necessary when providing and supporting pupils with intimate care and personal care routines such as, wiping noses, washing faces/ hands, apply suncream (see Intimate Care Policy).

Medical care – to provide medical care such as First Aid (See our Supporting policy).

### Procedures

At Wyre Forest School Physical Contact and Safe touch is used to calm, soothe and regulate a child's emotions. Staff need to have a clear understanding of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch.

Appropriate touch is touch that respects the personal privacy and personal space of pupils. Examples of appropriate touch include:

- Responses affecting the safety and well-being of pupils e.g., holding hands, using Team Teach.
- Responses supporting social and emotional development such as, hugs, sitting on laps, reassuring touch on shoulder.
- Touch for health and hygiene, personal and intimate care.

Inappropriate touch is touch that is used to satisfy adults needs rather than the need of the pupil.

Examples of inappropriate touch include:

- Coercion or other forms of exploitation of the pupil's lack of knowledge.

- Violation of laws against sexual contact between adults and children.

All staff need to follow the procedures within this policy as outlined below:

- All members of staff at WFS are responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils.
- Each staff member is responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff work, and should be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- The same professional standards are always applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity.
- Staff continually monitor and review their practice and ensure they follow the guidance provided.
- Physical contact or safe touch will not be initiated with pupils unless it is appropriate, necessary and/or planned.
- It is vital that staff always consider the pupil's gender, race, disability, and age when using touch as individuals may be used to experiencing different levels or types of touch.
- Physical Contact and/or Safe Touch will not be initiated with pupils unless it is appropriate, necessary and/or planned.
- Staff always need to be mindful of appropriate behaviour.
- Some of our pupils seek comfort and emotional support from staff by hugging or sitting on their laps. If hugging is initiated by a pupil, then where possible staff will hug using a sideways embrace. Staff will allow pupils to sit on their laps but this will be discouraged by staff who will prompt pupils to sit next to them.

### Training

At Wyre Forest School staff attend weekly training as we understand the importance professional development plays in improving classroom practice and pupil outcomes. This training includes, whole-school training, bespoke pathway training which is highlighted from pathway and curriculum monitoring, and induction training for all new staff. Our Physical Contact and Safe Touch Procedures are highlighted within our safeguarding, behaviour and intimate care training.

### Safeguarding

Wyre Forest School follows the procedures set out by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board and take account of guidance issued by the document 'Keeping children Safe in Education' and DfES 'Working Together to Safeguard Children.' All staff are trained in Child Protection awareness, and this training is regularly updated.

If a member of staff has any safeguarding concerns or queries, they will immediately contact The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or DDSL. Following receipt of any information raising concern, the DSL will consider what action to take and seek advice from Children's Services as required.

If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff, the allegation will be investigated according to the school's safeguarding procedures.

### Behaviour

Staff are Team Teach trained which equips staff to use positive behaviour management to manage challenging situations and behaviours in ways that lead to desirable outcomes and positive relationships. Bespoke behaviour training is also delivered to all staff which enables them to positively support pupils' behaviour.

### **Intimate Care**

Staff are trained to follow our intimate care procedures to ensure pupils are treated with sensitivity and respect, and in such a way that their experiences of intimate care is a positive one. Each pupil who receives intimate care has an intimate care plan which is created in consultation with parents/ carers. This intimate care plan ensures there are clear individualised procedures for pupils which supports the development of their independence.

### **Monitoring of this policy**

The use of 'safe touch' needs to be supervised, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, as indeed does the policy, to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of our pupils.

The monitoring of this policy and its application will be reviewed every two years by: Headteacher and Governors.

Last reviewed: November 2023 by Laura Morris and submitted to Governors for approval.

### **Links to other Policies**

This policy should be read and implemented in line with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy (including Child Protection)
- Behaviour Policy
- Accessibility Policy
- Manual Handling Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Supporting pupils with Medical Needs Policy
- Intimate Care Policy