



**The Park
Academies
Trust**

Safe Touch Policy

TPAT Policy Management

Document history

Review date	Version	Reviewer / owner	Executive approval	Approving body	Meeting date of policy approval
09/2021	1	Rachel Surch	SLT	LAB	09/2021
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Material changes since last publication

Section	Changes
Whole document	Complete re write based on the model from Delegated Services. This provides a greater level of detail than the previous policy.

This policy is reviewed every three years. The next review is due by June 2029.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Scope

1.2 Other linked Policies

2. Policy Statement

Roles and Responsibilities

3. What is Safe Touch?

4. Types of Safe Touch

5. Use of Force

6. Reporting Inappropriate Touch

7. Training of Staff

8. Monitoring and Review

1. Introduction

The Trust intends and expects that all decisions around the use of Trust resources will be underpinned at all times by its vision and values:

Our aim:

TPAT – Inspiring futures, empowering people.

We aim to benefit our communities by nurturing well-educated, aspirational and creative young people. We exist to inspire futures and empower all our people. We achieve this by enriching and fulfilling our employees with the investment to become masters of their craft, all working together to realise exceptional outcomes for young people.

To achieve this our schools will:

- Create an aspirational, driven, and highly engaging educational environment where every pupil can succeed.
- Commit to knowing each pupil individually and empowering them to excel.
- Deliver the highest quality learning opportunities facilitated by excellent teachers.
- Inspire our pupils to become confident, motivated and respectful individuals ready to make a positive contribution to society.

The Trust will support our schools by:

- Providing the resources and stability schools need to work efficiently and effectively, overcoming challenges and prioritising education every day.
- Providing a platform for collaboration, sharing excellence and experience, and fostering unity and shared purpose.
- Nurturing our Trust's 'culture of improvement' where staff thrive in a safe, supportive network, embracing feedback and professional dialogue to drive sustainable improvement

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 actually 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.

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 will be contained a child's Positive Handling Plan held by the school.

1.1 Aims and Scope

Children learn who they are and how the world is, by forming relationships with people and things around them. The quality of a child's relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and well-being. Many of the pupils who require emotional support from school may have been subject to trauma or distress or may not have had a positive start in life. It is with this in mind that staff seek to respond to children's developmental needs by using appropriate safe touch.

Our policy takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills. We have adopted an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning.

Our policy rests on the belief that every member of staff needs to know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Hence, staff need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference.

1.2 Other Linked Policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Behaviour Policy
Equality Policy
Health and Safety Policy
Intimate Care Policy
Risk Assessment policy and system
SEND Policy

Staff Code of Conduct
Supporting Pupils With Medical Conditions
Health and Safety Policy
Equality Policy
Restrictive Intervention Policy
PSHE / RSE Policy

2. Policy Statement

Roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All members of staff at our setting 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 setting's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- 2.3 The leader or post holder's job title 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 setting 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/Deputies.
- 2.6 The leader or post holder's job title is responsible for communicating with parents/carers and ensuring that they are aware of this policy.
- 2.7 The setting 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 instruments

4. Types of Safe Touch

4.1 We understand that certain types of physical contact 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: In our settings we encourage staff using touch for reward or comfort to use the 'setting-hug', rather than an embrace. The setting-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 i. We place the following restrictions on holding hands: At our setting 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 nursery and Reception classes we will hold a pupil's hand when giving guidance, reassurance or to comfort them.

ii. We encourage the use of a 'setting 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 nursery and reception classes
- Nursery and 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 setting-hug or setting-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

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 setting can use reasonable force in situations when:

- Disruptive pupils must be removed from the classroom and have previously refused to go
- Members of staff need to control disruptive pupils on setting 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 headteacher who will keep a written record of this 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 in order to prevent any allegations of inappropriate physical contact.

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 Headteacher immediately. If the Headteacher is involved the report will be made to the CEO.

6.3 The Headteacher will keep a written record of 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 Staff Code of Conduct and TPAT Allegations procedure.

7. Training of Staff

7.1 Our lead DSL 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. Monitoring and Review

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