



The Federation of Spixworth Schools

Safe Touch Policy

Agreed by Governing Body: Autumn 2020

To be reviewed: Autumn 2022

Group Responsible: Full Governors

Contents:

Statement of intent

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

Statement of intent

At The Federation of Spixworth Schools, we understand that appropriate relationships between staff and pupils are paramount to promoting the safeguarding of pupils at our school.

This 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 pupils are entitled to receive an education in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected. The school is dedicated to ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or disrespected in terms of physical contact between themselves or a member of staff.

Signed by:

_____	Headteacher	Date:	_____
_____	Chair of governors	Date:	_____

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, but not limited to, the following:
 - DfE (2018) 'Keeping children safe in education'
 - DfE (2018) 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
 - Positive Handling Policy
 - Physical Restraint and Reasonable Force Policy
 - Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
 - Intimate Care

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 DSL is responsible for conducting 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 SLT 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.
- 2.6. The SLT is responsible for communicating with parents 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. 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
 - Giving first aid to a pupil
 - Guiding a child's hand when learning to use tools, including pencils
 - Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons
 - Administering medicine
 - Using musical instruments

4. Types of safe touch

- 4.1. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.
- 4.2. The school understands that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate, such as hugging, lap-sitting and some instances of holding hands.
- 4.3. The school recognises that the only appropriate places to touch pupils are on the shoulders, arms and back.
- 4.4. The school places the following restrictions on hugging:
 - 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 the school deems as inappropriate.
 - Young Children often run up to staff and hug staff 'front on.' Staff should gently remove the child's hands from around their back and move themselves into the sideways hug position.
- 4.5. The school places the following restrictions on holding hands:

- 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. Young children also often seek out a safe, adult hand to hold.
 - We have employed a 'school-hand-hold' in order to prevent any inappropriate exchange between staff and pupils.
 - The school-hand-hold involves the member of staff holding their arm out and the pupil wrapping their hand around the staff's lower arm. If required, the member of staff can then place their free hand on top of the pupil's for extra security.
- 4.6. The school recognises that all instances of lap-sitting are inappropriate and therefore we prohibit this interaction between members of staff and pupils. Where young children seek to climb onto an adult's lap, the adult will sensitively move the child to the 'school hug' position.
 - 4.7. 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 hand-holding and hugging.
 - 4.8. 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.
 - 4.9. 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.
 - 4.10. Appropriate touch involving pupils with SEND will be in line with their EHC plan or IHP.
 - 4.11. Physical contact in relation to intimate care is advised through the Intimate Care Policy. Parental approval will be sought in cases of on-going intimate care.

5. Reasonable force

- 5.1. The school understands that there are times when members of staff must provide physical intervention whereby a pupil presents danger to themselves or others.
- 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. When physical intervention is used it should be undertaken in such a way that maintains the safety and dignity of all concerned and should always be reasonable, appropriate and necessary to the harm.
- 5.4. 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.

- 5.5. 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 the school recognises that in some extreme cases, such as immediate intervention to prevent worse physical injury, this may not be possible.
- 5.6. 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.
 - A pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves and a member of staff must intervene to prevent this.
- 5.7. Any occurrences of the use of reasonable force will be reported to the Head of School, who will keep a written record of this and communicate it to the pupil's parents.
- 5.8. The school will ensure it has considered the risks involved when using reasonable force involving pupils with SEND, particularly recognising the additional vulnerability of this group.
- 5.9. The school will adhere to the Physical Restraint and Reasonable Force Policy at all times.
- 5.10. Staff use the 'Step On' method of physical intervention. Photographs to illustrate the strategies used at The Federation of Spixworth Schools can be found as an annex to this policy.

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 Head of School, in order to prevent any allegations of inappropriate physical contact. The Head of School will inform the DSL as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 6.2. 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 DSL immediately.
- 6.3. The Head of School 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 the school's Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

- 6.5. In situations where restrictive physical interventions may need to be employed regularly, a physical intervention plan must be discussed with and signed by the parents.

7. Training of staff

- 7.1. The DSL will conduct annual safeguarding training 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 our school and will communicate these to the pupils they are in contact with.

8. Monitoring and review

- 8.1. This policy is reviewed every two years by the Head of School and DSL, who will make any necessary changes and communicate these to all members of staff.
- 8.2. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction.
- 8.3. The next scheduled review date for this policy is Autumn 2022.

Annex

Photographs to illustrate appropriate touch strategies used at Spixworth Infant School

Open Mitten



- fingers together
- thumb away from fingers
- palms parallel to floor

Closed Mitten



- fingers and thumb together

Offering an Arm



- hip in
- head away
- sideways stance
- arm is offered
- student accepts the invite
- draw elbow in for extra security

Supportive Hug



To communicate comfort or reward:

- hip in
- head away
- sideways stance
- closed mittens contain each shoulder
- communicate intention
- use 'de-escalation script' if needed

Supportive Arm



- hip in
- head away
- sideways stance
- positioned behind the elbow
- closed mittens used above the elbows to maintain safe shape (penguin shape)
- communicate intention

Open Mitten Guide



- open mitten hand, placed on the arm above the elbow
- safe shape (penguin shape)
- palm parallel to the floor
- staff positioned behind with extended arm
- communicate intention
- use 'de-escalation script' if needed

Open Mitten Escort



- hip in
- head away
- open mitten hands above the elbows
- safe shape (penguin shape)
- arm resting across the shoulders
- communicate intention
- move assertively (prevent kicking / dropping)

Open Mitten Escort Paired



- hip in
- head away
- open mitten hands above the elbows
- safe shape (penguin shape)
- arms resting across the shoulders

- communicate intention
- move assertively (prevent kicking / dropping)

Students who are allowed to plant their feet may choose to drop or kick or spit at staff. Keeping the feet occupied with movement occupies the brain and reduces the disruptive options.

If the student digs their feet in resist the temptation to oppose the force, relax, give a little and the student will reduce resistance.