



The Federation of Spixworth Schools

Physical Intervention and Safe Touch Policy

Agreed by Governing Body: Autumn 2023

To be reviewed: Autumn 2025

Group Responsible: Individual Governor

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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 schools.

The Federation of Spixworth Schools believes that it is important to establish a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. To achieve this, the school recognises that, in certain circumstances, physical intervention, including safe touch and the use of reasonable force, is necessary.

The school understands that behaviour is often a means of communication which may signal that a pupil is in need of support but does not know how to express this; therefore, the school takes a proactive approach to anticipating, managing and minimising potential triggers of distressed behaviour that may cause harm.

This policy acknowledges that situations may arise in which staff members will be required to use physical intervention, and in some cases reasonable force, in order to handle pupils' emotions or aggressive behaviour when other measures have failed to do so.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that physical intervention is used in a correct and safe manner, which is in accordance with the relevant legislation and national guidance. 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.

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
- Education Act 2011

1.2. This policy also has due regard to government guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force in schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- HM Government (2019) 'Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention'

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

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Intimate Care
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Low-Level Safeguarding Concerns 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.

The governing board is responsible for:

- Monitoring the overall implementation of this policy.
- Notifying the executive headteacher that the Behaviour Policy should include the power to use reasonable force.
- Evaluating on an annual basis instances of physical intervention to analyse how and when reasonable force is used and identify any trends.
- Reviewing this policy every two years basis.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the executive headteacher, from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force

The head of school, supported by the Executive Headteacher is responsible for:

- Deciding whether members of staff require additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities, considering the needs of pupils.
- Ensuring all members of staff understand the correct conduct in terms of positive handling.
- Handling any allegations of abuse in line with the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.
- Maintaining the records of the use of reasonable force and evaluating on a termly basis how reasonable force and physical intervention is used.
- Ensuring that any member of staff who uses reasonable force completes a full record of the intervention on the online reporting system: CPOMS
- Ensuring that the Behaviour Policy sets out the circumstances in which force might be used.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the governing board, from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Providing training to members of staff on how to handle the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Ensuring staff understand how pupils with SEND may react differently to reasonable force.
- Ensuring that staff understand the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND or medical conditions.
- Developing individual risk assessments for pupils with SEND or medical conditions that are agreed with the pupil's parents, and ensuring teaching staff are aware of these.
- Ensuring that staff understand how reasonable force principles may need to be adapted for pupils with medical conditions.
- Evaluating on a termly basis how reasonable force and physical intervention is used with regard to pupils with SEND, in collaboration with the head of school.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Providing staff with annual reasonable force training where the head of school deems it necessary.
- Ensuring all members of staff use reasonable force in accordance with this policy.
- Reviewing this policy in liaison with the head of school and governing board.
- 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.

2.2. The SLT is responsible for ensuring that all staff engage in safe touch with pupils, and only where absolutely necessary.

2.3. All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or unsafe at our school as a result of inappropriate touch.

2.4. All members of staff have a responsibility to report any instances of inappropriate touch to the DSL.

2.5. The SLT is responsible for communicating with parents and ensuring that they are aware of this policy.

- 2.6. The school has a responsibility for ensuring that it creates and promotes a culture in which pupils' wishes and feelings are respected.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, '**physical intervention**' is used to refer to any situation in which physical contact with a pupil is necessary – this includes reasonable force, e.g. to defuse a situation in which a pupil is at risk of harming themselves or others, and safe touch, e.g. comforting a pupil in emotional distress.

For the purposes of this policy, '**positive handling**' is defined as the overall, graduated approach of responding to pupils' behaviour and emotions with the intention of protecting pupils and staff, and limiting damage to others and property. Positive handling adapts the least intrusive intervention techniques in response to situations, before using gentle physical intervention and reasonable force as a last resort.

For the purposes of this policy, '**reasonable force**' is considered to refer to a broad range of actions that may be used to control or restrain a pupil to prevent that pupil from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. Reasonable force covers force that is necessary and proportionate to the circumstances.

There are two key types of reasonable force:

- '**Control**' – actions used in an attempt to direct a pupil's movements; this includes passive physical contact, e.g. standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact, e.g. leading a pupil out of a classroom by their arm.
- '**Restraint**' – actions used in an attempt to physically bring a pupil under control. This type of force is typically used in more extreme circumstances, e.g. where two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate, causing staff to intervene to hold them back from one another physically.

For the purposes of this policy, '**safe touch**' is defined as physical contact which, if avoided, would be inhumane, unkind, and potentially emotionally or physically damaging for the pupil, or cause distress to a pupil, e.g. where a pupil is significantly distressed and in need of physical comfort, safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.

- 3.1. 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. Positive handling

The principle of positive handling means that the school expects staff to assess whether the incident requiring a response can be resolved without physical intervention.

Where possible, the school implements an approach of prevention, where staff will be trained in recognising warning signs of severe pain or distress and/or aggressive behaviour, communicating empathetically with pupils displaying such signs to aid them in regulating their emotions, and altering their environment to minimise distressing stimuli.

Teaching staff will be aware of the behavioural patterns, medical conditions and levels of need of pupils in their class, and will ensure that incidents of disruptive or aggressive behaviour in the classroom are handled in line with individual pupils' needs.

Staff will not generally resort to physical contact or reasonable force immediately without first questioning whether there is a need to use physical intervention. Staff will question whether:

- Verbal de-escalation can be attempted.
- There are actions that can be taken to remove triggers from pupils, e.g. dimming the lights and encouraging quiet where a pupil is having a meltdown in response to sensory overstimulation.
- The pupil can be removed from the situation without physical intervention, e.g. if they will follow a member of teaching staff out of the classroom.
- The pupil has a condition or support needs that mean physical intervention would be inherently more dangerous, e.g. asthma which may be made worse by restrictive holds or sensory issues where physical touch would contribute to sensory overload and may provoke aggressive behaviour.
- They have the ability, training and adequate support to physically intervene safely without causing unnecessary harm to the pupil or themselves.

Where there is no immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, destruction of property or serious disruption, reasonable force will not be used on the pupil. Any reasonable force used in situations that are non-urgent will only be used once all alternative options have been exhausted and where the staff member in charge deems that the situation is escalating.

The school understands that, in some cases, action may be required very quickly, e.g. in the event that a pupil attempts to run out into a busy road, or where pupils begin a violent fight with one another and staff are forced to pull the pupils apart. Staff will not be penalised for resorting to the use of physical intervention or reasonable force in such situations where it is justified and perceived necessary to prevent harm to others or property in the circumstances.

Positive handling will be applied with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. Reasonable force is not used as a method of behaviour management or discipline – only as a last resort in situations that require de-escalation to prevent harm.

5. Reasonable force

Staff members will use actions that are appropriate and in proportion to the circumstances. Physical restraint will never be used routinely. Where reasonable force is required, the degree and type of force that is used will depend on the pupil's circumstances, e.g. their age or SEND. The following list is not exhaustive, but provides examples of situations where the school may decide to use reasonable force where other methods of defusing a situation have been exhausted or are not appropriate:

- Members of staff need to control pupils risking the safety of themselves or others outside of school premises where the same range of support options are not available, e.g. on school trips.
- Members of staff must prevent a pupil from leaving an area, e.g. the classroom or school grounds, where doing so would risk their safety or the safety of others.
- 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.
- Disruptive children must be removed from the classroom and are refusing instructions to leave.
- The head of school or authorised staff are conducting a search for items prohibited under the Education Act 1996, e.g. knives and weapons, alcohol, and illegal drugs.

All members of staff will be permitted to use reasonable force where they believe it to be appropriate in line with their training, as long as all necessary precautions are taken. The decision to physically intervene during a situation is down to the professional judgement of the member of staff and always depends on the circumstances and the pupil's individual needs.

The power to use reasonable force also applies to any individual whom the head of school has identified as temporarily in charge, such as volunteers.

In many cases where physical intervention or reasonable force is required, minimal and non-restrictive force will be appropriate, e.g. holding a pupils arm to escort them from a classroom.

Reasonable force techniques that involve restraint will only be used where the staff member in charge feels it is necessary to prevent serious harm. In general, restraint will only be used briefly and prolonged restraint will not be used, i.e. restraint beyond that which is necessary to remove the immediate threat a pupil is posing to themselves or others.

Where staff determine physical intervention is necessary, they will calmly communicate the reasons for their actions to the pupil and explain why it is necessary in a non-threatening manner. In most cases, staff will communicate this to pupils before making physical contact to minimise distress and/or further aggressive behaviour from the pupil; however, the school recognises that this is not possible in some emergency situations.

Staff will never give the impression that they are acting out of anger or are punishing the pupil. Staff members will always avoid acting in a way that could cause injury; however, the

school understands that accidental injury may occur in emergency situations where there is not sufficient time for a considered response, e.g. bruising on a child's wrist where a staff member has grabbed them to prevent them running onto a busy road.

Where a member of staff believes that they are at risk, e.g. where an injury is likely to occur, they will not intervene in an incident without the help and assistance of another staff member.

Reasonable force techniques which present an **unacceptable** risk and will not be used under any circumstances include:

- The 'seated double embrace' where two staff members force a pupil into a sitting position and lean them forward whilst a third staff member monitors their breathing.
- The 'double basket-hold' in which a pupil's arms are held across their chest.
- The 'nose distraction technique' which involves a sharp upward jab under the pupil's nose.

Staff will also be aware that, in some instances, it will cause more distress to a pupil, and may increase the risk of harm to their peers, if they are prevented from leaving an area, e.g. their classroom, using physical intervention. Where it is not dangerous to allow them to leave, the staff member in charge of the situation should use their judgement in allowing a pupil to remove themselves from the area, as environmental factors in the area specifically may be provoking their behaviour.

Following the incidents where reasonable force is used, the pupil involved may be subject to separate disciplinary procedures, in which strategies should be formed to help avoid reoccurrence of such incidents.

6. Pupils with SEND

The school will have due consideration to the risks posed by the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND in terms of physical intervention and reasonable force.

The SENCO will ensure that the stipulations of the Equality Act 2010 are adhered to in relation to reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and the Public Sector Equality Duty, and will ensure that staff that come into regular contact with pupils with SEND are aware of the ways in which their needs can be met without reasonable force.

The school is aware that pupils with SEND may sometimes experience meltdowns, which can sometimes manifest in behaviour which may be aggressive or seem uncontrollable. Where it is known that a pupil is prone to meltdowns, the SENCO and head of school will draft a risk assessment to determine planned strategies for managing the pupil's meltdowns that are tailored to the pupil's specific needs, to avoid the use of reasonable force. These risk assessments will be conducted in collaboration with the pupil and their parents, where appropriate.

Some pupils with SEND may require physical intervention when they feel overwhelmed or stressed, e.g. a tight hug; however, this will be discussed as part of relevant risk assessments.

Staff members will not assume that a technique employed for one pupil with SEND will be applicable to other pupils with SEND.

Staff will also be aware that pupils with SEND may engage in frequent, repetitive self-stimulatory behaviour, known as 'stimming', and that some pupils may engage in self-injurious stimming, e.g. repeatedly hitting or scratching themselves. While this can be alarming, staff will be aware that stimming is often carried out as a means of emotional regulation or self-soothing in response to stressful or overwhelming stimuli. Staff members will aim to remove distressing stimuli from the environment, where possible, or will support pupils to engage in less harmful stimming methods, e.g. by providing them with something to play with or demonstrating a less harmful stim, such as hand flapping.

Staff will be aware that restraining a pupil in a way that prevents them from stimming entirely can cause extreme distress and lead to further aggressive behaviour. Self-injurious stimming and tactics to support a pupil to engage in safer stims will be included as part of the pupil's risk assessment.

The school will adhere to its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy at all times.

7. Post-incident support

Following an incident of reasonable force, all pupils and staff members involved will be given any necessary first aid to treat injuries as soon as possible, and emotional support.

Wherever reasonable force is used, staff members and pupils involved in incidents will be given separate opportunities to reflect on what happened.

It will be explained to the pupil involved the reason that such intervention was used, and reassured that the use of the intervention was not a punishment for their behaviour, but rather a method of defusing the situation and preventing them from harming themselves or others. The pupil will be asked about the reasons for their behaviour, including:

- Why their environment was causing such distress for them, e.g. in an instance of sensory overstimulation leading to a meltdown.
- Whether they feel there was anything that could have been done to meet their needs before the situation escalated.
- Whether, and how, staff actions were helpful or unhelpful.

Staff will be encouraged to reflect on their actions and how they handled the situation, and will be reassured, where appropriate, that they have done nothing wrong and acted in what they perceived to be the best interests of pupils.

8. Reporting incidents

A detailed written report will be kept of **all** incidents where positive handling or reasonable force is used, distinguishing between planned interventions, i.e. those in line with approved strategies for the behaviour of specific pupils, and unplanned or emergency interventions.

Immediately following an incident, the member(s) of staff involved will verbally report the incident to the head of school and provide a comprehensive written record of the situation as

soon as possible, using CPOMs and selecting the STEPs tag. The written report of the incident must be thorough, including as much detail as possible as to what had happened before, during and after the incident, the reasons why specific interventions were employed, and any injuries incurred due to the incident.

Records are retained on CPOMs and analysed by the head of school, DSLs and SENCO where physical intervention was used on a pupil with SEND, on the day that they are posted to ensure that such interventions are being used appropriately, and to identify patterns of behaviour and responses to that behaviour that may require changes to school practice, e.g. increased staff training or further behavioural or emotional support. Records should also be sent to the governing board annually for evaluation.

Staff members who do not record an instance of reasonable force where it has occurred may be disciplined in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

Where positive handling, reasonable force or physical restraint has been used, the pupil's parent(s) will be informed as long as this would not place the pupil at greater risk. This information will normally be shared verbally. If the decision is made that the parents cannot be informed as this would place the child at greater risk, a safeguarding referral will be made in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The head of school will make the final decision as to whether it is appropriate to inform the pupil's parents of the details of an incident. If it is appropriate, the following will be adhered to:

- Parents will be informed in writing and a copy of this report will be available via CPOMS to the member(s) of staff involved in the incident.
- The report will inform parents of their right to complain about the use of positive handling and reasonable force, in line with the Complaints Procedures Policy.

If a member of staff witnesses or suspects the use of reasonable force, where another member of staff is actively involved in physical intervention, they will report this to the head of school immediately.

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.

The head of school will be responsible for conducting a thorough investigation to find out the correct details of what occurred; this may include talking to other pupils about the incident, for instance those who witnessed the event.

9. Complaints

All members of staff will be made fully aware of the consequences and legal retributions that can occur following the incorrect use of physical intervention and force.

All complaints regarding the use of physical intervention or force will be investigated in a thorough and speedy manner. The person making the complaint is responsible for providing evidence for their allegations, e.g. testimony of events or evidence of injury – it is not for the member of staff to prove that their actions were made reasonably.

In extreme circumstances, parents may take civil action or pursue a criminal prosecution. In the case where a member of staff has acted within the law, this will provide a defence to any civil or criminal prosecution.

Members of staff accused of using excessive force will not be automatically suspended as a response to the allegations. The following procedure will be adhered to, in line with the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy:

- Careful consideration will be given to whether the case warrants a person being suspended until the allegation is resolved.
- The governing board will always take into account whether a staff member has acted within the law when considering whether or not to take disciplinary action against a staff member involved in an incident.
- Where a member of staff is suspended, the school will ensure that the staff member has access to a named contact that can provide support and guidance.
- The school will provide pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation.

Where a safeguarding allegation is made against a member of staff that involves physical contact, e.g. restraint, the strategy discussion or initial evaluation with the LADO will take into account that teachers and other school staff are entitled to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils in certain circumstances, including dealing with disruptive behaviour.

10. Safe touch

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
- Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons
- Administering medicine
- Using musical instruments

The school understands that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate, e.g. cuddling, lap-sitting and some instances of holding hands, and that safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.

The school designates that the only appropriate places on a pupil's body to touch them are their shoulders, arms and upper back.

Staff employing touch for reward or comfort will 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 inappropriate.

The school recognises that staff will sometimes need to hold a pupil's hand, e.g. to guide them or prevent them from physical harm. Staff needing to hold a pupil's hand will use the '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.

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. 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.

If a member of staff attempts to use one of the safe methods of touch and a pupil is unhappy or uncomfortable with this, 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.

Where it is reported that a staff member has engaged, or is suspected to have engaged, in touch that is not appropriate in line with this policy and the Staff Code of Conduct, this will be handled in line with the Reporting Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy, or, where there have been multiple reports of inappropriate touch or an instance of touch which is severely inappropriate, the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

11. Monitoring and review

- 11.1. This policy is reviewed every two years by the Head of School, DSL and SENCO, who will make any necessary changes and communicate these to all members of staff.
- 11.2. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction.
- 11.3. The next scheduled review date for this policy is Autumn 2024.

Appendix A

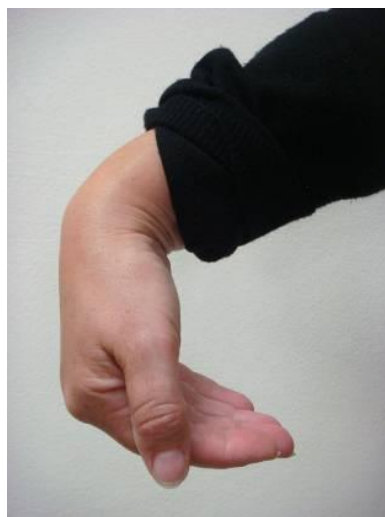
Photographs to illustrate appropriate touch strategies used at The Federation of Spixworth Schools.

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.

