

**Safe Touch Policy**

**Introduction**

Safe touch can be therapeutic at any age, and is essential to the healthy development of a child. Touch of a student by a staff member in a school setting is not illegal and in some situations may be beneficial. This policy sets out a framework for Wings staff to use touch in a helpful way, and outlines what might constitute “unsafe touch” or “unreasonable force”.

**When Safe Touch might be beneficial**

Staff who are fully trained are able to use safe touch when another adult is present. It is acceptable to use touch to

* Calm a distressed child or young person
* Contain an angry child or young person
* Reassure and anxious child or young person or a child or young person with low self esteem
* Soothe a child or young person whose emotions are unregulated

Other techniques to be used alongside safe touch include:

* Lowering the voice
* Speaking more slowly
* Breathing more deeply
* Speaking firmly, quietly and in an unflustered way
* Providing clear and achievable boundaries

Touch by an adult on a child or young person will be on clothed or open areas – eg head, hand, arms, shoulders.

**Safe Holding**

A staff member who is trained may use gentle holding techniques to help calm and soothe a child or young person who

* Is harming themselves or others or is likely to
* Is damaging property or equipment
* Is out of control and not responding to verbal instructions

This advice is in line with the Use of Reasonable Force (department for Education 2013.

**Unsafe Touch or Holding**

Touch or holding will never be used:

* To satisfy the staff member’s needs
* As an impulsive or ill thought out response
* To exercise power
* In an invasive or sexual way
* By untrained staff
* As a punishment
* In a prejudiced or judgmental way or to convey favouritism.

**When touch or holding is inappropriate**

Children or young people from some cultures or with certain histories or conditions (eg autism) may be very uncomfortable with touch by an adult. Staff members should consider this when contemplating touching a child or young person.

Parents and carers should be informed at induction of the Organisation’s policy on touch, and should be enabled to express their views and any particular needs of their child around touch.