



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

There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a child or vulnerable adult is proper and necessary. Examples include:

- Calming/comforting a distressed child or young person/vulnerable adult
- Containing an angry child or young person/vulnerable adult
- Reassuring an anxious child or young person or a child or young person with low self esteem
- Soothing a child or young person whose emotions are unregulated
- When congratulating or praising an individual
- Demonstrating how to use a musical instrument or techniques/exercises in sports coaching sessions
- To give first aid

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. The adult should be mindful of who else is present, and should not spend time alone with a child/young person/vulnerable adult in areas not covered by CCTV (refer to safeguarding policy). The use of safe touch will be discussed with all staff at induction with regular refresher conversations within staff meetings/whole group training as needed. Staff are

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also encouraged to ask questions and discuss to ensure that everyone is aware of, and meeting, the expectations as outlined here.

Safe Holding

A staff member 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
- As a punishment
- In a prejudiced or judgmental way or to convey favouritism
- In an unreasonable manner – one in which the individual may be hurt by the physical intervention

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.