



SAFEGUARDING – SAFE TOUCH POLICY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

At Downham Preparatory School we understand that appropriate relationships between staff and pupils are paramount to promoting the safeguarding of children at our school.

The DfE's guidance document, 'Use of reasonable force in schools', which was published in 2013, makes clear that there are occasions when physical contact with a pupil, other than reasonable force, is appropriate and necessary.

This Safe Touch 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 children are entitled to receive an education in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected. The school will dedicate itself to ensuring that no pupils feel threatened or disrespected, in terms of physical contact between themselves or a member of staff.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. This policy has due regard to the following legislation, including, but not limited to:

- The Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010

1.2. This policy will also have due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE 'Use of reasonable force in schools' 2013
- DfE 'Working together to safeguard children' 2015

1.3. The school will implement this policy in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy and Equality Policy.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- All members of staff at our school have a duty of care towards pupils, and must be aware of the boundaries involving physical contact.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for conducting annual safeguarding training for all members of staff and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities, in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.
- The Principal and DSL are responsible for ensuring that all staff engage in safe touch with pupils, and only where absolutely necessary.
- All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or unsafe at our school as a result of inappropriate touch.
- All members of staff have a responsibility to report any instances of inappropriate touch to the Principal or DSL.
- The Principal is responsible for communicating with parents/carers and ensuring that they are aware of this policy.

- The school has a responsibility for ensuring that they create and promote a culture in which pupils' wishes and feelings are respected.

WHAT IS SAFE TOUCH?

- 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.
- Safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.
- 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, or when using musical instruments.

TYPES OF SAFE TOUCH

- The school understands that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate, such as hugging, lap-sitting, holding hands or kissing.
- The school recognises that the only appropriate places to touch pupils are on the shoulders, arms and back.
- Except in the case of demonstrating skills during sports lessons, we allow the following:
 - When demonstrating how to use sporting equipment or sports skills staff may need to touch children to support and guide them, for example in gymnastics, hockey, rugby and football.
 - When learning climbing skills staff will need to use a guiding hand to support younger children
 - When younger children are using the climbing equipment staff may need to support them getting up and down-this must be done in sight of others. Staff must lift from under the armpits and place the child down gently.
 - Staff will limit lone-working, when this is necessary in the school hall the door is pinned open and there are glass windows allowing others to see in.
- **The school places the following restrictions on hugging:**
 - At our school 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 would deem inappropriate.
- **The school places the following restrictions on holding hands:**
 - At our school 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 Reception class we will hold a pupil's hand when giving guidance, reassurance or to comfort them.
 - We encourage the use of the 'school hand-hold'. This is done by the adult holding their arm out, and the child is encouraged to either hold the hand or arm of the adult or wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child's hand for a little extra security if it is required.

- **The school places the following restrictions on lap-sitting:**
 - The school recognises that all instances of lap-sitting are inappropriate and therefore prohibits this interaction between members of staff and pupils.
 - Reception class will allow pupil's to sit on their lap if they require comfort or reassurance, particularly in the case of distress; this type of contact is only made with the consent of the child. The child must be sat sideways or facing outwards and never in a front embrace.
 - 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 must explain to the pupil why it is unacceptable and encourage them to engage in the school-hug.
 - If a member of staff attempts to use one of the safe methods of touch and a pupil is unhappy with this, the member of staff will retract immediately in order to respect the pupil's wishes.

REASONABLE FORCE

- The school understands that there are times when members of staff must provide physical intervention whereby a child presents danger to themselves or others.
- 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.
- 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.
- At all times, members of staff must 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.
- The school is able to use reasonable force in situations when:
 - Disruptive children 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. (DfE, p.5)
- Any occurrences of the use of reasonable force will be reported to the Principal.
STAFF INVOLVED MUST FILL IN OUR USE OF RESTRAINT RECORD.

REPORTING INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH

- If a pupil attempts to engage in any inappropriate touch, the member of staff involved will report this immediately to the Principal or DSL, in order to prevent any allegations of inappropriate physical contact.
- 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 Principal or DSL immediately.
- The Principal and DSL will keep a written record of all instances of reported inappropriate touch.
- Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct.

TRAINING OF STAFF

- The Principal and DSL will conduct safeguarding training for all members of staff in relation to safe touch.
- All staff will be regularly reminded of the methods of safe touch employed by our school, and will communicate this to the pupils they are in contact with.

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis by the Principal and DSL, who will make any necessary changes and communicate this to all members of staff.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Primary legislation

- Children Act (1989 s47)
- Protection of Children Act (1999)
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations (2009)
- Police Act 1987 (Criminal Records) (N02) Regulations 2009

Further Guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (revised HMG 2006, March 2013 & March 2015)
- Guidance for Safer Work Practices for Adults who work with Children & young People- (2015)
- Keeping children safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for schools & colleges (DfE) 2019
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
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LINKED POLICIES

Safeguarding Policy


Health and Safety Policy

Behaviour Policy

Equality Policy.

Additional Information in line with Coronavirus Guidance

- Staff are encouraged to remain 2M apart from children as much as possible.
- If you need to treat a child who has symptoms of coronavirus you will need to wear PPE as advised in our risk assessment.
- There may be children who appear distressed when they return to school, IF you need to offer physical comfort please only use the 'school hug' as mentioned in the policy above.

Principal		Date:	
Signed: -			Reviewed January 2023

REVIEW DATE: ... January 2024