



Safe Touch and Physical Intervention Policy



Our Ethos:

‘Everyone in our school community has a right to learn and grow, be treated with respect and feel safe. Each has a responsibility too to conduct themselves in a way that helps promote these rights helping us to ensure that we continue to develop a culture and ethos in which every person feels valued and knows how to value the contribution of others.’

1. Context

1.1 Our policy on Safe Touch has been developed in the context of the local authorities' Child Protection Procedures and Policies and Government guidance. It takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and other empirical studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, emotional regulation, mental health and the development of pro-social skills. This policy also includes specific guidance relating to the use of force and physical intervention where it is used in emergency and planned situations.

1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with 'Use of reasonable force Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies July 2013' (DFE), 'Behaviour and discipline in schools, Advice for headteachers and school staff February 2014' (DFE), Child Protection and Safeguarding policy, Health and Safety policy.

'Governing bodies of maintained schools have a duty under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requiring them to make arrangements to ensure that their 4 functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils.'

1.3 We have a policy on safe touch in order to protect pupils and school staff from allegations. Under Child Protection procedures many schools, education authorities and academies have adopted 'No Touch' policies.

South Somerset Partnership School is adopting an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch in special cases as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy emotional growth and learning.

1.4 This policy applies to all staff at South Somerset Partnership School and to all activities, on or off-site and at all times. However, only staff who have received appropriate Team Teach training will hold pupils in any form of 'restraint' as guided by this training. All staff should seek a trained person to support them in the event of an emergency.

1.5 Named members of staff have received 'Positive Handling' training through 'Team Teach' and only those who have received two-day training know how and when to hold pupils in safe ways within governmental guidelines both for therapeutic purposes and in emergency situations.

1.6 Thrive Licensed Practitioners are also then trained by Thrive staff to combine their practice with the Thrive Approach™ so they can identify and use safe touch as a developmental intervention.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and related procedures lies with the Headteacher and the area management committee. This committee will approve and review this policy annually.
- 2.2 The pupil's tutor will be the first point of contact for any member of staff, parent/carer who wishes to discuss any concerns relating to the behaviour of a child. The tutor should inform a member of the senior leadership team if a positive handling plan is required.
- 2.3 The Deputy Headteacher will be the named member of staff responsible for ensuring that all School staff are aware of this policy and any related procedures.
- 2.4 The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that all staff supporting pupils who may require 'safe touch' have appropriate training. A record of this training will be held in the school office.
- 2.5 The Deputy Headteacher will be responsible for the monitoring of all individual positive handling plans (PHPs) and risk assessing any activities/individual pupils as necessary.
- 2.6 The school will ensure that suitably trained staff are available whenever pupils with significant SEMH needs and or those who may require a PHP are engaged in school activities.
- 2.7 The school will ensure that all new staff/students receive induction in appropriate touch when they begin work with pupils.

3. The developmentally necessary experience of safe touch

- 3.1 Pupils learn who they are and how the world is 'in relationship'. The quality of the child's relationships with significant adults is key to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Touch is recognised as being a physical way of soothing, calming and containing distress. Berne identified touch as a human 'hunger' necessary for survival and well-being. Many research studies have indicated the necessity of human contact and touch in the healthy development of pupils. It is a factor in pupils who experience neglect and 'fail to thrive'.
- 3.2 If 'safe touch' is to be used as an intervention, it must be done with the full knowledge and consent of parents/carers, by trained and supervised staff in carefully monitored situations where its therapeutic use has been agreed because it addresses an identified developmental need on the part of the child.
- 3.3 The use of 'safe touch' by designated adults needs to be supervised, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, as indeed does the policy, to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of pupils, parents/carers and staff.
- 3.4 Research (see Appendix 2) shows clearly that healthy pro-social brain development requires access to safe touch as one of the means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, sad or angry child. It is essential for all pupils to learn the difference between safe and unsafe touch and to experience having their strongest emotions contained, validated, accepted and soothed by a significant adult.

- 3.5 If pupils are behaving in unacceptable, threatening, dangerous, aggressive or out of control ways, they have not yet learned how their strongest emotional reactions can be contained, channeled and communicated safely. In recognition of this, under special, agreed and supervised conditions, specially trained staff will consider using safe touch as one of the means available to them for example to calm a distressed child, to contain an angry or wild child and/or encourage or affirm an anxious child or to support a child with low self-esteem.
- 3.6 Safe touch used to calm, soothe and regulate a child's emotions is a needed developmental experience. The brain does not develop self-soothing neuronal pathways unless and until this safe emotional regulation has been experienced within a positive relationship with a significant adult. Where pupils have had insufficient experience of safe touch and calming regulation this may be a priority to help the brain to develop access to thinking, judging and evaluating mechanisms.
- 3.7 Safe touch is one of the key ways of regulating pupils' emotions, but it is a strategy that fully trained staff will use only under supervision and in line with a whole school THRIVE approach.

Other means of calming, soothing and containing pupils' strong emotions include:

- Slowing one's pace
- Lowering the voice
- Breathing more deeply
- Initially matching the pitch and volume of the child's emotional display (shout, cry etc) and then regulating it down
- Talking slowly firmly and quietly in an unhurried way
- Providing clear predictable consistently held boundaries

The developmentally appropriate (and therapeutic) use of safe touch is defined by situations in which abstinence would actually be inhumane, unkind and potentially psychologically or neuro-biologically damaging.

Examples include the beneficial use of touch in the comforting of a child who is in an acute state of distress and/or out of control. Not to reach out to the child in such circumstances could be re-traumatising and neurobiologically damaging as well as confirming or inviting anti-social behaviour patterns.

Moreover, gentle safe holding is appropriate if a child:

- is hurting himself/herself or others (or is likely to hurt)
- is damaging school property
- is severely disrupting the learning of others (where it is not possible to move others out of the way)

3.9 This is in line with The 1996 Education Act (Section 550A) that stipulates that reasonable physical intervention may be used to prevent a pupil from significant harm to self or others, damage to property, or committing a criminal offence. Any staff member undertaking safe touch or a restraint of any kind should never do this without at least one witness. The 'help' protocol will be followed and all necessary staff will receive appropriate and timely training in line with team teach guidance.

3.10 Government guidance also specifies other examples where touching a pupil might be "proper or necessary":

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school
- When comforting a distressed pupil
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during physical education (PE) lessons or sports coaching
- To give first aid

It is important that the age and stage of development of every child informs how adults are with that child. Any member of staff who is concerned about appropriate touch should discuss this with their line manager.

4. Recording and Reporting

4.1 Where an adult has held a child using a Team Teach restrictive physical intervention, this will be recorded in the 'bound book'. A copy of the entry and the most recent behaviour policy will be included on the child's file.

4.2 Any child who has significant SEMH needs will have a positive handling plan completed with teaching staff and shared with parents/carers. Any plan will be reviewed at least annually and discontinued as necessary.

4.3 The school will ensure that "significant incidents" (where a member of staff has used a physical intervention on a pupil) are recorded and reported to parents and all agencies involved with the child as appropriate.

4.4 If it is likely that reporting the incident will result in significant harm to the pupil, then the incident will be reported to Somerset Direct in line with our child protection and safeguarding policy.

4.5 Parents/ carers will be informed by a member of the senior leadership team of any significant incident when a restraint has been used, ideally by telephone and as soon as possible after the incident.

5. Post-incident Support

- 5.1 Members of staff who have been assaulted may wish to report the incident to the police and/or seek advice and support from their trade union representative.
- 5.2 If staff or pupils have been injured, immediate first aid will be provided and medical help accessed, if necessary. Staff and pupils will also receive emotional support. Letters to parents informing them about the use of restraint may be used to engage in discussion regarding future course of action. A positive handling plan may be necessary to prevent and deal with any further recurrence of behaviour that could lead to the use of restraint.
- 5.3 If necessary the school will also inform local authority pupils' services (Youth Offending Team; Educational Psychology Service; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; Staff will aim to help the pupil to develop strategies to avoid repeating the difficult behaviour.
- 5.4 The school will provide ongoing support for staff and pupils as long as necessary in respect of:
- physical consequences
 - emotional stress/loss of confidence
 - opportunities to analyse, reflect and learn from the incident

6. Complaints

- 6.1 All school users and stakeholders have a right to complain about actions taken by school staff including use of force. If a specific allegation is made against a member of staff, then the school will follow the related policy and procedures (see employee disciplinary and appeals policy)
- 6.2 Other complaints will be dealt with via the school's complaints procedure.

7. References

- Stewart, Ian and Joines, Vann. *TA Today: A New Introduction to Transactional Analysis*. Lifespace Publishing, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. 1987
- www.livescience.com/21778
- www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b015p62y
- www.romania-insider.com
- <http://www.danielhughes.org/html/PLACE.html>

8. Appendices

- A- Use of reasonable force- Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies, 2013 DFE
- B- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools- Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies, 2014 DFE
- C- Guidance on the use of restrictive physical intervention for staff working with pupils and adults who display extreme behaviour in association with learning disability and or Autistic Spectrum Disorders 2002 DFE
- D- Guidance on the use of restrictive physical interventions for pupils with severe behavioural difficulties
- E- Dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff, 2012 DFE
- F- Positive Handling Plan (blank example)

Date of issue/revision: September 2017

Chair of Management Committee:

Headteacher:

Date:

