

Aims/Rationale

At Dussindale Primary School, we understand that appropriate relationships between staff and pupils are paramount to promoting the safeguarding of children at our school. 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. It is extremely important that you have read and understood this policy to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to hold/touch children and the appropriate ways in which we do so to keep everyone safe.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school Safeguarding and Child protection policy.

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.

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 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- The headteacher is 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 headteacher.
- The headteacher is responsible for communicating with parents/carers and ensuring that they are aware of this policy.
- All school staff have a responsibility for ensuring that they create and promote a culture in which pupils' wishes and feelings are respected.

Why Do We Use Touch?

We may choose to use touch for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for either comfort or reward. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt students if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc. and to keep them safe e.g. to guide them when crossing a road, or for First Aid. On occasion it may

be necessary when demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons, or when using musical instruments.

How Do We Use Touch?

Hugging - At this school, we encourage staff who are using touch for comfort or reward to use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and the adult's hands on the shoulders limits the ability of the child to turn themselves into you. This can be done either standing or sitting.

Hand-Holding - We recognise that children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is compliant. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children, this can become a restraint. Therefore, we encourage the use of the 'school hand-hold'. The adult keeps their hand 'flat' if the child wishes to hold it, so that it is clear that the child is choosing to hold the adult's hand, and not the adult controlling this. Alternatively, the adult may hold their arm out, and the child is encouraged to wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child's for a little extra security if it is required. In summary, it is generally deemed appropriate to touch others on the upper arm which would appear to be regarded as a neutral zone in most cultures.

Lap-Sitting - At our school we actively discourage lap-sitting. Children should be taught to seek comfort/attention through other means, for example the school hand hold or hug. If a child attempts to sit on your lap, explain to them that this is not what we do here, and ask them to sit next to you if it is appropriate.

Please note: although we have a touch policy and believe that contingent touch can be a positive experience for the children that we care for, this does not mean that you have to touch children, and it should also be realised that some children will not want to be touched. This must be respected. 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.

Reporting inappropriate touch

At times, children may be in such crisis or distress that they hold you in a way which is not described as above (eg 'front on' hug/lapsitting). If this should happen please **ensure** that you have informed a member of the senior leadership team to protect yourself from an allegation of inappropriate physical contact. You will be asked to make a note of this, in order to record and monitor the amount of times the student is doing this to staff to see whether this is a 'controlling' behaviour, or whether the child is displaying distressed behaviour regularly.

If any adult suspects or witnesses inappropriate physical contact, whereby the member of staff/volunteer/visitor is willingly involved, they **must** report this to the headteacher immediately, as per our safeguarding, whistle-blowing and allegations against staff policies.

