

OTTERHAM C P SCHOOL

Safe Touch Policy



October 2017

Safe Touch Policy

Rationale

Children 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. Many research studies have indicated the necessity of human contact and touch in the healthy development of children. It is a factor in children who experience neglect and 'fail to thrive'.

This policy is also designed to protect children and school staff from allegations of mis-use of touch.

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary.

Examples of 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 PE lessons or sports coaching, and
- To give first aid

Where touch is used, it should be brief, gentle contact on open clothed parts of the body: hands, arms, shoulders, head, hair, shoes.

Guidance

Otterham C P School staff should always consider and abide by the following points when carrying out their duties:

- Touch should not be in response to or be intended to arouse sexual expectations or feelings (Department of Health Circular LAC (1993))
- Play-fighting is not a substitute for appropriate affection towards young people, it gives confusing messages to them about personal and professional boundaries
- Where a young person requires intimate personal care, staff should ensure that student is comfortable with the staff member attending to their needs. Other staff should always be around to monitor events and the young person's privacy and dignity should always be preserved
- Privacy issues are always to be considered. A safe environment which respects privacy and shows regard for personal boundaries will be encouraged. Thought must be given to how staff present themselves, (eg how they dress), and how they show professional respect when relating to each other and to young people
- Where a child presents a danger to themselves or to others it will, at times, be necessary for staff to use means of physical intervention. Training for staff will be made available. At such times, staff should always take care to explain what they are doing and that the actions taken are for safety reasons
- Clarity should always be our aim. A young person should never be left in any doubt about the member of staff's intention behind any physical contact, even if it is felt that the child may not have the cognitive understanding or reasoning. Clumsy or unconsidered use of touch may be experienced by a child as being confusing, uncomfortable or distressing. A decisive, firm and planned form of open touch within an appropriate context and a safe relationship is less likely to lead to unease and confusion

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that all practice at Otterham School is safe and appropriate. Any member of staff who is concerned about another member of staff's practice should discuss their concerns with the Headteacher or another senior member of staff as appropriate.