



# **TOUCH POLICY 2023-2024**

**Effective Date: October 2017**

**Last Reviewed June 2023**

**Reviewed by: Karen Hayward, Executive Principal**

**Next Review Date: June 2024**

## **Purpose**

As a Federation we understand that there may be occasions when we need to have physical contact with a student. As part of our duty of care to your child, there may be times when they need comforting or reassuring or in a minority of circumstances to remove a risk to other students or staff. We may choose to hold a student 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. It is important for staff and parents to have a clear understanding of the school's guidelines for physical contact.

## **Summary**

- We use a sideways hug when students may need comforting – this is our 'school hug'
- A member of staff will always respect a student's choice to not be touched
- Staff have a 'duty of care' to pupils. If they believe there is a risk of serious harm, they will take action and, following school procedure, may physically intervene to remove a child
- All staff have been trained in de-escalation strategies.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

This policy applies to:

- All staff
- Parent volunteers
- Work Experience Students
- Governors
- Parents/Guardians

## **Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation**

The aims of this policy will be monitored alongside the Whole School Safeguarding Policy, including the Self- Review Tool for Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools.

At our schools, we have a touch policy. This means that as a member of staff you are able to physically guide, touch or prompt student in appropriate ways at the appropriate times. It is extremely important that you have read and understood this policy to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to hold/touch student and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

## **Why Do We Use Touch?**

We may choose to hold a student 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. Staff should take care and use their professional judgement when deciding whether to provide intervention/assistance to a child who does not require such care, even if the child requests help. Staff should ask themselves how others may view their actions. Staff should avoid any conduct which would lead to any reasonable person to question their reasons or intentions.

## **How do we use Touch?**

### **Hugging**

At our schools, we encourage staff that 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 limit the ability of the child to turn themselves into you. This can be done either standing or sitting.

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

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the students in their care. Therefore, if a student is likely to be at risk from harm, if you do not physically intervene in an emergency situation, you must take action. The action you take will be dependent on the dynamic risk assessment that you make at that moment in time.

Parents/guardians will be made aware of this policy when their child is admitted to this school.

If you have any questions or would like a further discussion regarding this policy, please speak to your line manager at the earliest available opportunity.