



Safe Touch Policy

Ramsden Hall Academy

LAST REVIEW DATE	September 2021	REVIEW PERIOD	3 Yearly
NEXT REVIEW DATE	September 2024	OWNER	Emma Baker

Physical contact should always be about meeting the needs of the pupils. Staff must remember that some respond positively to physical contact and some do not. This will be highlighted with the individual Pupil Profile Risk Assessment.

Within Ramsden Hall Academy, this means that as a member of staff you may physically guide, touch or prompt children in appropriate ways at appropriate times. It is extremely important that you have read and understood all relevant policies to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to use safe touch, physical intervention or restrictive physical intervention with children and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

This policy to be read in conjunction with the 'Behaviour Policy' and the 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy'

Why Do We Use Touch?

Children have the right to independence and choices, and we seek to provide opportunities for personal growth, emotional health and wellbeing. However, rights also involve responsibilities, such as not harming other people's rights.

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the pupils in their care. Therefore, if a pupil 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.

Situations which may benefit from using safe touch include:

- To reassure a pupil of your presence
- To encourage a pupil to or from an area
- To draw the attention of a pupil

There may also be occasions for physical contact for curricular reasons such as during sports, PE and drama lessons as well as in an emergency to avert danger to the pupil / pupils.

In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:

- the pupil's age and level of understanding;
- the pupil's individual characteristics and history;
- the location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present).

At Ramsden Hall Academy, we encourage staff that are using safe touch for comfort by using a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' cuddling. Hugging can be used either standing or seated.

At times, while in crisis, distress or excitement, pupils may hold staff in a way which is not described as above e.g. 'front on' hug. If this should happen, please inform your

line Manager if it has felt inappropriate or becomes regular. You may need to record this on Sleuth in order to monitor the amount of times the student is seeking this support from staff and to analyse the child's unmet need.

General reparative touch

Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or dysregulated pupil. Safe touch, used to regulate a pupil's emotions, triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body which supports our approach of relate, recover and repair.

Reparative touch may include:

- patting a back
- hand on arm or shoulder
- or for a little extra security – placing a hand on top of the pupil's hand
- Agreed head, hand or shoulder therapeutic style massage

Positive handling (calming to help regulate a child)

Safe touch and positive handling may be a way of providing support for the pupil in order for them to regulate their emotions or their sensory needs.

All staff are MAPA trained in order to understand appropriate touch and physical intervention. All physical interventions are logged on Sleuth in line with MAPA Practice.

Rationale

Children learn who they are and how the world is, by forming relationships with people around them. The quality of a child's relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing.

Many children who require emotional support from school may have been subject to trauma or distress. It is with this in mind that staff seek to respond to children's developmental needs by using appropriate safe touch.

Attachment theory and child development identifies safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills.

Our policy rests on the belief that every member of staff needs to know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Hence, staff need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference. Equally, when a child is in deep distress, staff need to know when and how sufficient connection and psychological holding can be appropriately provided.

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.

