

Positive Touch Policy

Approval confirmed:

Designation	Name	Date	Signature
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Monitoring and Evaluation	
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Review delegated to:	Quality of Education committee

Document Version control

Version	Changes made	Date
1.0	Initial set up of Trust-wide policy	July 2022
	Review	September 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy has been developed with due consideration of research and studies based on and around the positive impact of touch. The importance of touch should not be underestimated as it can:
 - 1.1.1. Show acceptance
 - 1.1.2. Emphasise the spoken word
 - 1.1.3. Provide reassurance
 - 1.1.4. Offer an alternative to spoken communication
- 1.2. Used in context and with empathy, touch enables us to build trusting relationships with pupils and develop natural interactions.

2. Implementation

- 2.1. Whilst touch can be a positive experience for pupils, this does not mean that you have to touch them and it should also be realised that some pupils will not want to be touched. Please respect this.
- 2.2. Physical contact is never made as a punishment, or to inflict pain. All forms of corporal punishment are prohibited.
- 2.3. Physical contact will not be made with a pupil's neck, breasts, abdomen, genital area, other sensitive body parts, or to put pressure on joints. An appropriate touch is not invasive or humiliating and could not be considered as flirtatious. It will not become a habit between a member of staff and a particular pupils.
- 2.4. Appropriate places to touch are shoulders, arms, hands and back.
- 2.5. It is **not** appropriate to hug face to face.
- 2.6. There are many occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with pupils for a variety of reasons, for example:
 - 2.6.1. First Aid
 - 2.6.2. To comfort a pupil in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age)
 - 2.6.3. To congratulate a pupil
 - 2.6.4. To direct a pupil (holding hands, hand on shoulder etc.)
 - 2.6.5. For educational skills (PE, Drama etc.)
 - 2.6.6. In an emergency to increase the safety of the pupil(s)
 - 2.6.7. Where a child has intimate care needs (refer to Intimate Care Policy)
- 2.7. In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:
 - 2.7.1. The pupil's age and level of understanding
 - 2.7.2. The pupil's individual characteristics and history

- 2.7.3. The location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present)
- 2.8. If pupils require physical contact on a regular basis, relevant information will be documented in an individual plan for the child such as a handling plan, toileting plan or behaviour support plan.
- 2.9. Without exception, all staff need to be clear and open about the use of touch, how it supports the development and wellbeing of pupils and be able to explain the rationale for its use. The use of touch should be discussed openly between staff.
- 2.10. In all cases, staff must use their own professional judgement, and be guided by what a reasonable parent might do, when they feel a pupil needs this kind of support. It is very important that, as far as possible, pupils give consent to any touch.
- 2.11. All staff should be sensitive to any verbal or non-verbal communication from pupils indicating that they do not want to be touched. It must always be considered that for touch to be positive it should be consensual and staff should always respect the wishes of the individual.

3. Acceptable forms of touch in schools

- 3.1. **Casual Touch** – this might include patting on the back or placing a hand on the shoulder
- 3.2. **Communication** – the use of touch enables us to reinforce positive, communicative exchanges such as giving a high five or shaking hands
- 3.3. **Hugging** – a hug is known to produce oxytocin and serotonin, which can help healing, and can make a person feel less anxious, less alone and happier. At SAND Academies Trust, we encourage staff who are using touch for comfort or reward to use a ‘school hug’. This is 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 will limit the ability to turn themselves into you. This can be done either standing or sitting.
- 3.4. **Emotional Wellbeing** – touch enables us to offer our pupils reassurance, security and comfort. In context it can be used to help them understand their emotions and feelings. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child.
- 3.5. **Intimate Care** – this is defined as care tasks of an intimate nature, associated with bodily functions, body products and personal hygiene which demand direct or indirect contact with or exposure of the genitals or the breasts. Refer to the Intimate Care policy for acceptable implementation of these tasks.

4. Concerns

- 4.1. If staff are in any doubt about issues concerning appropriate touch, or observe any practice they consider is cause for concern they should follow the agreed protocol for safeguarding as laid down in the Trust’s Safeguarding policy.