

THE HARLINGTON AND SUNDON ACADEMY TRUST



HARLINGTON LOWER AND SUNDON LOWER SCHOOL **TOUCH GUIDANCE POLICY**

Approved by Curriculum Trustee Committee: February 2024
Next review: February 2027



At our school, we recognise the importance of adult interactions in helping build pupils' feelings of self-esteem, self-confidence, trust in others and joyful engagement. Staff will use these interactions to nurture the emotional well-being of pupils, so that they are more able to learn, make friends, and achieve.

Listening to a pupil's needs is something staff will always take time to do. Whether being shown a "hurt" or a new pair of shoes, staff will take time to listen and react. With a "hurt" such as a cut or graze, staff may need to touch the area to clean it or apply a dressing. We may also use wet paper towels or a dry cotton wool ball to "make better" an imagined "hurt" so that our pupils know their concerns are being heard.

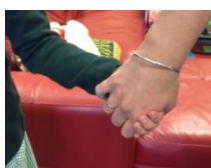


Why Do We Use Touch?

We may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general times we would normally do so for either comfort or reward.

'Touch is a normal, healthy part of all human interaction. There is a growing body of literature demonstrating the positive impact of healthy physical contact on people of all ages. Physical touch can relieve stress, decrease anxiety and depression and increase comfort' (see referenced documents at end of policy).

The School Hug: At this school, we encourage staff when 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 children's shoulders, but from the side rather than 'front on' hugging. 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 and usually would be when the child puts their hand into the adults' hand.

Lap-Sitting: At our school, our youngest pupils may attempt to sit on a lap if they are distressed. We tactfully encourage pupils to seek comfort/attention through other means, such as holding hands or a sideways hug.

Lifting: At our school, the youngest pupils (especially Nursery aged pupils) may ask to be picked up. We tactfully encourage pupils to seek comfort/attention through other means, such as a sideways hug.

What is Theraplay®?

At Harlington Lower and Sundon Lower we have introduced Theraplay® as part of our school routine. This is an empirically proven approach to enhancing children's emotional well-being through a series of games and activities. Sessions are aimed at enhancing pupils' sense of attachment, their sense of self-esteem, their ability to trust in others, and to promote a sense of joyful engagement. The Theraplay® model takes its roots from the natural patterns of healthy interaction between

parent and child. Our sessions are adapted for teacher/pupil relationships and focus on four essential qualities: Structure, Engagement, Nurture, and Challenge. Theraplay® sessions create an active and affective connection between the child, other children and staff, promoting a sense of self as worthy and lovable, and of relationships being positive and rewarding. We recognise that, whilst interaction through touch can be a positive experience for the pupils at our schools, not every child is comfortable with this. We always respect this and guide other pupils to be respectful with their friends who request this.

At all times our goal is to maintain the safety and meet the developmental needs of the child.

Physical intervention

a. Who may use physical intervention and when

The law allows teachers, and other persons who are authorised by the Head Teacher to have control or charge of pupils to use such force as is reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- committing a criminal offence (including behaving in a way that would be an offence if the pupil were not under the age of criminal responsibility);
- injuring themselves or others;
- causing damage to property (including the pupil's own property);
- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere.' (Education Act 1996, Section 550A)

School staff are also, like anyone else, allowed to use reasonable force (the minimum necessary) to defend themselves.

We take the view that staff are not expected to put themselves in danger; and that removing pupils and themselves from a source of danger is a proper thing to do. We appreciate the integrity of our staff and value their efforts to rectify situations that are difficult and in which they exercise their duty of care for their pupils. However, we do not require them to go beyond what is reasonable. In particular it is acceptable for any member of staff to decide that they will not use physical intervention for personal reasons.

Physical intervention should always be used as a last resort.

b. Acceptable Physical Interventions

Reasonable force is not defined legally in isolation. It must be justified as appropriate by the circumstances. We use only the minimum force that is needed to restore safety or appropriate behaviour; and we take account of the age, understanding and gender of the pupil.

Acceptable forms of intervention in this school include:

- leading or guiding a pupil by the hand or arm, or shepherding them with a hand in the center of the back;
- holding a pupil who has lost control until they are calm and safe
- physically moving between and separating two pupils if possible;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- use of reasonable force to remove a weapon or dangerous object from a pupil's grasp;
- where there is immediate risk of injury, any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force' — for example to prevent a pupil running into a busy road or hitting or hurting someone;

It is also acceptable for doors to have double or high locks to ensure pupil safety, or for

external doors to be locked for security purposes, if a member of staff is always with the pupils in such circumstances. Seclusion alone in a locked room is not permitted. If a child is in a distressed where they are manifesting physical violence, they may be guided to a safe room where they can be calmed. In line with the OFSTED recommendation “Any use of isolation which prevents a child leaving the room of their own free will, should only be used in exceptional circumstances if it reduces the risk presented by the child to themselves and others’. The door will not be locked however adults may hold the door shut in order to maintain the safety of the child and others, if there is reasonable threat that people would be hurt if the child left the room. If this happens an adult will remain in the room with the child if possible. If this would put the adult in danger, they should remain just outside and ensure they are able to see the child and maintain their safety. This would occur for a reasonable time period, dependent on the time needed for the child to calm. Throughout this period, adults would follow the child’s individual behaviour plan strategies. If a child did not have one, a behaviour plan would be created after such an incident.

Staff may move, defend themselves, lead, restrain or block someone, bearing in mind the whole time their own safety as well as that of others and of the child who is the subject of any restraint or other intervention.

It is **unacceptable** and likely to be illegal or grounds for disciplinary action for staff to use any physical intervention designed to cause pain or injury including:

- any form of corporal punishment, slapping, punching or kicking;
- holding by the neck or collar, or otherwise restricting the ability to breathe;
- holding by the hair or an ear;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- tripping up a pupil or holding an arm out at neck or head height to stop them;
- holding a pupil face down on the ground or sitting on them;
- **shutting or locking a pupil in a room**, except in extreme situations whilst summoning support or preventing danger of injury.

Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

Physical interventions are not in general used to achieve a search of clothing or property even if we had good reason to believe that a weapon or dangerous drugs were being concealed.

c. Using Physical Intervention

Except in cases where there is immediate danger we would normally try other ways of resolving or de-escalating a situation. These could include:

- using de-escalation strategies
- calmly re-stating the rules and expectations for the situation;
- removing other pupils from the situation and thus from danger of from being an audience;
- use of physical proximity, but not in a threatening way;
- use of physical ‘space’, giving the child enough room or space so that they feel less threatened or trapped by a situation
- encouraging the pupil to withdraw to a safer and calmer situation;
- Calling another adult for support or to take over.
- **Restraint that inflicts pain should never be used**
- **Restraint should never be used as a punishment**

Adults should remember that the following principles govern our management decisions:

- It is essential that adults remain objective and calm in both speech and actions, and listen and respond quietly to the pupil so as not to exacerbate the situation when

managing disruptive children

- Staff should maintain positive attitudes that are constructive. Refer to previous achievements and promote self esteem
- Staff should clarify options and consequences with the child
- Staff should create diversionary activities wherever possible in order to dispel aggression and anger.

If more than minor physical intervention is judged to be necessary the teacher or adult in charge should;

- send for the assistance of another adult (for support or to take over, and as a witness);
- remove other pupils from the scene if possible;
- continue to talk calmly to the pupil explaining what will happen, and under what circumstances the physical intervention will cease (but not in a threatening way);
- use the minimum force necessary and cease the intervention as soon as it is judged safe;
- Not act punitively in any way verbally or physically.

In some circumstances we may consider it appropriate to call the police.

Following a significant incident of physical intervention, when a pupil has resisted or challenged and force has been used, the teacher or adult responsible should as soon as possible inform a senior member of staff. We acknowledge that such events are stressful for both pupils and staff and both parties will need time to recover, with the chance of de-briefing and resolving the situation.

A full written account of the incident should be made by the member of staff concerned and recorded on CPOMs under the label physical intervention.

The report should contain:

- name(s) of pupil(s) concerned, when and where the incident occurred
- Names of staff or pupils who witnessed
- The reason why force was needed
- How the incident began and progressed, who said what, who did what
- What was done to calm things down
- What degree of force was used? What kind of hold, where and for how long
- Pupil's response and the outcome of the incident
- Details of any injury to any person or damage to property

It must be recorded and dated by the member of staff. The Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher in their absence) must add an action on CPOMs to record that they have read the record and countersign it. The Headteacher should

- discuss the incident with the pupil as soon as possible;
- interview staff involved and any other witnesses;
- inform the pupil's parents/carers and social worker if relevant;
- record any disagreements expressed by the pupil or adults about the event
- Take any appropriate further action, liaising with trustees or unions as appropriate, and acting within the Trust's Child Protection Procedures.

We report incidents to the Chair of Trustees in outline without identifying the pupil.

d. Planning for Physical Intervention

Where we think a pupil might require physical restraint we plan in advance and know who will do

what. This planning includes helping pupils to avoid provoking situations, helping them find success and minimise frustration, and develops our own skills. It also helps us see better where we can head off difficulties when we spot them and preempt them early enough. A child friendly behaviour plan should be created. The plan should include:

- parents and the pupil views and to ensure that they are clear about what specific action the school might need to take;
- a risk assessment that considers carefully the likely outcomes to the pupil and others of undertaking intervention or not;
- managing the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, at what stage and what type of holds to be used):
- Identifying key staff who should know exactly what action they should be taking. Any member of staff who may have to use a physical intervention should always be fully briefed about the child in question, and it is best if they are well known to the child.
- ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate;
- Identifying training needs and updates.

e. Training

We are clear that training of staff is vital in this area. All staff (not just teachers) are given general training on behaviour management. Staff are also offered supervision to deal with difficult events, as in our Safeguarding Policy.

If the need arises, staff will be trained with certified Team Teach accreditation for staff using such techniques.

f. Complaints

We hope that by adopting this policy and keeping parents well informed should help to avoid the need for complaints. Any disputes that do arise about the use of force by a member of staff should be dealt with in accordance with the Trust's Child Protection Procedures, a copy of which is available on the school websites. This could in some circumstances lead to an investigation by police and social services.

Complaints about this policy should be directed to the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees.

References Reference can be made to the following documents:

- April 2018 OFSTED 'Positive Environments where children can flourish'
- DFE-00295-2013- 'Section 550A of the Education Act 2013: The Use of reasonable force in schools'
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>
- Advice from unions and professional associations
- British Institute of Learning difficulties (BILD): Code of Practice for Trainers in the Use of Physical Intervention
- 'Behaviour and discipline in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff', Department for Education, 2022; [Behaviour in schools guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/behaviour-in-schools-guidance.pdf)
- 'The special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years', Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25.

Referenced documents

(1) Barnard, K.E., & Brazelton, T.B. (Eds.) Touch: The foundation of experience. Madison, CT: International Universities Press Inc., 1990. (2) Field, T.M. The therapeutic effect of touch. In G. Branningan & M. Merrens (Eds.), The undaunted psychologists: Adventures in research (pp. 3-12). New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1993.



We support children in becoming well rounded individuals where they naturally demonstrate the values of the school in all aspects of their lives.