

## Physical Touch Statement and Guidance



This guidance should be read in conjunction with

- DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force in schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- HM Government (2019) 'Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention'

### Context

Fairfield is committed to a safe and secure environment that encourages young people to thrive. We have a set of values that underpin the way we work to prioritise understanding our young people's individual needs. We believe that all behaviour is an act of communication that signals a young person's unmet needs and cautions that they may not be able to articulate these in appropriate ways. As professionals, our role is to identify these needs and respond appropriately. We are committed to establishing a safe physical and emotional learning environment where basic needs are met.

Physical Touch, when used appropriately and with consent is a key element of maintaining a safe environment. This could be when a young person needs reassurance, as part of a physical intervention in an emergency or as part of an agreed learning or care plan.

Touch is the earliest sense to develop and is significant in the way we perceive our own bodies and our sense of self and then more latterly, others. In the first months of life, touch is key in the development of secure attachment and the formation of relational bonds. In the classroom, positive, contingent touch from teachers has been demonstrated to increase on-task behaviour and decrease disruptive behaviour.

Fairfield feels that it is right that DfE has now stipulated that education provider's cannot have a no touch policy as physical intervention can have a profound impact on stressed out or dysregulated learners, often preventing escalation and the need for exclusion or isolation. A 'no touch policy' would potentially deprive learners of this opportunity. Key to this position is striking the right balance between learning, safety and physical touch.

Fairfield offers learning opportunities for a range of young people with SEND. Our young people work in a personalised manner with their needs at the centre of their programme. We are a geographically large, rural and open access site with a range of real-work-based learning opportunities including horticultural machinery, catering and hospitality, dog day care and animal care and as such there is a minimum expected level of behaviour required of all learners.

Given the nature of our college, the environment and location of the setting, the subjects and pedagogical aims for our young people, we do not routinely offer placements to young people that require high levels of 1:1 support and/or regular restrictive interventions or restraint. We recognise that other providers would be more suited to this.

## **Planned Physical Touch**

Young people may require physical touch as part of their learning programme, such as hand over hand support with physical tasks, redirection, reassurance, personal care, part of a therapeutic or sensory intervention or support with applying sun cream. Physical touch as part of a programme of learning will always be used as part of a written plan and consent sought in cases. If necessary, additional training or monitoring processes and guidance may be required.

Copies of all plans will be kept in SchoolPod and the consent will be logged.

## **Emergencies & Reporting**

In an emergency situation, staff will always act in the best interests of the young people. Our Positive and Proactive Working Policy illustrates our commitment to this. In an unplanned emergency situation staff must use their professional judgement and undertake an in-the-moment dynamic risk assessment. They may also use Reasonable Force to prevent injury or harm to young people. Reasonable Force covers a broad range of actions that require physical touch. Reasonable in this context means using no more force than is necessary and is proportionate to the risks involved. It is expected that staff will use Reasonable Force when there is no other alternative and only as a last resort. In all cases the incident and the physical touch will be recorded and logged on SchoolPod. In an emergency situation, families, carers and the young person will always be part of the communication/debrief and reflection.

## **Limitations & Risk Assessments**

All subjects, interventions, learning spaces and activities with an inherent risk will be subject to a risk assessment. These are reviewed termly and in the event of an accident occurring and are stored online in SharePoint.

As with all areas of SEND, the needs and safety of our young people and staff is paramount. Therefore, all activity that involves physical touch requires an ongoing common-sense approach that respects the individual needs of the young people, their lived experiences and dynamic risk assessment.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of considerations and action.

Physical Touch must not:

- Cause arousal, sexual expectations or feelings: and to mitigate any risk of this happening there should be absolutely no contact between the professional and young person on any area of the body that would be covered by a swimsuit.
- Ignore a young person's lived experience and needs. It must also be sensitive to learners who have suffered abuse or has cultural or religious beliefs
- Cause distress to learners with specific needs such as Autism or an aversion to touch.
- Happen in private spaces such as a young person's bedroom or a bathroom.
- Happen if either party is unsure or if consent is revoked, or brought into question.
- Make either party feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

This guidance will be reviewed annually by the Pastoral Team  
**July 2025.**