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Safe Touch Policy

Date Adopted: September 2023

Implementation Date: September 2023

Review period: Annual

Date of Next Review: December 2026

Responsibility for Reviewing and Monitoring: Alex Davies, *Principal*

History of changes made to this policy:

Version	Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change e.g., TU request, Change in legislation

1) Introduction

- a) This policy should be read in conjunction with the Snowdon Village Behaviour and Communication Policy and Safeguarding Policy. It details how we will implement guidance provided by DfE, Team-Teach and the Trauma Informed Schools trust around safe-touch and positive handling.
- b) The term 'positive handling' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. A clear and consistent positive handling policy supports all pupils, including those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, within an ethos of mutual respect, care and safety.
- c) Staff have a duty to intervene in order to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, damaging property, or in order to maintain good order and discipline. Furthermore, the Academy takes seriously its duty of care to pupils, employees and visitors to the school.
 - The first and paramount consideration is the welfare of the children in our care.
 - The second is the welfare and protection of the adults who look after them.
- d) Staff at Snowdon Village Academy are trained to look after pupils in their care and aim to focus on de-escalation techniques wherever possible. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically, they will follow this 'Safe Touch Policy'.
- e) The DfE non-statutory guidance document 'Use of reasonable force' (dated July 2013- reviewed 2015) provides advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444051/Use_of_reasonable_force_advice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf
- f) Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the Act) enables school staff to use such force as is reasonable. There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force.
- g) DfE guidance and the Act make it clear that all members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force, and that the power can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils, such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit. However, in our Academy, wherever possible, only staff trained in the pre-emptive and responsive positive handling strategy techniques of Team-Teach will use physical intervention techniques with children, and only when necessary.
- h) Although any member of staff may be required to physically intervene with a pupil who is endangering themselves or others, damaging property or to maintain good order and discipline, we would expect accredited staff to take over as soon as possible.
- i) In March 2019 the Equality and Human Rights Commission published the guidance document, 'Human rights framework for restraint'. This guidance sets out key principles of articles 3, 8 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), incorporated into domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998, which govern the use of restraint across all settings: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/human-rights-framework-forrestraint.pdf>
- j) **The term 'safe touch' recognises that children learn who they are (and how the world is) within their significant relationships. The quality of the child's relationships with significant adults is key to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Touch is**

recognised as being a physical way of soothing, calming and containing distress and as a developmentally necessary experience. Many research studies have indicated the necessity of human contact and touch in the healthy development of children.

2) Team-Teach

- a) Team-Teach is accredited through ICM (Institute of Conflict Management). Staff at Snowdon Village undergo a two day course, led by two qualified trainers with a refresher course undertaken every two to three years.
- b) Further details of the Team-Teach approach can be found on the Team-Teach website. The website address is www.team-teach.co.uk

3) Before using physical interventions

- a) We take effective action to reduce risk by:
 - Showing care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiating and reasoning.
 - Giving clear directions for pupils to stop.
 - Reminding the pupil about rules and likely outcomes.
 - Removing an audience or taking vulnerable pupils to a safe place.
 - Making the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons.
 - Using positive guidance to escort pupils to somewhere less pressured.
 - Ensuring that colleagues know what is happening and call for help.
- b) Whilst or before intervention, staff should speak calmly as a way of reassurance e.g. "I am doing this to keep you safe."

4) Use of Restraint

a) The term 'physical restraint' is used when force is used to overcome active resistance. At Snowdon Village, we only use physical restraint when there is no realistic alternative and for the shortest amount of time possible. We expect staff to conduct either a dynamic risk assessment or use the written risk assessment for each child. We expect staff to think creatively about alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective. The paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the child and that it reduces rather than increases risk. Any response to challenging behaviour should be reasonable, proportionate and necessary. Physical restraint must only be in accordance with the following:

- The member of staff should have good grounds for believing the child is in immediate danger of harming themselves or another person, in danger of seriously damaging property or not maintaining good order or discipline.
- Only the minimum force necessary to prevent injury or damage should be applied.
- Every effort should be made to secure a minimum of two Team-Teach trained members of staff present before applying the restraint. Other staff can act as assistants or witnesses.
- Once safe, the restraint should be relaxed to allow the child to regain self control.

- Restraint should be an act of care and control, NOT punishment.
- Physical restraint should not be used purely to force compliance with staff instructions when there is no immediate danger to people and property.
- After the event, the restraint should be discussed with the child, if appropriate, and the parents/ carers at the earliest opportunity – the child’s voice around their experience must be recorded.

b) The definition of reasonable, proportionate and safe practice can change and evolve and that this will be kept under review.

5) **Post Incident Debrief and Recording**

- a) After any incident a full debrief should take place so that learning can inform practice.
- b) Following an incident, it is the policy of Snowdon Village Academy to offer support to all involved. This is an opportunity for learning, and time needs to be given for following up incidents so that pupils and staff have an opportunity to express their feelings, suggest alternative courses of action for the future and appreciate another person’s perspective.
- c) It is difficult to devise a framework of support that meets the needs of all. As individuals we all vary in how much support we need after an unpleasant incident. Generally, a member of senior staff would expect to talk to staff and children involved in any incidents involving any restraint. If the staff or pupils need time to rest or compose themselves, arrangements for this will be supported by the Senior Leadership Team.
- d) Any incident where the use of physical intervention has been necessary must be logged in the ‘Bound and Numbered Book’ on the same day, by the members of staff involved. A separate log should be added for each member of staff who has used physical restraint.
- e) As soon as is appropriate after the event, the child’s voice should be added to the Bound and Numbered book, this should be supported by a trusted adult and only needs to be recorded once per incident.
- f) The responsibility for monitoring the Bound and Numbered book lies with the Snowdon Village Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- g) Where it is deemed necessary, the Principal may direct members of the Academy Leadership Team, supported by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to conduct a Serious Incident Review.

6) **Other Physical Contact with Pupils (DfE Use of reasonable force 2013)**

- a) It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. This includes the use of ‘Safe Touch’.
- b) Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper and necessary:
 - Holding the hand of a child of primary age at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school.
 - When comforting a distressed pupil.
 - When a pupil is being congratulated or praised.
 - To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument.
 - To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.

- To give first aid
- c) This list is not exhaustive, but provides some examples of situations where physical contact is proper and necessary.

Snowdon Village employs the use of holistic therapies including Reiki and Yoga – these therapies are carried out by experienced practitioners, with at least one other adult present and with the explicit consent of the young person where it is necessary for physical touch to take place.

7) Safe Touch

The term ‘safe touch’ recognises that children learn who they are (and how the world is) within their significant relationships. The quality of the child’s relationships with significant adults is key to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Touch is recognised as being a physical way of soothing, calming and containing distress and as a developmentally necessary experience. Many research studies have indicated the necessity of human contact and touch in the healthy development of children. Safe touch used to calm, soothe and regulate a child’s emotions is a needed developmental experience. The brain does not develop neuronal pathways to initiate calming and self-soothing unless and until this safe emotional regulation has been experienced within a positive relationship with a significant adult. Where children have had insufficient experience of safe touch and calming regulation, this may be a priority to help their brains to develop access to thinking, judging, evaluating and choosing mechanisms. These are sometimes known as ‘higher executive skills’ and they are an intrinsic part of cognitive regulation.

The developmentally appropriate (and reparative) use of safe touch is defined by situations in which abstinence would actually be inhumane, unkind and potentially psychologically or neuro-biologically damaging. Examples include the beneficial use of touch in the comforting of a child who is in an acute state of distress and/or out of control. Not to reach out to the child in such circumstances could be re-traumatising and neuro-biologically damaging as well as confirming or inviting anti-social behaviour patterns.

Refraining from physically, safely holding a child in the face of their intense grief, stress and/or rage reactions can lead to a state of hyper-arousal, in which toxic levels of stress chemicals are released in the body and brain. The severely damaging long-term effects of this state have been intensively researched worldwide and are well documented.

- a) Snowdon Village adopts an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy emotional growth and learning. Research shows clearly that healthy pro-social brain development requires access to safe touch as one of the means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, sad or angry child.
- b) It is essential for all children to learn the difference between safe and unsafe touch and to experience having their strongest emotions contained, validated, accepted and soothed by a significant adult.

- c) In recognition of this, under special, agreed and supervised conditions, staff will consider using safe touch as one of the means available to them, for example to calm a distressed child or comfort a young person.

- d) Gentle **caring and soothing touch** is appropriate if a child;
 - Is seriously distressed and in need of comfort and containment in order to feel safe.
 - Where a child is unable to self soothe or calm and is becoming increasingly distressed and is seeking the comfort and reassurance of a familiar and trusted adult.
 - The child's voice is very important and all staff are skilled in recognising when it is appropriate to contain, soothe and calm an extremely distressed child.

8. Considerations around 'Safe Touch'

- a) We adhere to the two adult ratio ensuring that where a child is very distressed and in need of comfort and reassurance, as far as is possible, two familiar and trusted adults will be present. Where a child has indicated that they feel overwhelmed when more than one adult is present the second adult will be available to provide support at a distance that can enable the child to feel that they can begin to calm.
- b) Adults should ensure that if they intend to use 'safe touch' they are in a space where they can be seen by others (e.g through a glass door panel) or by CCTV cameras where available.
- c) Safe touch should always be child initiated, except in cases where children may be too young to recognise this is what they need and in this circumstance there should also be two adults present.
- d) Where adults are 'hugging' a child, where possible they should try to use a side on approach, so that the front of the adult's and child's body do not make contact with one another.
- e) Safe touch will take place for the shortest amount of time possible, whilst still providing the child with the necessary soothing/ contact.

9. Reporting and Recording the use of Safe Touch

- a) Where safe touch is required for a significant period of time this will be **recorded and reported using CPOMS** and the child's parent or carer will be informed. e.g This is not necessary should the child have received a short, side on, child initiated hug after being congratulated; but would be where a child has needed to be held and rocked perhaps, after becoming emotionally dysregulated.
- b) Pupils' Contextual Risk Assessments will be reviewed in light of the potential need to adopt new strategies and put in additional controls to enable a child and others to be safe – including the use of Team Teach and Safe Touch.
- c) Reporting and recording is monitored by the Centre Lead and Designated Safeguarding Lead termly to ensure clear records are in place, in addition CPOMS usage is monitored weekly by the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- d) Please refer to the Snowdon Village [Safeguarding Policy](#), for details on our procedures for managing allegations against members of staff.

10. Unsafe Touch

At no point and under no circumstances should staff members use touch to satisfy their own need for physical contact or reassurance.

a) No unsafe touch:

All staff should be trained to be fully cognisant of touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising or experienced as eroticising in any way whatsoever.

b) Concerns around the consistent and sustained use of safe touch or Team Teach, should be shared directly with the Principal of Snowdon Village.