

LYCÉE FRANÇAIS CHARLES DE GAULLE DE LONDRES SAFE TOUCH AND POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

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This policy is publicly available on the School website and is available in hard copy on request.

This is the Safe Touch and Positive Handling Policy of Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle de Londres (the "School").

This policy applies in relation to all pupils of the School, including those pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (*maternelle*). It applies to the School's four sites: South Kensington, Ecole de Wix, Ecole Marie d'Orliac, and Ecole Andre Malraux.

Reference to staff in this policy includes all those who work for or on behalf of the School, regardless of their employment status, including contractors, supply staff, volunteers and those on work experience unless otherwise indicated.

Mission statement:

The School makes a simple and honest commitment: "to offer each child the best conditions in which to realise their academic potential, to be able to develop and thrive in a peaceful environment and achieve the level of excellence required to access their desired course even at the most competitive universities. We nurture each individual with care and help them build self-confidence – this remains our pledge to our families as much today as it has been for over a century."

At the School, we are committed to safeguarding children and young people and we expect everyone in our School to share this commitment. In line with the Government's vision for all services for children and young people and the Department for Education Statutory Guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education" September 2024, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2023 and the '[Use of Reasonable Force 2013](#)', the School's senior leadership team and all school staff recognise that children have a fundamental right to learn in a safe environment and to be protected from harm.

We provide staff training on appropriate positive handling, led by our designated safeguarding lead and Health and Safety manager.

Introduction Touch can be used to provide sensitive and good quality care for the children and young people we support. Used in context, and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the children and young people we care for. In play or for emotional reasons children of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

1. Aims

The term Physical contact is used to describe the use of touch for many purposes in numerous different contexts. This is a controversial and complex area. There have been instances where schools have had a no touch policy and totally forbade staff from touching children. This is actually against all statutory guidance and is not tenable.

The Children's Act 1989 makes it clear that the paramount consideration in any decision should be in the best interest of the child concerned. Paramount in this context means that it should be the first thing people think about and it takes precedence over other considerations.

Physical contact should always be about meeting the needs of the child. Actions that can be ambiguous are open to misinterpretation. Staff should always think before making any physical contact. They

should be clear about why their actions are in the best interest of the child concerned. They should remember that some children like physical contact and some do not.

Staff at the School aim to apply touch in order to support the wellbeing and safety of our children and young people. This means that a member of staff is able to guide, touch or prompt children in an appropriate way at the appropriate times. The aim of this policy is to set out the reasons why we may choose to use touch and the appropriate ways in which we do so. At times staff and peers may unintentionally touch one another for example bumping into someone or brushing past someone as they pass each other. Staff and pupils accept that this is part of working alongside others. If staff or pupils feel uncomfortable with an instance of unintentional touch they should report this following the School's safeguarding and Child Protection Policy or whistleblowing policy. Staff should follow safeguarding guidance to ensure they are not putting themselves or a pupil in a vulnerable position, and are advised to refer to the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Staff should ensure that intimate care such as nappy changing and toileting, or changing wet clothes is carried out one-to-one by a child's key person wherever possible, staying visible to other practitioners but maintaining a child's privacy, for example, leaving the door ajar.

At all times, staff should recognise that resolving an aggressive or potentially violent incident should be through the use of verbal persuasion. This is absolutely the preferred method. However, we also need to recognise that it may not always work, therefore staff may have to resort to the use of force for the safety of the child, other children and staff and themselves.

If children are deemed to need physical intervention at any point, this information will be contained in a child's Positive Handling Plan held by the School.

2. Rationale

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

Many of the pupils who require emotional support from school may have been subject to trauma or distress or may not have had a positive start in life. It is with this in mind that staff seek to respond to children's developmental needs by using appropriate safe touch.

This policy takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills. The School has adopted an informed, evidence based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning.

This 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.

3. Different types of touch

There are four different types of touch and physical contact that may be used, these are:

Casual / informal / incidental touch

Staff use touch with pupils as part of a normal relationship, for example comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. This might also include putting an arm out to bar an exit from a room for specific safety reasons (for example, to stop a child walking into an unsafe situation), taking a child by the hand or patting on the back, arm or shoulder. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating.

General reparative touch

This is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child's emotions triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Reparative touch may include patting a back or an arm. Children may also request a 'hug' or 'cuddle' from a staff member for comfort, however this should always be requested by a child or offered in the presence of another staff member in a public place within the School and never behind closed doors.

Contact/interactive Play

Contact play is used by staff adopting a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship. This will only take place when the child has developed a trusting relationship with the adult and when they feel completely comfortable and at ease with this type of contact. Contact play may include an adult chasing and catching the child or an adult and child playing a game of building towers with their hands.

Positive handling (calming a dysregulated child)

Restraining techniques used by a staff member should be familiar to the staff involved, and they should be appropriately trained and be able to use them safely. A child who is in a state of dysregulation and has no mechanism for self-calming or regulating their strong emotional reactions may be physically contained by staff.

It is recommended that staff employ the safest and gentlest means of holding a child, which is entirely designed to enable them to feel safe and soothed and bring him or her down from an uncontrollable state of hyperarousal. Maintaining boundaries in such cases can be a vital corrective emotional experience, without which the child can be left at risk of actual physical or psychological damage.

The brain does not develop self-soothing neuronal pathways unless this safe emotional regulation has been experienced. Physical containment of a dysregulated child can be the only way to provide the reassurance necessary to restore calm.

During any incident of restraint, staff must seek as far as possible to:

- Lower the child's level of anxiety during the restraint by continually offering verbal reassurance and avoiding generating fear of injury in the child;
- Cause minimum level of restriction of movement of limbs consistent with the danger of injury (so, for example, will not restrict the movement of the child's legs when they are on the ground unless in an enclosed space where flailing legs are likely to be injured);
- Ensure at least one other member of staff is present wherever possible.

4. Steps to Take Before Positive Handling

Prevention strategies and calming measures will be employed and the following action should be taken before a restraint is used.

- Applying the School's relevant pupil behaviour and discipline policy (for primary schools or for the secondary school)
- Conversation, distraction, coaxing skills, gentle persuasion or redirection to other activities (e.g. touching the child's arm and leading him / her away from danger, gently placing a hand on the child's shoulder);
- Put distance between the child and others - move others to a safer place;
- Calmly remove anything that could be used as a weapon, including hot drinks, objects, furniture;
- Use seclusion only if necessary for a short period while waiting for help, preferably where a member of staff can observe the child;
- Keep talking calmly to the child, explain what is happening and why, how it can stop, and what will happen next;

Although these techniques to calm a dysregulated child are seen as best practice, individual children may require techniques to calm down. A child in this situation would require a risk assessment and a personalised behaviour plan to enable safe and consistent practice.

5. Legislation and guidance

What is a reasonable force?

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom. Staff working with early years children may occasionally need to support the parent/ child separation through calm communication with both parties and enabling a transfer between adults if necessary to prevent excessive harm and distress
- Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
- School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, however in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.

Who can use reasonable force?

All members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force.

When can reasonable force be used?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

Section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2006:

“Power of members of staff to use force

1. A person to whom this section applies may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing a pupil from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following, namely—

- a. committing any offence,*
- b. causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself), or*
- c. prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.*

2. This section applies to a person who is, in relation to a pupil, a member of the staff of any school at which education is provided for the pupil.

3. The power conferred by subsection (1) may be exercised only where—

- a. the member of the staff and the pupil are on the premises of the school in question, or*
- b. they are elsewhere and the member of the staff has lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned.*

4. Subsection (1) does not authorise anything to be done in relation to a pupil which constitutes the giving of corporal punishment within the meaning of section 548 of EA 1996.

5. The powers conferred by subsection (1) are in addition to any powers exercisable apart from this section and are not to be construed as restricting what may lawfully be done apart from this section.

6. In this section, “offence” includes anything that would be an offence but for the operation of any presumption that a person under a particular age is incapable of committing an offence.”

The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

Schools cannot:

- use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

6. Concerns about a staff member (including supply teacher, volunteer or contractor)

If you have concerns about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor), or an allegation is made about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) posing a risk of harm to children, in accordance with the School's Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy, speak to the Head of School or Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. If the concerns/allegations are about the Head of School, speak to the Deputy Head of the Cultural Department of the French Embassy (Telephone number: 020 70731300).

Additional considerations for supply teachers and all contracted staff

If there are concerns or an allegation is made against someone not directly employed by the school, such as a supply teacher or contracted staff member provided by an agency, the School will take the actions as described in its safeguarding and child protection policy

7. Concerns and Complaints

please see our concerns and complaints policy available on the school website:

[https://www.lyceefrancais.org.uk/a-propos/rapports-et-reglements/Complaints against staff](https://www.lyceefrancais.org.uk/a-propos/rapports-et-reglements/Complaints%20against%20staff)

Complaints against staff that are likely to require a child protection investigation will be handled in accordance with our procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against staff .

8. Whistle-blowing

For information on whistleblowing please refer to our school whistle blowing policy, available on the school website <https://www.lyceefrancais.org.uk/a-propos/rapports-et-reglements/>

All safeguarding contacts and details are on the safeguarding and child protection policy:
<https://www.lyceefrancais.org.uk/a-propos/rapports-et-reglements/>