

# THE VINE INTER-CHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL



## SAFE TOUCH POLICY

Policy Development: December 2019

Policy Ratification: *July 2020*

Policy Review: December 2022

### Link to The Vine Vision

In order to demonstrate our love for one another it is important that we use touch in a way that preserves dignity. We believe that each pupil must be viewed as an autonomous child of God, with free will, meaning that touch must only be in their best interests and ideally with their consent.

## Safe Touch Statement

At The Vine Inter-Church Primary School, we believe that used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of natural human interactions. We also believe that it can be key to developing fundamental social, behavioral and attention skills. We recognize that whilst for some pupils, physical support may be essential for their development for others it may not.

At The Vine Inter-Church Primary School, touch must only occur if it is in the pupil's best interest. We believe that pupils must be able to differentiate the attachment that is appropriate for them to form with staff and the attachment that they share with their parent or sibling. Therefore, touch used by staff must never encourage or promote intimacy between the staff member and the pupil,

At The Vine Inter-Church Primary School, we recognize that some pupils show discomfort or dislike of being touched and ensure that these feelings are respected and in these cases, touch does not occur.

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## 1. AIM OF POLICY

The aim of this policy is to:

- Ensure that all staff understand when and how touch may, must and must not be used in our school.

## 2. PURPOSE OF TOUCH IN SCHOOL

**For Communication** – Touch is beneficial as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication (Nind and Hewett, 1994). Touch is often necessary to reinforce other communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself. Touch enables staff and pupils to respond non-verbally. It also enables response to physical contact when used for communication and to make social connections.

**Supporting Teaching**– Touch can be used to direct pupils in educational tasks and skill development. Examples include prompting and physical support such as hand-over-hand or hand under hand guiding during learning activities. Pupils of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

**Physical Support** – Touch may be necessary to support pupils engaged in physical activities such as Sensory Circuits, Swimming, Physical Education or bespoke Therapy programmes. (Where bespoke programmes are followed, Individual plans will provide personalized guidance).

**Supporting Mobility**– Touch may be used as guidance and/or to help with mobility or as part of an activity where a pupil needs support when moving. Some pupils may need moving and handling to protect them from harming themselves or others.

**Emotional Support** – Touch is an effective way to communicate affection and warmth. It gives reassurance and can communicate security and comfort. Touch enables the development of understanding of positive emotions and the ability to communicate them. Cautionary touch should be used with pupils who are sensitive to touch, touch defensive or may have a history of receiving negative touch.

**Intimate Care**– Touch is necessary in order to carry out and support pupils' personal care and intimate care routines (see Intimate Care Policy). No personal care should be provided that the child could do themselves.

**Medical care** – Touch is often essential when providing First Aid (See First Aid policy).

## 3. USE OF TOUCH AT THE VINE INTER-CHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Hugs

A hug at The Vine School is always from the side and never face on. See image 1.



Whilst staff must always verbally comfort a pupil who is upset, they may also use a hug to provide comfort. Staff may also choose to hug a pupil as a sign of congratulations, if the pupil says it is OK for the staff member to hug them.

**If a pupil initiates a side on hug with a member of staff, the member of staff must either accept the hug or tap the pupil on the shoulder and say "I do not need a hug right now."**

**If a pupil hugs staff face on or in another way (eg around the neck or from behind) then staff must:** Tap the child on the shoulder and say "let go I name!.... let go please".

## Using the body as a barrier or block

There may be occasions when staff may use their body as a barrier or block. Such occasions would be where a pupil displays dangerous behaviour. (Dangerous behaviour is defined as behavior which will imminently result in injury to self or others, damage to property or behaviour that would be considered criminal if the person was the age of criminal responsibility). Adults must only block the path of a pupil whilst their behaviour is dangerous.

## Hand on hand instruction

When teaching some practical skills, for example painting, correct pencil grip, instrument playing and balancing, staff may need to touch the pupils to guide their movements.

## Separating a pupil from a carer:

Staff must not forcibly remove a pupil from a carer. If a pupil is visibly distressed about separating from their carer, staff must use reassuring talk and clearly explain to the pupil why they should come into school.

Once separated, staff may use an arm or a side hug (image 1) to stop a child running back to a carer. If staff assess that a pupil running out of school after a carer will endanger themselves, they must block their path.

## Using touch to show pride

Staff may use of 'High Fives', 'Back pats', 'Shoulder squeezes' or 'Hand shakes' to congratulate pupils and as a sign of showing pride in them. These actions must not be forceful and must not be used if the pupil clearly dislikes touch.

## Gaining attention

If a child is not paying attention an adult may lightly tap them on the hand, arm, shoulder or upper back in order to gain their focus.

## Guiding a pupil & hand holding

If a pupil needs to be guided in the correct direction staff may:

- offer their arm for the pupil to hold onto
- Offer a flat open hand for the pupil to hold onto (do not wrap your own fingers around theirs)
- Guide a pupil through a side hug (image one) with the other hand placed on the top of their shoulder closest to the staff member.
- Guiding a pupil from behind using 'Caring C' hands on the pupil's triceps

# The Vine Inter-Church Primary School

'opening hearts and minds'

The Vine Inter-Church Primary School is committed to the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity for all and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share these commitments.



## Lap-Sitting

At our school pupils must not sit on another person's lap. Pupils must be taught to seek comfort/attention through other means. If a pupil attempts to sit on an adult's lap, they must explain that it is not appropriate and may ask the pupil to sit next to them.

## Carrying

Pupils must never be carried unless instructed to by a qualified first aider.

## Restraint and/or removal

This will only ever be carried out by SLT, following DfE guidance

## Individual Behaviour Plans

Some pupils may have different touch protocols laid out in their individual plans.

## Duty of Care

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the students in their care. Therefore, if a student is likely to be at risk from harm if you do not physically intervene in an emergency situation, you must take action. The action you take will be dependent on the dynamic risk assessment that you make at that moment in time.

## 4. REVIEW OF POLICY

A review of this Policy will be undertaken every 3 years by the Governors.

## RELATED POLICIES

First Aid Policy