HQIS

**Physical Contact Guidelines**



Effective Date Aug 2021

Governors’ Approval Aug 2021

Next Review Date Aug 2022

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for teachers or support staff to make physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. A 'no touch' approach is generally the policy but impractical in some circumstances when contact is appropriate and required to remove a student from a situation of distress or danger, to greet or warn a student who cannot hear or see a hazard and protect students from a harm which might be self-inflicted or targetted by another in the same space.

When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, and other relevant factors. The general rule is that the contact is professional and reasonable in the context to build or maintain the well-being of the child or protect them from a present danger.

Appropriate physical contact in schools occurs most often with younger pupils.

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Faculty should therefore, use their professional judgment at all times.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of faculty believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported and documented.

This means that teachers and other adults should:

• always approve any planned social contact with administration, for example when it is part of a class/grade level reward program.

• advise administration of any regular social contact they have with a pupil which may give rise to concern.

• report and record any situation which the teacher believes might compromise the school or their own professional standing.

• report any indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a pupil may be infatuated with a member of faculty.

• be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described.

• never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent.

• always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny.

• never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights.

Physical contact, which occurs regularly with an individual child or young person, is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this is part of a formally agreed plan (for example, in relation to pupils with special educational needs). Any such contact should be the subject of an agreed and open school policy and subject to review.

Where feasible, faculty should seek the child's permission before initiating contact. Faculty should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and – so far as is possible -- use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.

Extra caution may be required where it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to faculty being vulnerable to allegations of abuse. It is recognized that many such children are extremely needy and may seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances faculty should deter the child sensitively by helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.

The general culture of 'limited touch' should be adapted, where appropriate, to the Individual requirements of each child School faculty must only ever use physical contact for behavior intervention (i.e. restraint, etc.) as a last resort, when a child is endangering him/herself or others. Such an event should be reported immediately to the school principal. At all other times, physical contact for behavior intervention must be minimal in force to prevent injury to another person.

PE teachers, coaches, and ASP coordinators should inform the child of any necessary contact they intend to take (e.g. “I am going to move your foot into the correct position” or “I am going to move your hips into the correct position”). They should only use physical contact if the aim is to:

• develop and improve specific sport/athletic techniques

• prevent an injury

• treat an injury.