



Safe Touch Policy

Aim of policy: To ensure all staff carry out safe practice when using appropriate use of safe touch at Life Skills Manor School.

This policy should be read and implemented in line with the following school policies:

- LSM Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- LSM Behaviour Management policy

Why use therapeutic touch?

Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with children and young people. It can also be key to developing fundamental social, behavioural and attention skills.

The guidelines that follow describe the school's procedures on the use of appropriate safe and therapeutic touch.

When safe touch is appropriate:

Communication – Touch is part of our communication and can assist reinforcement of 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 or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social connections. This is particularly likely to occur during day-to-day greetings (handshakes, high fives etc.) Touch cues and physical prompts utilize supportive touch.

Emotional Wellbeing – Touch is an effective way to communicate affection and warmth. It gives reassurance and can communicate security and comfort. Touch enables the person to develop understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate them. Touch can offer reassurance, support, and comfort to distressed pupils. The use of safe therapeutic touch can also support our children and young people with regulation of their emotional and social needs. For example, therapeutic use of touch may be used in sensory circuits, thrive sessions, therapy sessions.

Educational Activities - Touch can be used to direct children in educational tasks e.g. to support developing skills. For example, gestural or physical prompts may be used when supporting learning to ride a bike. Play activities within lessons can naturally include touch (e.g. heads down thumbs up).

Safety: Touch may be necessary when carrying out First Aid duties to support a child or young person. Furthermore, if a child was in danger (e.g., unsafe crossing the road) then the use of touch to support risk management would be necessary.

Examples of inappropriate touch:

- Satisfaction of adult needs rather than that of the child/young person.
- Touch that can cause distress to a child e.g. tickling for long periods.
- Coercion or other forms of exploitation of the pupil's lack of knowledge.
- Violation of laws against sexual contact between adults and children.

Considerations when using touch:

- Staff should always ensure the child/young person consents to the use of touch. This includes reading the child's body language and periodically checking in with the child. Staff should always withdraw touch immediately if a child appears uncomfortable or distressed.
- Staff must always consider the SEN needs of our children and young people. For example, by being aware that some students are sensitive to touch, are touch defensive or may have a history of receiving negative touch.
- Staff must always consider the child/young person's gender, race, culture, and age to ensure the use of touch is safe, sensitive, and appropriate.
- To protect staff and the child/young person, staff should not lone work when providing therapeutic use of touch when supporting a child or young person.
- All staff are responsible for reflecting on the reasoning for therapeutic use of touch and consult with the wellbeing team if unsure.
- All staff are responsible for reporting any concerns regarding the use of touch as per safeguarding and child protection policy.

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Prepared by	Holly Palmer, Occupational Therapist
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