

PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH STUDENTS POLICY (Whole School)

It is not realistic to suggest that teachers should never touch students and they, and other staff, have the right to use reasonable force to control or restrain students in certain circumstances.

Physical contact

Physical contact may be misconstrued by a student, parent or observer. Touching students, including well-intentioned gestures such as putting a hand on a shoulder, can, if repeated regularly, lead to serious questions being raised. As a general principle, staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with their students. It is particularly unwise to attribute touching to their teaching style or as a way of relating to students. Teachers and other staff do, however, have the right to use reasonable physical force to restrain students in certain circumstances.

Any form of physical punishment of students is unlawful as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of restraint. It is particularly important that staff understand this, both to protect their own position and the overall reputation of the school.

Where physical contact may be acceptable

There may be occasions where a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same student over a period of time. Where a member of staff has particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance they should seek the advice of the Principal.

Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with students from time to time in the course of their duties. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted. There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain a student physically to prevent them from inflicting injury to others, self-injury, damaging property, or causing disruption. In such cases only the minimum force necessary may be used and any action taken must be to restrain the student. Where an employee has taken action to physically restrain a student they should make a written report of the incident in the form prescribed by the school's policy on restraint.

The policy is considered alongside:

1. Behaviour and Sanctions Policy
2. Child Protection Policy

Updated: September 2010

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