

Durham County Council

THORNHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Safe Touch Policy

Policy to be reviewed annually or as necessary.

Thornhill Primary School Safeguarding - Safe Touch Policy

INTENT

At Thornhill Primary School we understand that appropriate relationships between staff and pupils are paramount to promoting the safeguarding of children at our school. The DfE's guidance document, 'Use of reasonable force in schools', which was published in 2013, makes clear that there are occasions when physical contact with a pupil, other than reasonable force, is appropriate and necessary. This Safe Touch Policy has been created with the aim of ensuring that all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities in terms of appropriate and inappropriate touch when involving pupils. All children are entitled to receive an education in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected. The school will dedicate itself to ensuring that no pupils feel threatened or disrespected, in terms of physical contact between themselves or a member of staff.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. This policy has due regard to the following legislation, including, but not limited to:

- The Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010

1.2. This policy will also have due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE 'Use of reasonable force in schools' 2013
- DfE 'Working together to safeguard children' 2015

1.3. The school will implement this policy in conjunction with our KCSIE - School Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy and Equality Policy, Intimate Care Policy.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- All members of staff at our school have a duty of care towards pupils, and must be aware of the boundaries involving physical contact.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for conducting annual safeguarding training for all members of staff and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities, in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.
- The Head teacher, who is also DSL, is responsible for ensuring that all staff engage in safe touch with pupils, and only where absolutely necessary.
- All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or unsafe at our school as a result of inappropriate touch.
- All members of staff have a responsibility to report any instances of inappropriate touch to the Head teacher / DSL.
- The Head teacher is responsible for communicating with parents/carers and ensuring that they are aware of this policy.
- The school has a responsibility for ensuring that they create and promote a culture in which pupils' wishes and feelings are respected.

WHAT IS SAFE TOUCH?

- For the purpose of this policy, "safe touch" is defined as physical contact that, if otherwise avoided, would be inhumane, unkind and potentially emotionally or physically damaging for the pupil.
- Safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.
- At Thornhill Primary School we understand that the following examples are instances of safe touch which may occur between staff and pupils:
 - ❖ Comforting an upset or distressed pupil;
 - ❖ Congratulating or praising a pupil;
 - ❖ Holding the hand of a pupil to guide them, such as when crossing a road or walking to assembly;
 - ❖ Giving first aid to a pupil;
 - ❖ Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons, administering medicine, or when using musical instruments.

TYPES OF SAFE TOUCH

- At Thornhill Primary School we understand that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate, such as hugging, lap-sitting, holding hands or kissing.
- We recognise that the only appropriate places to touch pupils are on the shoulders, arms and back.
- Except in the case of demonstrating skills during sports lessons, we allow the following:

- ❖ When demonstrating how to use sporting equipment or sports skills staff may need to touch children to support and guide them, for example in gymnastics, hockey, rugby and football.
- ❖ When learning climbing skills staff will need to use a guiding hand to support younger children
- ❖ When younger children are using the climbing equipment staff may need to support them getting up and down-this must be done in sight of others. Staff must lift from under the armpits and place the child down gently.
- ❖ Staff will limit lone-working, when this is necessary in the school hall the door is pinned open and there are glass windows allowing others to see in. Classroom doors stay open around the school except for Reception / Nursery for security purposes.

• **The school places the following restrictions on hugging:**

- ❖ At Thornhill Primary School we encourage staff using touch for reward or comfort to use the 'school-hug', rather than an embrace.
- ❖ The school-hug is a sideways hug whereby the member of staff places their hands on the pupil's shoulders.
- ❖ This type of hug prevents the pupil from turning themselves towards the member of staff and thus engaging in a 'front' embrace, which the school would deem inappropriate.

• **The school places the following restrictions on holding hands:**

- ❖ At Thornhill Primary School we understand that there are times when a member of staff will need to hold a pupil's

hand, either to guide them or to prevent them from being physically harmed.

- ❖ Within our EYFS we will hold a pupil's hand when giving guidance, reassurance or to comfort them.
- ❖ We encourage the use of the 'school hand-hold'. This is done by the adult holding their arm out, and the child is encouraged to either hold the hand or arm of the adult or wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child's hand for a little extra security if it is required.

- **The school places the following restrictions on lap-sitting:**

- ❖ At Thornhill Primary School we recognise that all instances of lap-sitting are inappropriate and therefore prohibit this interaction between members of staff and pupils.
- ❖ EYFS classes will allow pupil's to sit on their lap if they require comfort or reassurance, particularly in the case of distress; this type of contact is only made with the consent of the child. **The child must be sat sideways or facing outwards and never in a front embrace.**
- ❖ The school understands that pupils are not always aware of the boundaries between staff and pupils and thus may try to engage in physical contact such as lap-sitting or inappropriate hand-holding and hugging.
- ❖ Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff must explain to the pupil why it is unacceptable and encourage them to engage in the school-hug.

- ❖ If a member of staff attempts to use one of the safe methods of touch and a pupil is unhappy with this, the member of staff will retract immediately in order to respect the pupil's wishes.

Intimate Care

Please see Personal Intimate Care and Toileting Policy

USE OF PHYSICAL RESTRAINT / REASONABLE FORCE

Staff at Thornhill Primary will follow the advice given in the DfE document *Use of Reasonable Force in Schools July 2013* which states;

- All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force.
- This power applies to any member of staff at the school
- 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.
- Small children can be calmed down by staff folding their arms around them in a gentle way.
- Force can be used 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.
- if a pupil runs from the school premises we will avoid chasing after them for fear of putting the child at further risk, rather staff will return to school and telephone parents

TRAINING OF STAFF

- The Head teacher / DSL will conduct safeguarding training for all members of staff in relation to safe touch.
- All staff will be regularly reminded of the methods of safe touch employed by our school, and will communicate this to the pupils they are in contact with.

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis by the Head teacher/ DSL, who will make any necessary changes and communicate this to all members of staff.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Primary legislation

- Children Act (1989 s47)
- Protection of Children Act (1999)
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations (2009)
- Police Act 1987 (Criminal Records) (N02) Regulations 2009

FURTHER GUIDANCE

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (revised HMG 2006, March 2013 & March 2015)

Guidance for Safer Work Practices for Adults who work with Children & young People- (2015)

- Keeping children safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for schools & colleges (DfE) 2022
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)

