

Plymouth CAST

Safe Touch Policy

Last Update: November 2024 (version 1.0- New Policy)

Document Control

Changes History

Version	Date	Amended by	Recipients	Purpose
1	15/11/24	Kevin Butlin		New Policy

Approvals

This policy requires the following approvals:

Board	SEL	CEO	Date Approval	Version	Date for Review
*			13th December 2024	1	December 2026

National/Local Policy

☐ This policy must be localised by Academies

☒ This policy must not be changed, it is a CAST/National Policy (only change logo, contact details and yellow highlighted sections)

Position with the Unions

Does the policy require consultation with the National Unions under our recognition agreement? ☐ Yes ☒ No If yes, the policy status is: ☒ Consulted and Approved ☐ Consulted and Not Approved ☐ Awaiting Consultation

Distribution

This document has been distributed to:

Position	Date	Version
All CAST Headteachers and Governors	16/12/2024	1

1. Vision and Values

Plymouth CAST is a multi-academy trust of Catholic schools which is part of the mission of the Catholic Church dedicated to human flourishing and the building of a kingdom of peace, truth and justice. The Trust is to be conducted in all aspects in accordance with canon law and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and at all times to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our vision and values are derived from our identity as a Catholic Trust. Central to our vision is the dignity of the human person, especially the most vulnerable. Our academies are dedicated to providing an education and formation where all our pupils and young people flourish in a safe, nurturing, enriching environment.

2. Introduction

In our schools we want to make sure our children are happy and have maximum opportunity to learn effectively. We want to see them live out the Gospel values, Catholic Virtues and British Values. We work alongside parents to encourage our children to develop as fully as possible. We want our children to:

- Grow socially
- Grow personally
- Grow spiritually
- Grow academically

The most important aspect in children feeling valued, safe and secure is the sense of connection and trust with a member (or more than one member) of staff. These are known as **Emotionally Available Adults (EAA)**. Children should be safe in the knowledge you have them in your mind, care about them as a person, about how they are feeling and what they are doing.

Strong relationships between staff and children are vital. Staff must be fair and **consistent** with children (taking into account individual needs). Children are supported to understand the boundaries, routines and structures are there to keep them safe, happy and able to learn.

Adults will hold these boundaries firmly while being **approachable, kind and compassionate**.

Our Safe Touch Policy supports our Behaviour Policy/Strategy in enabling staff to build positive, safe learning communities in which children and adults thrive.

Our Behaviour Strategy, of which this is part, is rooted in compassion, kindness and forgiveness. **We aim to follow the example of Jesus Christ** who led the disciples not through fear, but through love.

3. Aims

This policy has been created to support the School Behaviour Policy and to safeguard our children and staff. It aims to:

- Ensure that all children and adults feel safe, have a sense of belonging, feel secure and valued.
- Foster, nurture and value strong and healthy relationships.
- Provide a clear, fair and consistent approach to behaviour management.
- Ensure that our children are intrinsically motivated to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.
- Ensure that our values are underpinned by the Gospel Values, Catholic Virtues and British Values and that our children have a secure understanding of these.
- Maintain a calm and safe school environment.
- Ensure that all children are supported to achieve their full potential (equity).
- Define and describe what Safe Touch means, when and where it can be used and what this may entail.
- Outline acceptable use of touch within school
- Outline unacceptable forms of touch within school
- Protect children
- Protect staff and volunteers
- Outline the Legal Framework around Positive Handling, it's use within school and the professional responsibilities of staff working within school
- Outline the use of risk assessments and how these are used within school to support vulnerable child with challenging behaviour and others around them
- Outline responsibilities for the carrying out of Positive Handling procedures and Safe Touch.
- Provide information for staff with regard to their rights and responsibilities regarding Safe Touch, and what to do should an incident occur
- Provide template paperwork to be used in the event of Positive Handling being used while children

4. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read with reference to:

- School Behaviour Policy
- School Safeguarding Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions and Administration of Medication Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Section 4.19 of the Trust's H&S policy details the Trust's policy statement on 'Moving & Handling' which discusses manual handling.
- Whistleblowing Policy
- The Pupil Wellbeing Policy
- The Exclusion and Suspension Policy

5. Legislation and Statutory Requirements

This policy is based on the following legislation and guidance: •

- [Use of reasonable force - GOV.UK](#)
- [Reasonable force, restraint & restrictive practices in alternative provision and special schools - GOV.UK](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 \(gov.uk\)](#)
- [Behaviour in Schools - Advice for headteachers and school staff - GOV.UK](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools--2/further-guidance-and-resources-for-supporting-behaviour-in-schools>
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 93](#)

6. Principles

Plymouth CAST recognises the importance of **safe touch** between adults and children/young people to provide comfort, reassure, communicate and to protect.

"Where human beings have not been satisfied by good nurturing in infancy, there remains an intense need for holding and touch."
(Vereshack 1993).

The Department for Education states that,

"Schools should not have a 'no contact' policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a pupil causing harm." (Use of reasonable force Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies DfE July 2013)

Access to physical proximity and safe touch has been shown to:

- improve concentration
- improve cooperation
- increase a stronger sense of self and higher self-esteem/confidence
- reduce aggressive behaviour
- encourage a calmer classroom environment
- encourage empathy and respect for their peers
- enable the children to recognise difference between good and bad touch
- encourage a more relaxed and focused feeling in the school
- discover differences between people
- encourage and develop the imagination
- improve communication

Safe touch may be in the form of: (not an exhaustive list)

- Greeting and departure gestures: handshakes, greeting or departing embraces. These gestures vary from culture to culture.
- Conversational markers such as a light touch on the arm, hand, back or shoulder to enhance other forms of communication.
- Consolation touch: providing a comforting hug, holding hands or shoulders in response to grief, sorrow, distress, anguish, agony, sadness or upset.
- Reassuring touch: a pat on the back or shoulders encourages and reassures
- Grounding or reorienting touch: touching the hand or arm to help reduce anxiety or dissociation by helping a young person be aware of his or her physical body.
- Task-oriented touch: offering a hand to help someone stand up or stopping the young person from falling; holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school
- Instructional or modelling touch such as demonstrating and supporting in physical education, science, music, design and technology etc
- Celebratory or congratulatory touch: "high-fives," a pat on the back or a congratulatory hug for the young person who has succeeded with a goal or good effort toward a goal.
- Medical: administering first aid or assisting with medical needs
- Personal care: assisting to get dressed or undressed for PE lesson; putting a coat on.
- Intimate care: administering intimate care in line with the school's intimate care policy and the child's individual plan
- Inadvertent touch - touch that is unintentional or involuntary.

The appropriateness of different forms of safe touch will depend on the age, stage, culture and individual needs of each child.

7. Supporting Children Demonstrating Challenging Behaviour

This policy recognises that in exceptional circumstances, safe touch may require **reasonable force** to control or restrain a child in order to protect her/him or others.

The DfE is clear that:

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force:

- This power applies to any member of staff at the school.
- It can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.

(Use of reasonable force Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies DfE July 2013)

Physical contact must never be used to punish, frighten, embarrass or threaten a child. It must never be used for the self-gratification of the adult.

When managing child behaviours in school, adults must follow the relational approaches of the school's Behaviour Policy. In the vast majority of cases this will prevent any need for safe touch control or restraint.

When children display challenging behaviour, there are several stages of support in place to encourage them to manage their behaviour in a positive way. We ensure that we have established a **connection with the child**.

We support them to become fully regulated in the presence of adults they know well and trust. Every effort is made to promote psychological safety through the use of face, voice and body language.

Adults supporting children are well regulated themselves, raised voices are not used and children are not expected to spend time alone in isolation - to "*calm down*".

When supporting a dysregulated child, adults will follow the **Playful Accepting Curious Empathetic (PACE)** approach detailed in the school's Behaviour Policy.

PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving which aims to make the child feel safe. It is done by communicating the four elements of PACE together **flexibly, not as a step-by-step process**.

Using PACE **helps adults to slow down their reactions, stay calm and tune into what the child is experiencing** in the moment. It supports us to gain a better understanding of what the child is feeling. In tricky moments, it allows us to stay emotionally regulated and guide the child through their heightened emotions, thoughts and behaviours.

PACE helps children and young people feel more connected to and understood by important adults in their life and ultimately, to slow down their own responses.

All children will be treated with **unconditional positive regard** and when behaviour falls below expectations, staff will ensure the children are supported without judgement. Systems to address behaviour will be non-shaming and take place away from the sight of other children.

Adults will ensure they remain regulated and contained when dealing with incidents or challenging behaviour and strategies should make emotional acceleration more difficult. Praise should be easy and positive.

Where a situation is escalating and it is likely that the child will put themselves or others at risk of harm, the other children should be removed from the vicinity; the immediate environment made as safe as possible, and support will be requested from SLT and or the Pastoral team.

If the child does not regulate their behaviour and places themselves or others at risk of harm, it may be necessary to use safe touch with reasonable force to control or restrain in order to protect the individual child or others.

When safe touch with reasonable force is used to control or restrain a child to protect her/him or others, it must:

- Be a last resort
- Be applied using the minimum amount of force
- Be used for the minimum amount of time necessary to protect the individual or others. Once the child and/or others are safe, the restraint must be stopped immediately
- Be used in a way that maintains the dignity and safety of the child
- Avoid contact with intimate areas of the child's body
- Be used with attention to signs of medical distress and act accordingly
- Be mindful of existing medical conditions, needs and/or disabilities
- Never restrict breathing
- Never involve holding, grabbing or touching the child's neck
- Never obstruct the child's mouth or airway
- Never compress the child's chest or restrict movement of the diaphragm
- Never restrain the child lying down on the floor/ground
- Never deliberately trip a child over
- Never use as a form of punishment
- Be reported to the headteacher
- Be recorded
- Be reported to the child's parents/carers
- Be reported to the child's named social worker
- Be reported via OSHENS if required

Whilst using safe touch with reasonable force to control or restrain a child to protect a him/her or others, the adult should **talk to the child**, reassuring her/him of what is being done and why, and continuing to support reregulation.

Once the safe touch control or restraint has been released, the child should be checked for distress or injury and appropriate action taken if injury has occurred. The child should be 'PACEfully' debriefed about the incident.

Parents of the child who experienced safe touch control or restraint should be notified in person as soon as possible. Full details of the incident should be provided including antecedents; actions taken before safe touch restraint was used; why safe touch restraint was deemed necessary; how the child was restrained and what was done afterwards. Parents should be provided with a copy of this Policy and the Behaviour Policy.

As soon as possible after the incident the member of staff using positive touch control or restraint must be provided with a supportive debrief. This may be with a *Trauma-Informed Practitioner*, the school's *Mental Health Lead*, or a senior member of staff/the School Improvement Officer. The member of staff should be provided with the details of the trust's employee assistance programme.

The following should be included in the record of use of positive touch for control or restraint.

This should be completed using CPOMS:

- The date, time and place of the incident
- The name of the child involved, date of birth and their year group
- What triggered the behaviour; what diffusing techniques were used prior to use of safe touch to control or restrain
- Why safe touch to control or restrain was deemed necessary
- Place where the incident happened
- The approximate length of time the child was subject safe touch to control or restrain
- Any other adults or children present
- Time and date parents were informed
- Injuries sustained by child – if any
- Injuries sustained by adult - if any

8. Examples of Safe Touch for Control and Restraint

Restricting a child's movement by: (not an exhaustive list)

- Holding child's hand(s)
- Holding the child's wrist(s)
- Holding the child's arm(s)
- Holding the child's shoulder(s)
- Standing between children and keeping them apart
- Blocking a child's path by putting body between child and danger or target
- Removing object(s) from the child that may cause harm

9. Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs/Disabilities

School leaders must ensure that the principles of the school's Behaviour Policy with regards to children with SEND are followed by all staff.

Leaders must ensure that children with SEND do not experience safe touch control and restraint as a result of unmet need; the use of inappropriate strategies; failure to follow individual plans or agreed approaches.

Where there is a need due to an emotional difficulty or trauma in a child's life, our schools may refer to additional intervention. This includes Trauma Informed Schools practitioners, appropriate outreach or groups focusing on social skills and emotional literacy.

This may also result in a need for a personalised approach to supporting behaviour which will follow the overall principles - but be differentiated in outcome.

Where necessary, the school will ensure that children have individual relational support plans in place to mitigate the risk of the need for safe touch restraint. This may include provision which is additional and different - for example, time in a nurture base, play therapy, sensory breaks etc.

All adults, who will be teaching a group of children or spending time with them, are personally responsible for knowing a child's individual needs before teaching them. Schools should ensure all staff have accessed the child's learning education plans (IEPs) or behaviour plans (IBPs) and use the suggestions on these.

Teachers need to use IEPs/IBPs to understand what works and what doesn't work for that

child. For example: If a child has ADHD and possibly has difficulty keeping calm and focusing, taking away their playtime could be detrimental to their behaviour for the rest of the day as they are missing vital physical time. There would have to be other steps/approaches in place for that child which should be followed.

Behaviour steps should be adapted to suit the needs of individual children. Equity is the aim for these high-needs children. Their individual plan and adapted expectations for behaviour should be on their Pupil Profiles, which will be monitored by the SENDCo, Senior Mental Health Leader or other member of SLT. A child's triggers for negative behaviour need to be on their individual plan so that everyone can be aware of these.

Where a child is known to present a specific risk of needing to receive safe touch control or restraint, this should be detailed and controlled within an individual risk assessment as well as an individual behaviour plan. These documents should be shared with the child and his/her parents/carers.

10. Authorisation of Staff to use Safe Touch Control or Restraint

We recognise that safe touch control or restraint will be rarely used, and that it is a last resort to maintaining a safe environment and safety of children and staff.

Members of staff who are working directly with a child who is identified as at risk of requiring safe touch control or restraint must receive appropriate training. All staff working with such children must be familiar with all supporting paperwork, plans and risk assessments.

Where a situation is escalating and it is likely that the child will put themselves or others at risk of harm, the other children should be removed from the vicinity; the immediate environment made as safe as possible, and support will be requested from SLT and or the Pastoral team.

If a child is at immediate risk of causing harm to herself/himself and a trained member of staff is **not** present, any member of staff is authorised to use safe touch control or restraint as per this policy. This includes temporary and supply staff.

Visitors and volunteers must not be put in a position where they are likely to have to use safe touch control or restraint.

In an emergency, if a visitor or volunteer has to use safe touch control or restraint to prevent harm to a child or others, they will receive the same support from school and trust leaders, and the law as members of the school staff.

School leaders must ensure that plans are in place to cover for absent trained colleagues, and that all staff working with children, including temporary and supply staff, are familiar with individual plans and risk assessments.

11. Curriculum

The school's Safe Touch Policy is supported by a curriculum that teaches the children about the concepts of Respect, Responsibility and Consent; the relationship between each, and their importance in keeping themselves and others safe.

The children are taught about the difference between safe and unsafe touching, and what to do if they feel uncomfortable about someone touching them.

All of our children know who to speak to if they are frightened, upset or concerned.

12. What happens if there is a Complaint

If a child, parent or other adult complains about the use of safe touch, the school's School Improvement Officer (SIO) must be informed immediately. The SIO will inform the Director of Education, and he/she will inform the trust's HR Manager.

The school's DSL (or DDSL if the complaint is about the DSL) should inform the Local Authority Designated Officer if the complaint suggests harm to the child or that the adult has acted inappropriately. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the school's SIO should inform the LADO.

The trust's *Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy* should be followed.

13. Training

All staff will receive annual training on the implementation of the school's Behaviour Policy/Strategy, and all associated policies including this policy.

Further update and/or focused training will be provided throughout the year.

All supply/temporary staff and volunteers will be introduced to the Behaviour Policy/Strategy, the Staff Code of Conduct, and this policy.

Specific *positive handling* training such as that provided by the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI - formerly MAPA) will be provided to all staff who are likely to be required to use it.

The school will ensure that it has staff trained in specific *positive handling techniques* such as CPI – to enable it to keep staff and children safe. [CPI Training for Education](#)

The school has access to the trust's CPI trainer, Laura Thompson who is based at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Plymouth lthompson@holycross.plymouth.sch.uk

The school has the ongoing support of the trust's SEND and Trauma-Informed Practice Lead, Suzie Franklin s.franklin@plymouthcast.com

Plymouth CAST Mission

"Our mission is to be a community of outstanding schools in which our pupils flourish in safe, happy and stimulating environments and leave us with the knowledge and skills, personal qualities and aspirations, to make the world a better place, inspired by the Gospel."

Trust Values

We are defined by our mission and our Gospel values. These stand at the heart of everything we do:

- Humility – seeing life as a gift
- Compassion – empathy
- Kindness – gentleness
- Justice – working for a fairer world
- Forgiveness - reconciliation
- Integrity – do what you say
- Peace – committed to peace-making, non-violence
- Courage – standing up for truth