

The Cornerstone Academy

Safe Touch Policy

Approved By: Ofsted – Pre-Opening
Reviewed by: Cornerstone Local Support and Scrutiny Board
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Safe Touch Policy (inclusive of Positive Handling policy)

Cornerstone is committed to the best quality care and highest standards of safeguarding for Learners.

Aims and Objectives

- To create, maintain and monitor a physically and emotionally secure environment for Learners and adults.
- To ensure safeguarding of Learners is paramount at all times.
- Maintain close working links with Team Teach, ensuring all physical touch and any related documentation, policies and monitoring complies with the latest agreed best practice.
- Ensure that all physical touch is **reasonable, proportionate** and **necessary**.
- Ensure that Learners in distress receive appropriate comfort including physical touch if appropriate.
- Make decisions on what is deemed 'appropriate' as a staff team and with continued regard for legal frameworks, Team Teach and the Local Safeguarding Learners Board.
- Create, maintain and monitor a culture of agreed practice incorporating Team Teach philosophy.
- To ensure that any touch or positive physical intervention is conducted in view of at least one other staff member and that staff are made aware of their own personal risk assessment when working with learners.
- To ensure any allegation or complaint is dealt with in line with our complaints policy, child protection policy and procedures, with due regard for the law and its processes.
- Ensure Learners are aware of their right to refuse the offer of touch as a physical response to distress and ensure staff only use appropriate touch in line with the child's own wishes and feelings of security.

Definition

Cornerstone defines 'touch' as a physical response to trauma, distress and human emotional need that would comfort, protect and enhance secure relationships.

We believe to deny a child physical reassurance is against the needs of the child and their healthy emotional development. To this end, staff will respond to Learners in distress/emotional need, including a need to share happy emotions, with appropriate touch.

Appropriate Touch

All staff are aware of the definition of appropriate touch; noted here as touch that is not invasive humiliating, erotic or causing physical or emotional discomfort.

Agreed places for appropriate touch in order to comfort or congratulate a child are: back, arms, shoulders and hands. Staff at

Cornerstone have given consideration to the inclusion of 'hands' in this policy. The shaking hands is a widely used as a friendly greeting; this particularly applies to learners seeking comfort and reassurance. Staff at Cornerstone acknowledge the growing culture that believes it is safer to refrain from any touch due to anxieties that allegations of abuse may be made and that indeed instances of abuse do occur in the world. Staff are also aware of, and highly skilled in, the use of other methods of comfort, de-escalation, and

the control of undesirable behaviour. However, our staff team believes that providing a good quality emotional environment may sometimes require the use of touch.

Learners need to be educated in what constitutes appropriate touch, so that they can recognize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. This helps each child to respond appropriately to others and to seek help in threatening situations. This will be done through bespoke Personal, Social development sessions

Positive Handling

All positive physical interventions are in accordance with 'Guidance on the use of Reasonable Force in School' (DFES 1998), and the guidance set out in Section 93 of the Education and inspections Act 2006. Positive handling techniques are adopted in response to Team Teach training.

Our commitment to safe, positive handling includes:

- Monitoring and evaluating our responses to challenging behaviour, with particular regard to monitoring the use and effectiveness of any positive physical interventions.
- Reviewing any positive handling plans that may be in place for individual learners at agreed intervals that allow for swift adaptations to be made to meet the child's needs
- An acknowledgement of our duty of care to all pupils and that sometimes it may be necessary to use a positive handling technique to safeguard a student or students in crisis; or the learners, adults or property at risk from a student in crisis.
- All positive physical interventions are for the minimum amount of time, using the lightest possible hold and are reasonable, proportionate and necessary.
- All positive physical interventions are recorded and stored in line with the data protection act, and parents/carers are made aware of the use of such interventions if/when they occur. It is the responsibility of the staff member to report incidents directly to the head teacher.

A decision will be made about who will contact the parents:

- Physical intervention is never given for non compliance.
- All physical intervention conducted in a crisis situation will be the result of staff dynamically risk assessing the potential harm to the students in crisis and the Learners, adults or property around them.
- Staff always respond in a timely manner to situations of crisis where there is a real danger of harm to the individual in crisis and others around them.
- Any repeated behaviours and incidents are thoroughly investigated to source triggers for challenging behaviour and seek every possible alternative to positive physical handling.
- Learners and adults are given the opportunity to get out of challenging situations with dignity using the Team Teach help protocols known to all staff. Thereby ensuring no staff member or learner feels humiliated during such circumstances.
- Learners and staff are given time to reflect before any debrief discussions are undertaken.
- To ensure staff are well trained in safe, positive, physical handling techniques, including interventions for challenging situations and that such training is reviewed at the appropriate intervals.

- To de-escalate conflict and challenging situations to avoid the use of positive physical interventions wherever possible, ensuring that any interventions used in these circumstances are recorded by the member of staff and reported immediately to a senior member of staff (see above).
- To seek immediate, appropriate professional advice in circumstances where our positive physical handling techniques and this policy, fails to encompass the needs of a child.

If a child is exhibiting violence and/or acute levels of distress it may be appropriate and in the best interests of the individual and their peers to remove the 'audience' and take the peer group somewhere safe and quiet till the crisis is over. The wellbeing of all our Learners is paramount. We acknowledge that during positive physical interventions a learner may be hurt. Minor bruising or marks may occur during the process of positive physical intervention. Whilst this is always avoided wherever possible, this outcome is preferable to more severe physical harm to the child in crisis resulting from their behaviour, or serious harm occurring to another individual as a result of the incident.

The best possible outcome is always strived for. Staff are expected to make judgement calls based on the situation in hand. They are instructed to consider the following questions:

- Can I de-escalate this situation without the use of physical intervention?
- Is physical intervention in the child's best interests?
- Do I have to take any action; is there a real and imminent danger to be addressed?
- Do I need assistance?
- Why is the action I'm about to take necessary?
- Help and Support

Cornerstone ensures staff dealing with challenging behaviour are supported in the following ways:

- Regular appraisal/supervision and the use of line management
- Access to resources and advice.
- Access to appropriate training and refresher training.

Our Touch policy should be read with regard to the following:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Management policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy (inclusive of risk assessment procedure)
- Staff Disciplinary Policy (inclusive of Staff Handbook and Staff Grievance procedure)
- Complaints Policy