



Safe Touch Policy

Reviewed: Spring 26

UNCRC Commitment:

St Peter's CE Primary is fully committed to recognising, respecting, promoting and implementing the Rights of the Child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a Rights Respecting School, we strive to place the Rights of the Child at the very heart of our policies and practices.

Article 17 You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being

Article 28 You have the right to a good quality education.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mission

Every member of the school community should feel safe, secure, valued and of equal worth. At St Peter's, equality is a key principle for treating all people fairly and creating a society in which everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential - irrespective of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, gender re-assignment or any other recognised area of discrimination including pregnancy and maternity.

Safe Touch

Safe touch is an important aspect of fostering emotional security, regulation and wellbeing in a primary school setting. Any physical contact must always be appropriate, purposeful and in the best interests of the child. Research and guidance highlight that appropriate, contingent touch can support emotional regulation and reduce distress and may be necessary for communication, reassurance or inclusion in activities.

Principles of Safe Touch

All physical contact must be:

- **Child-centred and in the child's best interests**, consistent with the Children Act 1989 (paramountcy principle).
- **Appropriate, necessary and proportionate** to the child's identified needs.

- **Sensitive to individual preferences**, recognising that some children enjoy physical touch while others may find it uncomfortable or distressing.
- **Trauma-informed**, recognising that some children may have adverse reactions to physical contact.
- **Open and transparent**, ideally occurring within view of others.
- In line with national guidance including *Use of Reasonable Force* and *Safer Working Practice Guidance*.

Hugging and Affectionate Touch

Younger children may sometimes seek comfort through a hug. Where this occurs:

- Staff may provide a side hug only, not a front-facing hug.
- Hugs must always be child-initiated.
- Staff must keep hugs brief, appropriate and respectful.
- Children who do not want physical comfort must always have that choice respected.

Consent and Permission-Based Touch

Consent is central to safe, respectful practice. Staff should:

- Ask for consent where appropriate (verbally or using simple language suitable for younger children).
- Observe the child's body language for signs of uncertainty or withdrawal.
- Always respect a no, not right now, or signs of discomfort.

Helpful sentence stem for staff:

"Is it okay if I...?"

(e.g., "Is it okay if I hold your hand while we walk?")

Examples of Acceptable Safe Touch

These forms of touch may be appropriate when done with consent, purpose and professionalism:

- A brief hand on the shoulder or upper arm to offer reassurance.
- Side hugs when the child initiates them.
- Hand-holding with younger children for comfort, reassurance or safety (e.g., walking together, supporting emotional regulation).
- Handshakes and similar social gestures.
- Physical prompts such as hand-over-hand or hand-under-hand support during early learning, communication or fine-motor activities.
- Physical guidance required for participation in activities such as sensory circuits, therapeutic programmes or PE where necessary for safe inclusion.

Unacceptable Touch

Staff must **never**:

- Pick up or lift a child unless part of a documented care plan.
- Children sitting on an adult's lap
- Wrist-holding should never be as a restraint or to pull a child.
- Use front-facing, prolonged or intimate hugs.
- Use touch in a way that is unnecessary, could be misinterpreted, or makes a child feel uncomfortable.
- Use touch as punishment or in any way intended to cause pain, distress or humiliation—this is unlawful.
- Use wrist-holding as a restrictive intervention unless following a trained, authorised Positive Handling plan.