

Arun Court School: Policy Number 5

Arun Court School – TOUCH POLICY – last updated January 2021



Ratified by main EMAT meeting:

Signature (+ date) Chair of EMAT: Mr Paul Phillips

Signature (+ date) Proprietor:Mrs Beverley-Sarah White

Signature (+ date) Principal of SchoolVicki Williams

Date of next review: August /September 2022 (Reviewed BI- annually)

We highly recommend that this policy is read in conjunction with all our policy documents but in particular you should refer to:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection (Policy 4)
- Behaviour (Policy 2)
- Body Cam (Policy 3)
- Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Staff (Policy 7)
- Whistleblowing (Policy 13C)
- Employee Code of Conduct (Policy 13D)
- Therapy and Well-Being Delivery (Policy 11C)
- Exclusions and Terminations (Policy 12E)
- Interim Reviews (Policy 12D)

Context – What does Touch mean?

1.1 Touch can mean different things to different people. Some young people are sensory and touch seeking, others are touch avoidant. To some touch can bring comfort, for others it can bring back trauma. People experience touch in different ways depending on their past experiences.

1.2 Historically, due to fear of accusation and legal challenge, schools have taken a no-touch stance when it comes to positive touch. This could be for example an encouraging pat on the shoulder, helping a child who has fallen over, physically supporting a young person do gymnastics moves or giving a person a hug. In contrast many of the same schools have a restraint policy that allows for touch to occur within challenging behavioural circumstances.

1.3 At Arun Court School we have a deep concern that many young people with ASD or mental health needs only ever experience what could be classed as 'negative touch' or touch within negative circumstances. We also have a concern that restraint is often over-used in schools, in our view, and with the correct admissions criteria and with the correct environment many of these instances could be avoided.

Safeguarding in a school with a Positive Touch Policy

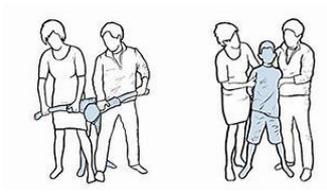
2.1 We recognise that there are serious safeguarding implications for our school as we have a positive touch policy and we take these very seriously. Our recruitment procedures, and continual monitoring of staff procedures, recognise that our policy on touch is likely to encourage applicants with criminal intentions towards young people to apply for posts.

2.2 As a result we provide training at Oqual Level 3 to all staff, have regular safeguarding supervision for staff and ensure that there is never a 'it could never happen here' attitude.

2.3 All positive touch is consensual, witnessed, public and conducted in a way that prevents mis-interpretation.

2.4 We do not encourage 'incidental touch' which is initiated by staff – e.g a reassuring pat on the shoulder. This should not occur as it is given without formal permission being given and without a request to touch the child. This is very important as this type of touch is an 'assumption' on the part of the staff member – staff must always think, why am I touching this student? Have they requested contact? Is it necessary for the task? OR am I assuming they need this ... which may not be the case, are you patting the student because their anxiety is making you feel uncomfortable, in which case there are other strategies they can be directed to.

Touch Related to Negative Behaviours



3.1 Whilst Arun Court School fundamentally disagrees with the amount of physical restraint used in the UK school system, we understand that it is necessary in certain circumstances. We aim to create an environment where restraint is not needed and as such, we DO NOT train our staff in MAPA or any other form of physical intervention. This affects our admissions policy which should be read in conjunction with this policy and our safeguarding policies. We ensure our admissions criteria fits our environment:

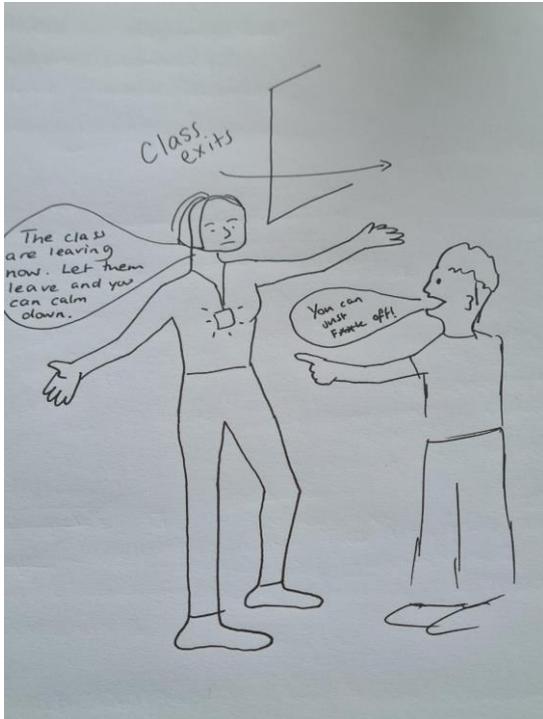
Environmental Factors	How this affects Admissions / EHCP Review
We do not have our own grounds – we use Birtley House, local walks and other areas of natural beauty instead	<p>We do not take those who abscond</p> <p>We can't take students for whom being allowed to run free in fences grounds is part of their behaviour management plan</p> <p>We can only take young people who, with support and high adult ratios, are safe around local roads</p>
We are a very small, calm school with limited rooms and break out spaces	We can't provide any student with their own room – we have a number of shared self-regulation spaces
Our environment includes specific strategies for those who have been bullied, abused including sexually and those who suffer with anxiety or depression	We can't take students who are likely to carry out behaviours, including regular intentional sexualised language and/or physical intimidation which will affect the recovery of other students

3.2 As stated in our behaviour policy, we aim to reduce anxiety via the use of therapeutic and well-being approaches and through negotiation, and de-escalation, avoid anxiety reaching a level where physical aggression takes place.

3.3 We do our utmost to get to know the students well, and to learn the signs of rising anxiety and anger, so that we can put de-escalation techniques in place quickly. However, we recognise that sometimes these signs will not be obvious, and that sometimes for a variety of circumstances, a student can very suddenly display extreme aggressive behaviours especially when the student is perhaps visiting or on a trial.

3.4 Body Blocking

In such circumstances we will use 'body blocking' (provided staff feel safe to do so) to enable an area to be evacuated and other students to be taken to safety. Ideally this should be recorded by another staff member's Body Cam.



3.5 Body Turning

We may place our hands on a young person's shoulders, run them down the forearm and turn them away from the source of anger to encourage them to find a safe place to calm down.



3.6 Emergency Protocol

Where we feel a child, or staff member, is in danger of physical assault we will use noise as a way of asserting ourselves and gaining compliance. We keep the school very calm, and voices very low at all times, in order for this to have maximum effect. An adult will invade the child's space with a hand outstretched in a stop motion and will shout direct instruction using minimal language. Their Body Cam should be on:

On the floor

Bottom on the

floor

Down, down now, sit cross-

legged You will not assault a

staff member Down on the floor,

now!

Once the child has complied with this emergency measure, de-escalation conversations and techniques will be used.

3.6 We will always later apologise to the child for shouting, and congratulate them for complying, however we make it very clear that assault is not acceptable and we reserve the right to prosecute. Students are expected to use the tools they have been given to reduce their anxiety and to control their anger – physical aggression is a red line and could lead to their placement ending.

3.7 We complete a risk assessment after such an incident, and the incident itself is recorded within our High level reporting file.

3.8 If a child does not comply, and can't be contained, and starts to reach a level of aggressive behaviour which is extreme, we will call the police and evacuate the building if necessary.

3.9 If the student follows evacuating staff and continues to be physically abusive, **in line with DFE guidance 'Use of Reasonable Force' 2013 adults are permitted to defend themselves as necessary.** They should always try to have their Body Cam on if doing so. **This guidance is attached at the end of this policy document.** We will ALWAYS notify the police in such extreme circumstances, and try to exit everyone from the premises until the police arrive. **We reserve the right to terminate placement immediately and provide online learning only in these circumstances.**



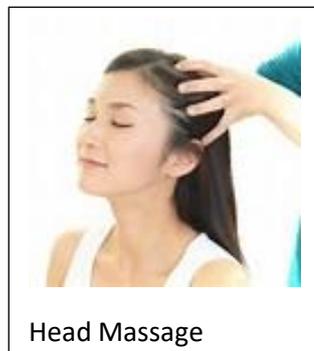
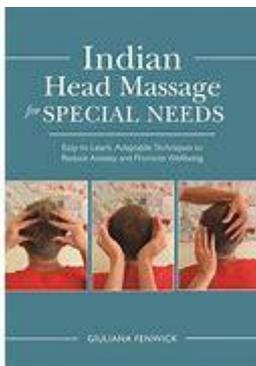
4. When a young person has to leave us due to aggression

We work with the LEA to find an alternative placement if we cannot protect the integrity of the school's work, or the high psychological needs of other students, due to behaviour. Please see our Interim Review Policy and Exclusions policy for further detail.

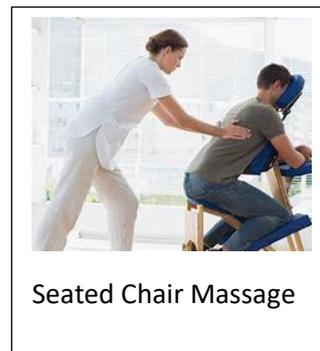
POSITIVE TOUCH

5. Positive Touch – Massage

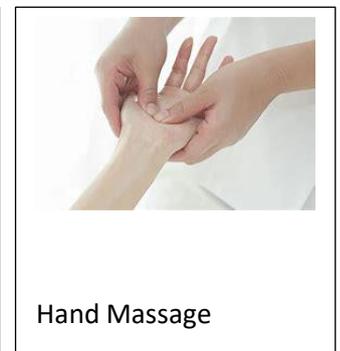
5.1 The benefits of Indian Head Massage and craniosacral therapy are becoming more widely acknowledged and research shows that they can help young people with high anxiety, including ASD, in a number of ways; relaxing, centring, improved verbal communication and improved sleep. Further suggested reading:



Head Massage



Seated Chair Massage



Hand Massage

(please ask to borrow a school copy)

5.2 We have several trained practitioners and this service is available on demand and also during set sessions such as Fredagymas or as part of a student's Sensory Diet.

5.3 Massage can only be carried out by a qualified and insured practitioner. We have practitioners in Indian Head Massage, seated back massage and hand massage – all of which are fully clothed massages. The following procedures are in place for safeguarding:

5.3.1 The massage must be witnessed by another staff member. If using a massage chair the practitioner must ensure a clear view for the witness at all times.

5.3.2 The massage is recorded in the log book and the masseuse, student and witness sign the log

5.3.3 The impact of massage is considered and recorded – it should be purposeful, not work avoidance.

5.3.4 No potentially allergic essential oils should be used – only base oils. The young persons allergy form should be checked before hand if they would like oil to be used.

SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES

1 TACTILE (TOUCH)

- Play with play-dough, kinetic sand, foam, slime, silly putty
- Massage lotion onto hands or skin
- Build sandcastles
- Play with a water table
- Make dough (cookie, bread, pizza)
- Brush teeth with a vibrating toothbrush
- Squeeze a stress ball
- Finger paint
- Pretend to shave with shaving cream
- Give or receive a massage
- Tickle or be tickled



2 ORAL MOTOR

- Chew on gummy snacks, gum
- Blow bubbles, Blow a whistle
- Drink from a straw
- Eat crunchy foods
- Suck on a hard candy, lollipop, sucker, frozen fruit
- Play an instrument that uses the mouth like a harmonica or wind instrument
- Use chew beads or other chewelry
- Apply lip balm
- Eat something sour or drink lemonade
- Brush teeth with a vibrating toothbrush



3 VISUAL

- Wear sunglasses or hat
- Use calming sensory bottles
- Read a social story or use story stones
- Lower or brighten lights
- Read a book, Look at pictures
- Watch television
- Do a crossword, Solve a puzzle
- Color, Paint, Draw

4 AUDITORY (SOUND)

- Listen to music
- Listen to a podcast
- Listen to a book on tape
- Bang on pots and pans
- Play an instrument
- Wear noise cancelling headphones
- Use a white noise machine
- Listen to nature sounds
- Play "guess that sound"
- Have ten minutes of silence



5 OLFACTORY (SMELL)

- Use essential oils
- Bake something
- Go on a smelling scavenger hunt (smell a flower, smell a tree, etc.)
- Play a guess that smell game
- Scratch and sniff stickers, Smelly markers, Scented playdough
- Practice deep breathing

6 VESTIBULAR

- Move your body: run, jump, march, dance, walk
- Climb stairs, Swing, Dance
- Ride a bike, scooter, or roller-blade
- Ice-skate, Go sledding, Make snow-angels
- Ride a merry-go-round
- Roll down a hill
- Do somersaults, Do push-ups, Do jumping jacks
- Play catch, Kick a ball, Swing a bat, Throw a ball



7 PROPRIOCEPTIVE

- Jump on a trampoline, Roll on a therapy ball
- Wear a body sock
- Practice yoga
- Do "heavy work"
- Push a shopping cart (real or toy), Push a stroller
- Vacuum, Mop, Sweet, Dust
- Do yoga
- Shovel snow, Build a snowman, Rake leaves
- Use a therapy ball
- Use a weighted blanket, Carry a weighted teddy bear

6.1 All students at Arun court School have a sensory diet that is bespoke to them. We ask our visiting occupational therapist, as well as the young person themselves and the well-being team to design and review the diets regularly.

6.2 the vast majority of items on a sensory diet will be able to be carried out without intervention or touch, but some such as resistance exercises will need an adult to work in close contact with the child.

6.3 Additionally, it is accepted that the OT may at times need to touch a young person

6.4 The following principles must apply-

CONSENT

Ask the young person, is it OK to touch you/hold hands etc to do this exercise? Respect their response.

PUBLIC

Such activities should be in a public space and never behind a closed door. There should be other people around as witnesses.

SPACING

Think carefully about where you place your own body – if you might be blocking the view of witnesses, then move. Always prevent accusation.

EMPOWER

Through PSHCE, SRE & participation in NSPCC programmes we ensure student know what is acceptable and what isn't – All staff should listen to students with concerns and refer to the DSLs. Never think 'it couldn't happen here'.

7. Positive Touch – Hug Plans

7.1 Some young people need hugs for reassurance. These students have a specific written hug plan which –

- Identifies the staff members able to give them hugs.
- Explains that hugs should be sideways on (not front to front) and that you must ask first – the staff member may tell you to wait until you are in a different space.
- Should always be in a public space and in front of other people.

7.2 Staff are asked if they are willing to be on a young person's hug plan, and as touch is different for different people, no staff member would ever be expected to be on a plan if they do not wish to be.



A sideways hug ensures that there is no intimate contact, especially between a female staff member's front (breasts) and the student. Hands should always be above waist height.

8. Positive Touch – Specific lessons

8.1 Within lessons such as forest school and P.E touch is sometimes needed to ensure safety – the principles of asking for consent and ensuring witnesses should apply:



CONSENT

Ask the young person, is it OK to touch you/hold hands etc to do this exercise? Explain why. Respect their response.

PUBLIC

Such activities should be in a public space and never behind a closed door. There should be other people around as witnesses.

SPACING

Think carefully about where you place your own body – if you might be blocking the view of witnesses, then move. Always prevent accusation.

EMPOWER

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9. Positive Touch First Aid and Intimate Care

We do not take students who require regular intimate care such as toileting assistance. If a child has a toileting accident, and has specific motor needs or is very distressed, we may help with dressing and support. In such circumstances, the same as for first aid examinations, a witness should always be present. A brief report should be written if this has taken place which should be signed by both staff members and the young person. **The report should be kept on file at the back of the major incidents folder in the 'very occasional intimate care' section.**

MONITORING OF THIS POLICY

This policy is ratified by full EMAT meeting and is reviewed Annually.

This policy is constantly monitored on the ground by the DSL Team, Well-being Team and the SLT. Touch is a safeguarding issue first and foremost, the Chair of EMAT and all safeguarding EMAT members should monitor this aspect to a high degree on their visits. The Proprietor / Executive Head also monitors the use of this policy.

All staff have a responsibility to monitor their own practice and ensure they are following polices. They risk disciplinary action if policy is not followed. They risk criminal prosecution if their actions, as a result of not following policy, endangers the welfare of a child.