**ONE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SAFE TOUCH & POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY**

Our policy on safe touch and positive handling has been developed with due consideration of neuro-biological research and studies based on and around the positive impact of touch. Our key aim is to facilitate a safe and happy school where children and staff alike enjoy coming to school and experience positive relationships with all whom they come into contact with. These positive relational experiences are fundamental to our positive ethos and this policy fully supports this.

**AIMS**

At ONE International School, we believe that all our children have the right to independence, choice and inclusion and we seek to provide opportunities for personal growth and emotional health and wellbeing. However, rights also involve responsibilities, such as not infringing other people’s rights. Children unable to control their actions or unable to appreciate danger have a right to be protected; as do other pupils using the school, and all staff should exercise a duty of care, whether this be by using touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry/sad child or alternatively using restrictive intervention to control or contain a situation.

**RATIONALE**

Children learn who they are and how the world works by forming relationships with people and things around them. The quality of a child’s relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Our policy takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory, child development and special educational needs.

At ONE International School, we have made an informed, evidence based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth/learning and only where necessary, restrictive intervention.

The types of safe touch and positive handling that may be used:

**CASUAL/ INFORMAL/INCIDENTAL TOUCH**

Staff use touch with children as part of a normal relationship, for example, comforting a child, giving reassurance or congratulating. This might include putting an arm out to bar an exit from a room, taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or putting an arm around the shoulders. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating.

**GENERAL REPARATIVE TOUCH**

Staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions use this form of touch in various situations. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child’s emotions, triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Reparative touch may include sitting on an adult’s lap – taking into consideration the age/stage of the child and, where possible, within sight of other colleagues.

Other examples of this type of touch include patting a back, high fives, putting an arm around the shoulders or holding hands.

**CONTACT PLAY**

Staff adopting a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship sometimes use contact play. This will only take place when the child has developed a trusting relationship with the adult and when they feel completely comfortable and at ease with this type of contact. Contact play may include an adult chasing and catching the child or an adult and child playing a game of building towers with their hands.

**POSITIVE HANDLING/RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION**

Positive Handling/Restrictive Intervention will only be used as a last resort in order to stop students:

1. Causing injury to themselves

2. Causing injury to other pupils

3. Damaging property

4. Having a negative impact on good order

The overriding principle relating to positive handling is that the best interests of the child take precedence over every other consideration. The first line of paragraph of the Children Act 1989 in the UK stated that the welfare of the child shall be the paramount consideration. Therefore when restrictive intervention is considered, it is regarded as a last resort and should only be used in exceptional circumstances

Restrictive Intervention will normally only be carried out by trained members of staff, however all staff have a right to defend themselves from attack, using an appropriate level of reasonable force. In an emergency, for example if a child were at immediate risk of harm, or about to inflict injury on someone else, then any member of staff would be entitled to intervene, including those without specific training. It is unlawful for a member of staff to use any degree of physical contact which is deliberately intended to punish a student, or

which is primarily intended to cause pain or humiliation. Physical interventions should only be used when dialogue and diversion have failed to stop the behaviour and should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result, taking into account the age and size of the child. The decision to use any physical and or restrictive intervention must take account of the immediate circumstances of the situation, coupled with prior knowledge of the student and be based upon an assessment of the risks associated with the intervention. Any physical intervention, restrictive intervention/touch should avoid contact that might be misinterpreted as sexual and respects the cultural expectations of the individual.

According to the DfE ‘Use of Reasonable Force Guidance 2013’

What is reasonable force?

1. The term ‘reasonable force’ covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

2. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

3. ‘Reasonable in the circumstances’ means using no more force than is needed.

4. As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.

5. Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.

6. School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.

**TOUCH AS PART OF OUR DAILY ROUTINES**

ONE I.S. staff initiate and respond warmly to appropriate touch from all children and indeed each other. Each morning the children are both greeted into the school and then again into their individual classrooms, this could be with a hug, a hand on the shoulder or a ‘high five’. Interactions in the playground or at the above times will often include a physical interaction, again a hug or a hand on the shoulder. This creates the nurturing, warm, caring environment that is so enabling for our children.

The staff are also acutely aware of the current atmosphere where, due to fears of abuse, touch as a natural and vital form of human connection has been almost vetoed in some schools. We also know that it is unfeasible, unethical, impractical and unsafe to impose a ‘No Touch Policy’. We know that as part of our loco parentis obligations that there are times where touch will be necessary for the wellbeing of the children in our care. We understand

that carefully judged contingent and/or containing touch could be therapeutic. Equally, we understand that when a child is in deep distress that with sufficient connection, psychological holding can sometimes be established without touching.

**TEACHING OUR CHILDREN ABOUT APPROPRIATE TOUCH**

Our policy adheres to the belief that every individual needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch.

By ‘Appropriate Touch’ we mean touch that is not invasive, humiliating or could possibly be considered as eroticising / flirtatious. We agree that ‘appropriate’ places to touch are ‘shoulders, arms and back. Staff will invite children to sit closely and occasionally on their lap (upper thighs). Where possible staff will aim to turn to the side when holding a child therefore avoiding full frontal touch, this will ensure that these holds are not misinterpreted.

Naturally, staff are also fully aware of touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising, or experienced as erotic/sexual in anyway whatsoever. Should any such touch be used this would be logged as an incident and would be subject to disciplinary action.

Where staff are assessed to be acting in the best interests of the child, the school will support them.