

# Orchid Vale Primary School

## Safe Touch Policy



**The Park  
Academies  
Trust**

| Date       | Details of policy updates                                                                |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dec 2021   | Reviewed and updated to reflect changes to KCSIE 2021                                    |
| Jan 2023   | Reviewed and updated to reflect changes to KSCIE 2022                                    |
| April 2025 | Reviewed and updated to reflect Thrive approaches and any changes to safeguarding policy |

| Review Date    | Version number | Reviewer/Owner (post holder)                     | Approved by (Committee) | Signature |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Sept 2020      | 1              | Helen Willcox<br>Designated<br>Safeguarding Lead |                         |           |
| September 2021 | 2              | Helen Willcox<br>Designated<br>Safeguarding Lead |                         |           |
| January 2023   | 3              | Helen Willcox<br>DSL                             |                         |           |
| April 2025     | 4              | Helen Willcox<br>DSL                             |                         |           |

## **The Park Academy Trust Introduction**

The Trust intends and expects that all decisions around the use of Trust resources will be underpinned at all times by its vision and values:

Our aim:

- To create centres of educational excellence that inspire all pupils to turn their potential into performance
- To achieve this our schools will:
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that allows pupils to develop their talents and ambitions
- Deliver the highest quality learning opportunities facilitated by excellent teachers
- Inspire our pupils to become confident, motivated and respectful individuals ready to make a positive contribution to society

The Trust will support our schools by:

- Maximising the resources and expertise available to individual schools
- Providing a platform for the sharing of excellent practice
- Challenging and developing staff to turn their potential into performance.

## **The welfare and safeguarding of our children is paramount in all we do at Orchid Vale Primary School.**

### **Introduction**

Children learn who they are and how the world is 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 well-being. It is with this in mind that staff seek to respond to children's developmental needs by using appropriate safe touch.

Our policy considers the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills. We have adopted an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning. This is in line with our Thrive approach embraced in every aspect of school life.

Our policy rests on the belief that every member of staff needs to know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Hence, staff need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference.

### **Different types of touch**

There are four different types of touch and physical contact that may be used, they are:

#### ***Casual/informal/incidental touch***

Staff use touch with children as part of a normal relationship, for example, comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. This might include 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***

This is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions. 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 stroking a back or an arm, rocking gently, a cuddle or sitting on an adult's lap (lap cushion may be used), hand or foot massage.

#### ***Contact/interactive Play***

Contact play is used by staff adopting a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship. 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. This sort of play releases the following chemicals

in the brain: Opioids – to calm and soothe and give pleasure; Dopamine – to focus, be alert and concentrate; BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotropic Factor) – a brain ‘fertiliser’ that encourages growth. Interactive play may include: throwing cushions to each other or using soft foam bats to fence each other.

***Positive Handling (calming a child) – The school’s positive handling policy will apply***

The restraining techniques used should be familiar to the staff involved, and they should be appropriately trained and be able to use them safely. A child who is in a state of deregulation and has no mechanism for self- calming or regulating their strong emotional reactions may be physically held by staff to keep them and others around them safe.

We would recommend that staff employ the safest and gentlest means of holding a child, which is entirely designed to enable the child to feel safe and soothed and bring him or her down from an uncontrollable state of hyper arousal. Maintaining boundaries in such as cases can be a vital corrective emotional experience, without which the child can be left at risk of actual physical or psychological damage.

The brain does not develop self- soothing neuronal pathways unless this safe emotional regulation has been experienced. Physical holding of a dysregulated child can be the only way to provide the reassurance necessary to restore calm. Such necessary interventions are fully in line with guidelines set out in the Government Document ‘new guidelines on the use of reasonable force in school’ (DfEE 1998) and in the Education Act Section 550A. During any incident of positive handling, staff must seek as far as possible:

- To keep the child, other children and themselves safe
- Lower the child’s level of anxiety during the restraint by offering verbal reassurance and avoiding generating fear of injury in the child.
- Cause minimum level of restriction of the movement of limbs consistent with the danger of injury (so, for example, will not restrict the movement of the child’s legs when they are on the ground unless in an enclosed space where falling legs are likely to be injured);
- Ensure at least one other member of staff is present wherever possible.
- To follow the child’s personal pen portrait and risk assessment

**Steps to Take Before Positive Handling**

Prevention strategies and calming measures will be employed and the following action should be taken before a restraint is used.

- Applying the school’s behaviour policy;
- Following the child’s pen portrait and risk assessment (where appropriate)
- Conversation, distraction, coaxing skills, gentle persuasion or redirection to other activities (e.g. touching the child’s arm and leading him/her away from danger, gently stroking the child’s shoulder);
- Put distance between the child and others-move others to a safer place;
- Calmly remove anything that could be used as a weapon, including hot drinks, objects, furniture;
- Use seclusion only if necessary for a short period while waiting for help, preferably where a member of staff can observe;

- Keep talking calmly to the child, explain what is happening and why, how it can stop, and what will happen next;

Although these techniques to calm a dysregulated child are seen as best practice, individual children may require techniques to calm down. Reference to a child's pen portrait, risk assessment or Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) may be required for more information.

**Links to other policies:**

Safeguarding child protection policy

Positive Handling policy

Behaviour Policy

SEND policy