Butlers Court School

Our Butlers Court family nurtures kind, resilient, ambitious and curious children. Our caring environment supports well-being and self-belief, encouraging everyone to flourish. Through a wide range of experiences and opportunities, every child has the chance to shine, developing a love of learning and prepared for the ever-changing world and a future of possibilities.

Safe Touch Policy

Statement of intent

At Butlers Court School, we understand that appropriate relationships between staff and pupils are paramount in promoting the safeguarding of children.

The DfE's guidance document, 'Use of reasonable force in schools', which was published in 2013, makes clear that there are occasions when physical contact with a pupil, other than reasonable force, is appropriate and necessary.

This Safe Touch Policy has been created with the aim of ensuring that all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities in terms of appropriate and inappropriate touch when involving pupils.

All children are entitled to receive an education in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected.

The school will dedicate itself to ensuring that no pupils feel threatened or disrespected, in terms of physical contact between themselves or a member of staff.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to the following legislation, including, but not limited to:

• The Children Act 1989

• Equality Act 2010

1.2. This policy will also have due regard to the following guidance:

• Use of Reasonable Force in Schools, DfE, 2013

• Working Together to Safeguard Children DfE, 2018

• Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE, 2026

• Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention HMG, 2019

1.3. The school will implement this policy in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy, Positive Handling Policy, Intimate Care Policy and Equality Policy.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. All members of staff at our school have a duty of care towards pupils, and must be aware of the boundaries involving physical contact.

2.2. The headteacher is responsible for conducting regular safeguarding training for all members of staff and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities, in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

2.3. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that all staff engage in safe touch with pupils, and only where absolutely necessary.

2.4. All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or unsafe at our school as a result of inappropriate touch.

2.5. All members of staff have a responsibility to report any instances of inappropriate touch to the headteacher.

2.6. The headteacher is responsible for communicating with parents/carers and ensuring that they are aware of this policy.

2.7. The school has a responsibility for ensuring that it creates and promote a culture in which pupils' wishes and feelings are respected.

3. What is safe touch?

3.1. For the purpose of this policy, "safe touch" is defined as physical contact that, if otherwise avoided, would be inhumane, unkind and potentially emotionally or physically damaging for the pupil.

3.2. Safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.

3.3. The school understands that the following examples are instances of safe touch which may occur between staff and pupils:

• Comforting an upset or distressed pupil

• Congratulating or praising a pupil

• Holding the hand of a pupil to guide them, such as when crossing a road or walking to assembly

• Giving first aid to a pupil

• Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons

• Administering medicine

• Using musical instruments

(Use of Reasonable Force in Schools, DfE, 2013, p.8)

4. Types of safe touch

4.1. Staff should ensure that safe touch only occurs in the presence of other adults or responsible children, and that it does not indicate favour towards particular pupils.

4.2. Pupils should never be touched in a way that could be misinterpreted as anything other than appropriate adult-child support.

4.3. Pupils should not be touched between the waist and mid-thigh, or on/near the chest (unless specifically required during a First Aid procedure or Steps physical intervention).

4.4. Types of Physical Contact

The school recognises that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate, e.g. cuddling, lap-sitting, and that safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious. The school places the following restrictions on hugging:

• At our school staff using touch for reward or comfort will use the 'shoulder-hug', rather than a 'front' embrace, which the school would deem inappropriate.

• The shoulder-hug is a sideways hug whereby the member of staff places their hands on the pupil's shoulders.

• This type of hug prevents the pupil from turning themselves towards the member of staff (thus engaging in a 'front' embrace).

Lap-sitting is inappropriate and prohibited. A child may only sit on an adult's knee for a short period and a specific purpose (e.g. for First Aid) – they should not sit too close to the body.

4.5. For pupils within the Early Years Foundation Stage, it may be more appropriate on occasion for closer physical contact, while appropriate child-adult relationships are being established. The points above still apply, however, except that sitting on the knee and shoulder-hugs might occur more regularly and be of longer duration, if such support is required by the child.

4.6. If a pupil requires assistance with changing clothes, great care must be taken to ensure that all physical contact is specifically and only for the purpose of the operation being carried out.

4.7. For intimate care (especially toileting), see the school's Intimate Care Policy,

4.8. The school understands that pupils are not always aware of the boundaries between staff and pupils and thus may try to engage in physical contact such as lap-sitting or inappropriate hugging. Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff will explain to the pupil why it is unacceptable and encourage them to engage in the shoulder-hug instead.

4.9. If a member of staff attempts to use one of the safe methods of touch and a pupil is unhappy with this, the member of staff will cease contact immediately in order to respect the pupil's wishes.

4.10. Appropriate touch involving pupils with SEND will be in line with their EHC plan or IHCP.

5. Reasonable force

5.1. The school understands that there are times when members of staff must provide physical intervention if a child presents danger to themselves or others.

5.2. All staff have the legal power to use reasonable force. In these instances, staff must always explain the reasons for their actions to the pupil and why it was necessary.

5.3. Reasonable force may be required in order to control or restrain a pupil in extreme circumstances, such as needing to guide a pupil to safety. All such incidents are carried out by Steps trained staff have received.

5.4. At all times, members of staff must ensure they use reasonable force in such a way as to avoid any injury to the pupil, but the school recognises that in some extreme cases, such as immediate intervention to prevent worse physical injury, this may not be possible.

5.5. The school is able to use reasonable force to:

• remove disruptive children from the classroom when they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;

• prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;

• prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;

• prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and

• restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts. (Use of Reasonable Force in Schools, DfE, 2013, p.5)

5.6. Schools cannot use force as a punishment – this is always unlawful.

6. Reporting inappropriate touch

6.1. If a pupil attempts to engage in any inappropriate touch, the member of staff involved will report this immediately to the headteacher, in order to prevent any allegations of inappropriate physical contact. This is also recorded on CPOMS.

6.2. If another member of staff suspects or witnesses inappropriate physical contact, whereby the member of staff is willingly involved, they will report this to the headteacher immediately.

6.3. Where it is reported that a staff member has engaged, or is suspected to have engaged, in touch that is not appropriate in line with this policy and the Staff Code of Conduct, this will be handled in line with the Reporting Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy, or, reported to the LADO.

6.4. The headteacher will keep a written record of all instances of reported inappropriate touch.

7. Training of staff

7.1. The headteacher will conduct regular safeguarding training for all members of staff in relation to safe touch.

7.2. All staff will be regularly reminded of the methods of safe touch employed by our school, and will communicate this to the pupils they are in contact with.

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis by the Premises and Health & Safety Committee.

Mr S Butler

Headteacher

November 2026

To be reviewed 2027