

# **GHYLLGROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL**



## **Touch Policy**

*Reviewed by the Governors: Summer 2025*

*Date to be reviewed: Summer 2026*



## **Ghyllgrove Primary School**

### **Statement on the use of Physical Interventions**

- There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with pupils for a variety of reasons, for example:
  - to comfort a pupil in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age);
  - to gently direct a pupil;
  - for curricular reasons (for example in PE, Drama etc);
  - in an emergency to avert danger to the pupil or pupils;
  
- In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:
  - the pupil's age and level of understanding;
  - the pupil's individual characteristics and history;
  - the location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present).

Within Ghyllgrove Primary School this means that as a member of staff may physically guide, touch or prompt children in appropriate ways at appropriate times. It is extremely important that you have read and understood all relevant policy to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to use physical intervention or restrictive physical intervention with children and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

### **Why Do We Use Touch?**

We may choose to use a physical intervention with children for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for either comfort reward or guidance.

### **How Do We Use Touch?**

#### **Hugging**

At Ghyllgrove Primary school, we encourage staff that are using touch for comfort or reward to use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' cuddling and the adult's hands on the shoulders limits the ability of the child to turn themselves into you. Hugging can be used either standing or seated.

#### **Hand-Holding**

We recognise that children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is compliant. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children, this can become a restraint. Therefore, we encourage the use of the 'offering an arm'. This is done by the adult holding their arm out, and the child is encouraged to wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child's for a little extra security if it is required. In summary, it is generally deemed appropriate to touch others on the upper arm and shoulders.

### **For Hearing Impaired pupils**

We recognise the importance that we have to touch/tap a deaf child to gain their attention. This is an appropriate tap/touch on either the arm or shoulder. At times a child will need support helping them to sign using their hands to get the correct handshape.

### **Lap-Sitting**

At our school we actively discourage lap-sitting. Children should be taught to seek comfort/attention through other means, explored within Essex Steps training. If a child attempts to sit on your lap, explain and ask them to sit next to you if it is appropriate.

At times, children may in such crisis or distress that they hold you in a way which is not described as above (e.g. 'front on' hug/lap sitting). If this should happen please ensure that you have informed a senior member of staff. You will be asked to make a note of this, this will be in order to record and monitor the amount of times the student is seeking this support from staff and to analyse the child's unmet need.

Please note that although we have a touch policy and believe that contingent touch can be a positive experience for the children that we care for, this does not mean that you have to use physical interventions with children.

It should also be realised that some children will not want to be touched. Please respect this.

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the students in their care. Therefore if a student is likely to be at risk from harm if you do not physically intervene in an emergency situation, you must take action. The action you take will be dependent on the dynamic risk assessment that you make at that moment in time.

We also have a policy for positive handling intervention in line with Essex Steps training.

Parents/carers will be made aware of this statement when their child is admitted to this school.

If you have any questions or would like a further discussion regarding this policy, please speak to your line manager at the earliest available opportunity.

**Review date Autumn Term 2026**