Thurgoland C.E. Primary School

Safe Touch Policy

Approved by:
Headteacher Mr D Jordan **Date: 08.07.2026**
Chair of Governors Mrs Laura Gregory-White **Date: 08.07.2026**
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THURGOLAND

CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

LEARNING TOGETHER IN FAITH & JOY

Our Christian Vision

LOVING GOD, BLESS THURGOLAND SCHOOL



Children at Thurgoland CE Primary are encouraged to see that everyone is special and unique and, in this way, gain a sense of ourselves as a unique individual – that true self, or best self, God has created us to be.

The Church of England states that, when it comes to education,

"THE VISION IS OF GOD-GIVEN FULLNESS OF LIFE IN WHICH EACH PERSON IS BOTH BLESSED AND A BLESSING"

(Church of England Vision for Education p.12)

AND MAY IT BE A PLACE OF FAITH AND JOY



As educators we are all passionate about the way children are formed by the environment in which they grow. To become our best self we will need the environment that enables this.

Our vision is rooted in the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13 31-32): A mustard seed...

"THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE A MUSTARD SEED, WHICH A MAN TOOK AND PLANTED IN HIS FIELD. THOUGH IT IS THE SMALLEST OF ALL SEEDS, YET WHEN IT GROWS, IT IS THE LARGEST OF GARDEN PLANTS AND BECOMES A TREE, SO THAT THE BIRDS COME AND PERCH IN ITS BRANCHES."

We are a small school in a valley – but we believe like the mustard seed that high standards of education can have far-reaching impact and that our children will grow into those who bless others through their careers, caring and vocations. One tiny seed just like one small child carries a world of potential.

Thurgoland CE Primary School is surrounded by beautiful countryside where farming and growing is part of daily life. The parable of the mustard seed provides a link with the historic roots of the school.

With our caring and nurturing ethos firmly embedded in all that we do, every member who joins our school whether child or adult, like the small mustard seed, is welcomed into a learning environment so that they grow and flourish in its broadest sense—academically, socially, morally, physically and spiritually.



BY WORKING AND PLAYING TOGETHER WE CAN LOVE, LEARN AND RESPECT



Through working and playing together in peace and harmony, Team Thurgoland embody the concept born from the African philosophy of "ubuntu" – a concept in which your sense of self is shaped by your relationships with other people – underpins how we work together in peace and harmony to become our best self. It's a way of living that begins with the premise that "I am" only because "we are."

"I AM BECAUSE WE ARE."

Our children, our staff, our families and our community – together we are Team Thurgoland.

"IT HAS BEEN SAID BEAUTIFULLY AND PROFOUNDLY, THAT OUR GOD IN HIS MOST INNER MYSTERY IS NOT SOLITUDE, BUT A FAMILY."
(John Paul II)

WE KNOW YOU ARE WITH US. HELP US BECOME OUR BEST SELF

TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

At Thurgoland CE Primary School, everyone is inspired to reach their full potential and become their best self, to make the world a better place.

"BELOVED, WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN NOW: WHAT WE WILL BE HAS NOT YET BEEN REVEALED" (1 JOHN 3:2A)

We are committed to promoting a growth mindset. In line with Christian teaching, at Thurgoland CE Primary School, there is a big emphasis on everyone striving to move from their former self to a self that has to be found: growth and renewal.



AMEN

Positive Handling: strategies used by trained/ named members of staff to ensure a pupil's safety i.e. when becoming dysregulated.

Thurgoland CE Primary Safe Touch Policy

Children learn who they are (and how the world is) within their significant relationships. The quality of the child's relationships with significant adults is key to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Touch is recognised as being a physical way of soothing, calming and containing distress. Many research studies have indicated the necessity of human contact and touch in the healthy development of children. It is a factor in children who experience neglect and 'fail to thrive'.

Our policy on Safe Touch (sometimes termed 'Safe Holding' or 'Positive Handling') has been developed in the context of the local authorities' child protection procedures and policies and government guidance, and contains within it Thrive Approach™ recommendations. It identifies safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, emotional regulation, mental health and the development of pro-social skills.

To whom does it apply?
It applies to all staff and children working within the school.

There will be occasions where physical contact between staff and children occurs as a normal part of school activities.

Where physical contact occurs using positive handling techniques this will be by a named member of staff.

Named members of staff need to have received 'Positive Handling' (or equivalent) training to know how and when to hold children in safe ways within governmental guidelines to ensure their safety and the safety of other pupils and staff.

Why have a policy on touch?
In order to protect children and school staff from allegations under Child Protection procedures many schools, education authorities and academies have adopted 'No Touch' policies. However, such policies do not address the emotional health and social wellbeing needs of children.

Thurgoland School is adopting an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch in special cases as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy emotional growth and learning.

Research
Research shows clearly that healthy pro-social brain development requires access to safe touch as one of the means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, sad or angry child. It is essential for all children to learn the difference between safe and unsafe touch and to experience having their strongest emotions contained, validated, accepted and soothed by a significant adult.

If children are behaving in unacceptable, threatening, dangerous, aggressive or out of control ways, they have not yet learned how their strongest emotional reactions can be contained, channelled and communicated safely.

In recognition of this, under special, agreed and supervised conditions, specially trained staff will consider using safe touch as one of the means available to them, for example to calm a distressed child, to contain an angry or wild child and/or encourage or affirm an anxious child or to support a child with low self-esteem.

Safe touch used to calm, soothe and regulate a child's emotions is a needed developmental experience. The brain does not develop neuronal pathways to initiate calming and self-soothing unless and until this safe emotional regulation has been experienced within a positive relationship with a significant adult.

Safe touch is one of the key ways of regulating children's emotions, but it is a strategy that fully trained staff will use only under supervision and in line with a whole school policy on touch.

Ways of regulating children's emotions
Other means of calming, soothing and containing children's strong emotions include:

- Slowing one's pace
- Lowering the voice
- Breathing more deeply
- Initially matching the pitch and volume of the child's emotional display and then regulating it down
- Talking slowly firmly and quietly in an unhurried unflustered way
- Providing clear predictable consistently held boundaries.

The appropriate use of safe touch is defined by situations in which abstinence would actually be inhumane, unkind and potentially psychologically or neuro-biologically damaging. Refraining from physically, safely holding a child in the face of their intense grief, stress and/or rage reactions can lead to a state of hyper-arousal, in which toxic levels of stress chemicals are released in the body and brain. The severely damaging long-term effects of this state have been intensively researched worldwide and are well documented.

Moreover, gentle safe holding is appropriate if a child:

- is hurting himself/herself or others
- is ***likely*** to hurt himself/herself and/or others
- is damaging property

- is incensed and out of control, so that all verbal attempts to engage him/her have failed.

Trained staff team members are trained in the safest and gentlest means of holding a child that is entirely designed to enable the child to feel safe and soothed, and to bring him or her down from uncontrollable states of hyper-arousal.

What about other physical contact with pupils?
It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, that sits outside the Safe Touch policy, with a pupil is proper and necessary.
Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school;
- When comforting a distressed pupil;
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and
- To give first aid.

Appropriate and inappropriate touch
We are highly aware of the current atmosphere where due to fears of abuse, touch as a natural and important form of human connection has been almost vetoed in some school contexts. Our policy rests on the belief that every member of staff needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Hence all staff members need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference. They need to show themselves to be highly aware of both the damaging and unnecessary uses of touch in an educational context.

Guidelines for the use of Safe Touch
To ensure touch is only used appropriately the following guidelines are to be followed:

- Parents/carers should be informed of the school policy on Touch.
- Teachers/support staff should be trained in all aspects of safe touch.
- Staff members should agree the use of safe touch in discussion with their manager.
- Child should be consulted, appropriate to their understanding, and involved in the development of a plan, based on a comprehensive risk assessment.
- Strategies should be rehearsed and practised (as is possible) with the child in preparation.
- A Resilience Plan should be completed and its use recorded and monitored.
- A Resilience Plan will be completed and agreed by staff, parents and the child
- TWO Adult rule: No adult should use safe holding when alone with a child. Both adults should have the closest / best relationship with the child.
- Where touch is used, contact should be brief and gentle, on clothed or publicly visible parts of the body: hands, arms, shoulders, head, hair, shoes.

Unsafe touch

- At no point and under no circumstances should staff members use touch to satisfy their own need for physical contact or reassurance.
- No unsafe touch: All staff are trained to be fully cognisant of touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising or experienced as eroticising in any way whatsoever.
- Serious Breach: Should any such touch be used it would be deemed as the most serious breach of the Code of Ethics warranting the highest level of disciplinary action.

When can reasonable force be used?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.
- The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.
- A Resilience Plan should be completed along with parents and the child for those who may need this strategy.

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where 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.

Schools cannot:

- Use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

When reasonable force has been used

Parents will be informed by telephone or face to face should reasonable force be used to calm a child and ensure their and others' safety.
The incident will be recorded on the CPOMS. This will include the events leading up to the incident and details about the strategies deployed by staff.
A copy of this document will be given to parents.
Following an incident, the Resilience Plan will be reviewed by staff.