



## **Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust**

**To unlock every child's potential as a unique child of God**  
**Respect – Forgiveness – Trust – Responsibility – Thankfulness – Justice – Humility**



# **Appropriate Touch**

Ratified: March 2026

Review due: Spring 2028

### **Mission Statement:**

**Unlock every child's potential as a unique child of God**

**Our aim is to ensure that every child's unique strengths are celebrated and strengthened alongside gaining an excellent academic, social, emotional and physical education.**

At the Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust, we believe that all our pupils have the right to have their emotional and physical health and wellbeing needs met. We recognise that there are situations when it would be inhumane, unkind and potentially harmful to a child's emotional, psychological or physical wellbeing to avoid the appropriate use of touch. Every member of staff needs to know and demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch.

## Types of appropriate touch

There are times when DBS-checked staff will have cause to have physical contact with pupils for a variety of reasons, for example:

- To comfort a pupil in distress (in a manner appropriate to their age)
- To gently direct a pupil such as to engage with a learning resource, to interact with a peer, or to transfer between learning situations
- To physically enable a pupil to access the curriculum
- In an emergency to avert danger to the pupil or pupils
- For reasons of personal or intimate care
- Contingent physical touch; everyday acts of communication by physical means to indicate approval, affection or sympathy
- General reparative touch; used to regulate a child's emotions, such as patting a back, squeezing an arm or a hand, or deep pressure massage.
- Contact play; such as an adult chasing and catching the pupil, or an adult and pupil playing a game of building towers with their hands

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

## Protective Behaviours

Staff are trained to know when and how to support a child experiencing distress to make sense of those feelings and learn to manage them. This is based on a positive relationship in which staff are reliably present, consistent, safe and trustworthy, having learnt to be attuned to the child's individual emotional needs. Protective Behaviours are taught as part of our curriculum, both within discrete lessons and as a feature of our school's culture. Every individual needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch.

Touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising, or experienced as eroticising in anyway whatsoever is not appropriate. Should any such touch be used it would be deemed as the most serious breach of this policy, warranting appropriate disciplinary action.

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies and Physical Intervention Policy further outline the necessity to ensure all children are safe in their bodies and their feelings, and how the staff across our Trust work together to ensure this is the case. Where staff are acting in the best interests of the child, they will be supported by the schools.

## Restrictive Physical Intervention

Appropriate touch should not be confused with Restrictive Physical Intervention. Restrictive Physical Intervention is a graduated response to behaviours that endanger the child, another person, cause serious disruption or damage the environment (Please see Physical Intervention Policy). A member of the Trust Executive Leadership Team is being trained as a TeamTeach trainer and will be able to train all staff to understand preemptive and preventative methods to supporting a child to self-regulate and manage their emotions and their bodies safely, but also trained in a range of graduated responses to holding and supporting children when required.

It is crucial that all involved in our school community understand that restraint is only ever used as a last resort, but that not all holding is restraint. At the Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust, we are clear that we also use appropriate touch to support our

children to self-regulate and be ready and prepared for learning and life, avoiding or reducing the frequency or intensity of restrictive physical intervention.

## Mechanical restraint

The Care Quality Commission defines Mechanical restraint as “the use of a device (e.g. belt or cuff) to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of a person’s body, or part of the body, for the primary purpose of behavioural control”. This is not appropriate in our setting whatsoever. It would be deemed as the most serious breach of this policy, warranting appropriate disciplinary action.

Mechanical restraint should not be confused with circumstances when staff have other, legitimate reasons for applying a device to the body or limb of a pupil in order to restrict movement, for example:

- Use of flexion gaiters designed to stabilise a child’s arms and/or legs, and to either restrict or assist movement dependent on the indications for use
- To safely secure a child in a hoist when used by a carer to safely lift and transfer them when they have identified limitations to their mobility and are unable to move from one location to another without this help
- The use of safety seatbelts for all children on the school minibus, as a legal requirement
- The use of chair harnesses and belts for those children who require it for postural or safety purposes
- Where there is an identified need for proprioceptive feedback that the child is proactively seeking in order to self-regulate.

The following principles must be applied when applying a device to the body or limb of a child or young person in order to restrict movement:

- It is essential for maintaining the safety, wellbeing and dignity of the young person
- Its use should only ever be for the minimum period of time necessary
- It has been evidenced that its use is reasonable, proportionate and necessary, in order to support the young person’s behaviour, broader educational outcomes, sensory needs and / or the educational context.