



# Aspire Learning School

## Safe Touch Policy

Policy Title: Safe Touch Policy for Pupils with ASD or Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Applies to: All staff and volunteers at Aspire Learning School

Version: 1.0

Date of Issue: April 2025

Review Date: April 2026

Approved by: Aspire Learning School Leadership Team



## 1. Purpose

This policy provides clear, research-informed guidance on the use of safe, supportive touch when working with pupils who are pre-verbal or minimally verbal. Its aim is to safeguard pupils and staff while fostering trust, emotional regulation, and secure relationships in line with trauma-informed and therapeutic practice.

## 2. Policy Principles

- **Respect:** Each pupil's individual sensory, emotional, cultural, and communication needs must be respected at all times.
- **Consent and Communication:** For pupils with limited communication, staff must seek consent through clear, consistent routines, visual support, body language, and prior planning.
- **Purposeful Touch:** All touch must serve a specific, supportive purpose, such as regulation, reassurance, safety, or care.
- **Professional Boundaries:** Staff must always maintain professional conduct and avoid any form of touch that could be misinterpreted.

## 3. Definitions

- **Safe Touch:** Physical contact that is non-intrusive, non-sexual, developmentally appropriate, and intended to calm, comfort, or reassure a pupil.
- **Therapeutic Touch:** May include deep pressure (e.g. gentle hand on shoulders, guided use of weighted objects) when planned with relevant professionals.
- **Inappropriate Touch:** Any touch that is for the gratification of the adult, lacks a clear purpose, violates boundaries, or can be misinterpreted.

## 4. Acceptable Touch in Context of ASD

Touch may include:

- Hand-over-hand guidance for learning or self-care tasks
- A gentle hand on the shoulder for reassurance
- Offering a side hug if the pupil initiates and welcomes it
- Deep pressure techniques (if included in the child's support plan)

Touch must always be:

- Consistent with the individual's Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Plan
- Used only when needed and withdrawn once the pupil is regulated



- Done with verbal explanation even if the pupil is non-verbal, to support understanding

### **5. Unacceptable Touch Includes**

- Any contact in intimate areas unless necessary for personal care and done according to policy (see Personal Care Policy).
- Play fighting or rough-and-tumble play
- Touch given in private or secret
- Touch that is prolonged, overly familiar, or that could be misinterpreted
- Touch for adult emotional comfort rather than for the pupil's needs

### **6. Personal Care**

Where intimate care is required:

- It must be outlined in the Personal Care Plan
- Staff must record each incident
- Staff should encourage as much independence as possible
- Care should be provided by staff known to the pupil and ideally, with two adults present or within visibility

### **7. Staff Training and Responsibilities**

All staff must:

- Complete training in autism-informed care, including sensory processing and safe touch
- Follow individualised support plans and risk assessments
- Immediately report and record any concern or incident related to touch
- Participate in reflective practice and supervision regarding physical contact

### **8. Consent and Communication Strategies**

Due to pupils' communication differences, staff must:

- Use visual schedules, social stories, and consistent routines
- Observe non-verbal cues such as body stiffening, moving away, or vocal protest
- Teach and reinforce boundaries through visual and sensory supports

### **9. Policy Oversight and Review**

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will monitor touch-related concerns and ensure compliance.



- The Leadership Team will review this policy annually, or earlier if legislation or needs change.
- This policy complements the Horizon Group Safe Touch and Personal Care Policies.