SCITT Physical Contact Policy

Approved on	20th July 2026
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Next Review Date	16th July 2029

Change Record

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
10.7.25	JPT	No changes
15/07/26	JPT	Terminology changes.

Date of next review: 15/07/29

When on school practice Trainees, Apprentices and Practitioners should always defer to the school policy.

Because of the nature of the pupils in our care, their age, maturity and backgrounds, we endeavour to support pupils in a variety of different ways. We wish to help pupils feel wanted and valued at all times in the school.

Many of our pupils either do not understand, or are still learning to understand the appropriateness of physical contact. Pupils look to us for approval and are testing our responses all the time.

It is often appropriate for pupils to be given some physical contact and comfort, but this must always be offered with the following caution:

1. Unless it is necessary to safeguard the pupil, physical contact should only ever take place when instigated by a pupil.
2. Always ensure there are other adults or responsible pupils around.
3. Never show favour to individual pupils.
4. Never touch a pupil in the area between the waist and mid thigh or near the chest.**
5. Never touch a pupil in a way that could be mis-interpreted as being anything other than friendly appropriate adult-pupil support.

6. When a pupil tries to get closer than appropriate, the message should always be along the lines of, “I like you and I enjoy being with you, but I would rather you held my arm/hand like this”.
7. Some very active pupils sometimes calm down and focus on a lesson when having a gentle stroke e.g. on the back. In this case such a support mechanism must be written into the pupil’s Care Plan.
8. Cuddles with young pupils should be short and side by side.
9. Never kiss a pupil, and do not encourage pupils to kiss adults other than their parents.
10. If a young pupil needs to sit on a member of staff’s knee for longer term support, this must be written into the pupil’s Care Plan.
11. Tickling is not appropriate.
12. For pupils within Foundation Stage, appropriate relationships are still being established, and there is a greater need for a more nurturing environment where it may be more appropriate for closer physical contact during some activities. The above cautions still apply, except that sitting on a knee, or longer cuddles may be more acceptable until the pupil is established and confident in school.
13. Where pupils require help with changing or toileting, the dignity of the pupil must be maintained at all times. Great care must be taken to ensure that all physical contact is specifically and only for the purpose of the operation being carried out. It is highly unlikely that a Trainee or Apprentice would be involved in toileting pupils but this will not be the case for Practitioners, who should follow the setting’s guidelines at all times..

**Exceptions would be made in a physical Intervention using only the Essex Steps Approach with trained staff.

Appropriate touches include:

- Hand shakes
- Shoulder hugs
- Holding hands during outings
- Guiding pupils using “Caring Hands”
- Essex Steps approaches for trained staff only

Pupils’s Response to Touch

Trainees, Apprentices and Practitioners must always be aware that all pupils interpret and react to touch in different ways. Some pupils are over-demonstrative and try to demand a great deal of affection and physical contact, whilst others shy away from or have a dislike of physical contact. We must never assume that a pupil will accept a touch that is meant as a friendly gesture.

There may be pupils in our care who have backgrounds where there has been inappropriate physical contact, or even emotional, physical or sexual abuse. These pupils will be confused about adult-pupil contact and will need very sensitive support and care. Wherever there is physical contact, this must be seriously considered.

The Protection of Pupils

Wherever a Trainee, Apprentice or Practitioner feels uncomfortable about the way in which a pupil is using or abusing physical contact, this must be immediately discussed with a Senior member of school or SCITT staff and recorded on a SCITT safeguarding referral form form and passed to the SCITT and school DSLs, using the appropriate forms. Trainees, Apprentices and Practitioners must be careful not to make a pupil feel rejected if they have been over-demonstrative physically. Refer to No. 5 above.

Where pupils make impulsive emotional approaches such as “I love you”, never reject or let down, but always respond positively by such as, “That must mean that you like me a lot, and I like you as well. I am especially pleased with you when you do your best work…”.

If this type of approach becomes inappropriate, or regular, seek advice from a School Mentor or the DSL.

Emergency Procedures for Physical Intervention

Although the school has a general policy of ‘No Physical Contact’ there may be the occasional time when all other avenues have been explored.

Teachers have a ‘duty of care’ to all pupils. If a pupil is becoming a danger to him/herself or others, we cannot do nothing. Obviously our first line of approach will be verbal, using a variety of de-escalation techniques, interventions and instructions.

Where these have not worked, there may be the need to intervene physically to stop someone putting themselves or others in danger. Examples of these could be:

- A pupil running towards a busy road
- An angry pupil about to hurt someone
- A serious fight
- A pupil damaging school property

Where this might happen the intervention must be using minimal force, and only enough to stop the incident.

Regard must be made to The Education Act 1996 (Circular 10/98). The pupil/s must be made aware of what is going to happen if the situation does not stop.

In an escalating or dangerous situation, reasonable, calm and considered responses could be:

- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding, pushing or pulling away from the incident
- Leading by the arm
- Guiding pupil away with hand in centre of the back

Such an incident must be reported fully in writing to the School Mentor and SCITT at the first opportunity, preferably the same day and never more than 24 hours after the incident.