

Safe Touch

This information provides guidance on appropriate physical contact with young people and vulnerable adults. Physical instruction which involves safe touch is sometimes essential to aid teaching and learning. It may also be appropriate where a child is in distress and needs comforting, when giving first aid or as a positive reinforcement. Some pointers for good practice when dealing with children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- Always take care that any necessary physical contact is welcome and does not give cultural offence, fear of harm or arouse sexual feelings or expectations.
- All touch should have a clear and legitimate purpose.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect, and never touch a child in a way that would be considered indecent. Always put their welfare first.
- Ensure that the intention behind all physical contact is professional and unambiguous.
- When physical contact is made, this should be in response to their needs, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and ability (use your professional judgement at all times, and be sensitive to reactions or feelings.)
- Physical contact which occurs regularly with an individual is likely to raise questions and be open to scrutiny.
- Physical contact should take place in an open environment avoiding private unobserved situations.
- Open communication, with no secrets, should be encouraged.
- Recognise that not everyone is comfortable with physical contact. Always explain why it is necessary and what form it will take.
- Do not indulge in 'rough and tumble play' or allow physical or sexually provocative games.
- Always be prepared to report and explain your actions as a teacher, and accept that all physical contact is open to scrutiny.
- Know who to contact if you have a concern about any inappropriate contact.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the RAD Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, which contains a Code of behaviour and good practice. This should be followed by anyone organising or involved in activities on behalf of the RAD for children or vulnerable adults.

Prepared in consultation with the NSPCC and Education Safeguarding Advisor for Wandsworth.