

Touch Policy

Sept 2021

Version 2

1. Scope

All employees of Expanse Learning College (Hereafter the college)

2. Rationale:

- Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive and good quality care for the children and young people we support.
- Used in context, and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the children and young people we care for.
- Staff often has concerns and fears about the use of touch for various reasons. This policy sets out to clarify the reasons and conditions for touch.

3. Purposes:

Touch is important and may be used routinely for any of the following reasons:

- For **communication**: to reinforce other communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself. In addition, to respond non-verbally or, to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social connections. This is particularly likely to occur during day-to-day greetings (handshakes, hugs etc.).
- For **educational reasons**: as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication for people at early communication levels, and to direct children in educational tasks and essential skills.
- As support or guidance, for example, during transitions between activities and during swimming or P.E. sessions.
- To **play**: play activities naturally include touch. People of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.
- For **therapy**: (e.g. massage, sensory stimulation, physiotherapy, rebound therapy etc.) provided either by the therapist or by another member of staff carrying out a therapy programme or following therapy advice.
- For **emotional reasons**: to communicate affection and warmth, to give reassurance and to communicate security and comfort. To enable the person to develop understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate the.
- To give **medical and nursing care**.
- To give **physical support**: to people who have physical difficulties (e.g. transfers in and out of wheelchairs) and in order to guide people between places, rooms or activities.
- To **protect** children and young people from danger by physically intervening and managing challenging behaviours including the use of restraint, while following the recognised guidelines and policies of the Expanse Learning.

4. Guidelines:

- Staff need to be clear and open about why they are using touch and be able to explain their practice.
- There must be clarity and transparency in issues of touch. Wherever possible, a description and rationale for physical contact and the details of it should be documented.
- The use of touch should be discussed openly and regularly between staff.
- People of any age can want and need physical support / touch. Staff are often concerned about the issue of age-appropriateness; however, the developmental age and emotional and communication needs of the individual are far more important than actual age.
- While gender and cultural factors have relevance in issues of touch, the emotional and communication needs of the individual are due equal consideration.
- As far as possible, the young person involved should consent to any touch given and staff should be sensitive to any verbal and non-verbal communication they give that might indicate that they don't want to be touched. It should always be considered by staff that for touches to provide positive experiences it should be consensual.
- Staff should be sensitive to any changes in the young person's behaviour (e.g. overexcitement or negative reactions) that might indicate the need to reduce or withdraw touch; particularly during play or intensive interaction. Significant changes in behaviour should be clearly recorded.
- The people we support should be given opportunities to touch each other while interacting and playing as would happen naturally for any child or young person. Attention should always be given to ensure that both parties are happy with this.

Staff must be aware of potential hazards in respect of sexual issues:

- staff must be sensitive to the danger of touch being misunderstood and triggering sexual arousal and must be alert to all feedback signals from the person they are working with.
- the young people we support may occasionally inadvertently touch intimate parts of a member of staff's body when there is no sexual intent or understanding. The member of staff should withdraw without giving significant negative feedback in this situation and the incident should be recorded.
- It is never appropriate for staff to touch a young person's intimate body areas except as part of intimate or medical care
- If staff are in any doubt about issues concerning appropriate touch or observe any practice that causes concern, they should discuss this with the Lead Person for Safeguarding.
- The best method of prevention of abuse is transparency, openness and teamwork, and staff should try to monitor and assist each other in carrying out their work.

5. Conclusion:

Touch is necessary and desirable as part of the development, emotional well-being, care, education and quality of life of the people we support.

This policy outlines when this may be needed and gives staff the direction and security for this to occur positively and productively, while still protecting the people in our care.

6. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed annually.

Impact of non-compliance:

Staff:	Disciplinary action, support plan
Student:	Not applicable
Legislation/organisational:	Reputational damage, litigation, statutory and non-regulated compliance. prosecution
Compliance lead:	Pastoral & Safeguarding
Policy Reference:	ELCO-POL-SFG-014
Version:	2
Agreed policy location:	DatabridgeMIS and Company Website
Does the policy require Governor approval?	No

Approval

<p>Prepared by Lorraine Woosey 01/09/2021</p>  <p>Head of Care and Development (Designated Safeguarding Lead)</p>	<p>Approved by Karl Wane 01/09/2021</p>  <p>Director of College</p>	<p>Counter Signatory Tony Brown 01/09/2021</p>  <p>CEO</p>
---	---	--

Version Control

Version	Date	Revision	Review Date
1	01/09/2020	Policy Reviewed	31/08/2021
2	01/09/2021	Policy Reviewed	31/08/2022
3			
4			
5			

Fundamentals of Communication

- enjoying being with another person
- being able to attend to that person
- concentration and attention span
- carrying out sequences of activity with the other person
- taking turns in exchanges of behaviour
- sharing personal space
- using and understanding eye contacts
- using and understanding facial expressions
- using and understanding physical contacts
- using and understanding non-verbal communication
- using vocalisations with meaning
- learning to regulate and control arousal levels

How the policy on Touch relates to the outcomes framework in Every Child Matters

Be Healthy

- Therapeutic involvement with the young people
- Emotional reasons
- Medical and nursing care
- Appropriate staff training on all the above

Stay Safe

- Clear policy and procedures on touch
- Clearly identified Child Safeguarding training for all relevant staff including identified managers at all levels

Enjoy and Achieve

- Positive reinforcement of touch in both physical and communicative skills for young people
- Clearly identified appropriate play that includes positive touch
- Openness and transparency on the issue of touch that gives a positive response to and from the young people in our care

Make a positive contribution

- Positive reaction from our young people in managing difficult situations when touch is required
- Assist the young people to manage change in a positive way, by touch, as they develop physically and mentally

Achieve Economic Well Being

- An awareness by all concerned of the financial stress on the young person and their families in supplying trained staff using touch as an everyday feature for support, communication and connectivity