

# Juniper Hill School

## Positive Touch Policy



*Kindness Enjoyment Achievement*

Written March 2026

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At Juniper Hill School, we believe the use of touch is a vital aspect of our nurturing role and that adult physical contact is not only inevitable but desirable.

Touch not only promotes a child's social and emotional development but is also a highly effective and powerful method of non-verbal communication and is key to the development of healthy relationships.

It can be used to:

- 👤 show acceptance;
- 👤 provide reassurance;
- 👤 demonstrate affection;
- 👤 calm and provide comfort;
- 👤 emphasise the spoken word;
- 👤 provide sensory stimulation;
- 👤 engage in personal care routines;
- 👤 deliver various therapy programmes;
- 👤 offer an alternative to spoken communication;
- 👤 remove a child from danger or keep a child safe.

When appropriate touch is not encouraged children don't learn to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate touch. They miss out on a whole range of valuable touch experiences – friendly, nurturing, reassuring, comforting and healing. We should be instilling a sense of what appropriate touch is.

Research has shown that positive touch is beneficial for early bonding, stress reduction, and state regulation (Harrison, 2001).

For children with developmental delay and disabilities, positive touch has been used effectively to enhance caregiver-child interactions and increase the child's comfort (Pardew & Bunse, 2005).

The Juniper Team recognise physical contact as an important part of child development. They understand physical contact may be communication and recognise the importance and significance of non-verbal communication and respond appropriately. This is always done in a developmentally appropriate way. Should a child refuse the comfort offered through touch, the child's wishes will be respected by the member of staff dealing with the situation.

Therapeutic touch is used in situations where children are distressed. In these situations, research has shown that it would be unkind or increase the child's distress if touch was not employed. When children are very distressed, they often ignore information provided by their senses for example, they may no longer see or no longer hear. When a child is distressed, touch, for some children, can be the only means of maintaining a connection with the child.

Examples of appropriate touch may include the following:

- 🚫 Responses affecting the safety and wellbeing of the child (e.g., holding the hand of a child while crossing the street, using a Team Teach hold when a pupil becomes a danger to themselves or others).
- 🚫 Responses supporting social and emotional development such as hugs lap sitting for younger children, reassuring touches on the shoulder, back rubs.
- 🚫 Touch for health and hygiene, personal care.

Where a pupil requires intimate personal care, staff should ensure that the pupil is comfortable with the staff member attending to their needs. A pupil's privacy and dignity should always be preserved, see Intimate Care Policy.

Examples of inappropriate touch include:

- 🚫 Satisfaction of adult needs rather than that of the pupil;
- 🚫 Coercion or other forms of exploitation of the pupil's lack of knowledge;
- 🚫 Violation of laws against sexual contact between adults and children;
- 🚫 Forced kisses, corporal punishment, slapping, striking or pinching, tickling for prolonged periods, fondling or molestation.

It is vital that staff should always consider the pupil's gender, race, disability, and age when using touch as individuals may be used to experiencing different levels or types of touch. An individual's history may also influence who represents a 'safe' adult to them. In addition, some individuals may be used to differing levels of touch as part of their cultural upbringing.

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that all practice at Juniper Hill School is safe, sensitive and appropriate.