



ROEDEAN MOIRA HOUSE APPROPRIATE TOUCH 2018-19

This policy is for the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Appropriate Touch

There is no area more sensitive and difficult to provide guidance for than the issue of 'touch' with pupils. How touch is initiated, carried out and withdrawn are clearly crucial issues which require careful consideration, appropriate guidance, and the personal judgement of each member of staff. There is a danger that what is written will create a rigid expectation for every event or circumstance in every situation and for every pupil.

This paper is an attempt to help each member of staff to develop their understanding and approach to touching pupils and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Statutory Guidelines
- Roedean Moira House Safeguarding Policy
- Roedean Moira House Risk Assessment Documentation

Main Principles

Roedean Moira House Designated Safeguarding Lead or Principal should be contacted by any adult or pupil who is concerned about any aspect surrounding physical contact of any kind.

- Touch can be a powerful expression of emotion, which needs to be used appropriately within relationships.
- Members of staff should not feel they have to touch pupils. It must always remain a personal decision, in line with the guideline and policies identified above. The rights and needs of the individual pupil and member of staff must be recognised.
- Appropriate touching initiated by pupils should be recognised as a part of normal relationships and consideration should always be given to the feelings of those being touched.
- All pupils have the right to express their feelings about being touched.
- All pupils have the right to be protected from touching by others in ways that constitute physical or sexual abuse, or in any way that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Touching should, wherever possible, take place within the view of other people.
- Pupils should be given opportunities to develop their understanding of touching, based upon the principle that their bodies belong to them and to no one else.
- Pupils touching each other must be recognised as a part of normal relationships - providing such touching involves mutual consent and is within the guidance provided on sexual contact and Safeguarding procedures.
- Touch must take place in such ways as to promote positive attitudes to touching.
- Touch must take place in ways as to respect the privacy and dignity of each pupil.
- Touch must take place in ways that minimise the chance of a pupil misunderstanding a member of staff's intentions or motives.
- In exceptional circumstances, such as those involving grief or loss, it may be appropriate to offer support in the form of an arm around a shoulder. However at all times the wishes and feeling of the pupil must be taken into consideration
- Please be aware that pupils will copy behaviour that they witness and staff should not inappropriately touch other members of staff, as great care needs to be taken to avoid giving pupils mixed messages.
- Staff are requested not to play fight with the pupils (see Behaviour Management Policy).
- Any occurrences about touch that are of concern to either pupil or staff should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Principal.

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Types of Touching

There are six kinds of touching that might take place at Roedean Moira House:

1. Staff touching pupils when carrying out personal care
2. Staff touching pupils to provide comfort or support
3. Staff touching pupils as part of a planned positive handling technique
4. Staff touching pupils when instructing them in a physical or practical lesson.
5. Pupils touching staff in fun or for reasons of affection/security
6. Pupils touching each other

Any touching requires the member of staff to assess a situation, the emotional needs, and past experience of the pupil very quickly. This has to be appropriate to the pupil's age, developmental stage, gender, and key worker guidelines regarding effective behaviour management techniques for that individual.

When a member of staff does initiate touch in order to support or comfort a pupil, great care must be taken to note how she receives this intervention.

How to touch appropriately

Staff need to be aware of what kind of touch is appropriate and what potentially involves pupil's privacy, dignity and what might put the member of staff at risk from having his/her intentions or motives misunderstood.

Some touch could invoke sexual feelings or responses in pupils and staff need to take great care to prevent this occurring. Contact and touch with adolescents and sexually mature pupils must recognise the overtly sexual overtones of certain kinds of touch.

When comforting or supporting a pupil do not touch any parts of her body, other than the hands, arms, shoulder area and top of the back. Touch will rarely be appropriate if it involves any other parts of the body. Care must be taken if holding the lower arms that contact is not being made with either your own, or the pupil's abdomen or genital area.

If a pupil attempts to embrace you, turn to the sideways position to avoid the possible sexual overtones that a 'front-on' cuddle may create. This type of touch should not be encouraged and the pupil supported in expressing her feelings in other more appropriate ways.

An acceptable longer-term touch is to stand beside the pupil and place the palm of your hands on her shoulders, with a grip sufficiently strong to convey your presence and support and to create a level of security for the pupil.

When sitting next to a pupil it is reasonable to allow her to sit close, if this provides the comfort and security needed.

Please be aware of touch as a developmental need. Close contact and physical touch needs to be gently and gradually diminished and the pupil encouraged to develop other ways of seeking emotional support (through the development of emotional literacy for example), and to work towards behaving in a way that is appropriate for their age and the situation.



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Inappropriate Touching

- Staff kissing or patting the head or caressing pupils' faces or necks.
- Any form of physical punishment or holding to restrain that is not recommended in the School's Physical Restraint Policy.
- Touching of a person's body, other than hands/shoulders/arms for any purpose other than personal care.
- Touching, including play fighting with pupils, in 'fun' situations. This means that touching pupils in a playful way, other than in organised school activities, is not permitted.
- It is not acceptable for a pupil to sit on an adult's lap, (or vice versa) or for a pupil to rest their legs on the member of staff's legs or lap.

Related policies and documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents:

Employee Handbook
Staff Handbook
Code of Conduct for Employees
Health Safety Handbook
Boarding Staff Handbook
National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools
ISI Handbook for the Inspection of Schools, Regulatory Requirements
Teachers' Standards
Departmental Handbook
Keeping Children Safe in Education
Safeguarding Policy
Pastoral Care Policy
Complaints Policy (Parents)
Complaints Policy (Pupils)

POLICY REVIEWED BY SCHOOL: May 2018

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NEXT REVIEW: June 2019