



A world in which Autism is celebrated.

Registered Charity No. 1152188

Safeguarding Children and Young People

13. Touch Policy.

At Sunbeams, we have a touch policy. This means that as a member of staff you are able to physically guide, touch or prompt children/young people in appropriate ways at the appropriate times. It is extremely important that you have read and understood this policy to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to hold/touch children/young people and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

Why Do We Use Touch?

We may choose to hold children/young people for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for reassurance. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt children or young people if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc, or to move to a safe place. This is normally carried out by the manager/deputy manager.

How Do We Use Touch?

- **Hugging**

At Sunbeams, we encourage staff who are using touch for reassurance to use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child/ young person's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and the adult's hands on the shoulders limit the ability of the child to turn themselves into you. This can be done either standing or sitting.

- **Hand-Holding**

We recognise that children/young people sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is appropriate. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children/young people, this can become a restraint. Therefore, we encourage the use of the 'school hand-hold'. This is done by the adult holding their arm out, and the child/young person is encouraged to wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child/young person's for a little extra security if it is required. In summary, it is generally deemed appropriate to touch others on the upper arm which would appear to be regarded as a neutral zone in most cultures.

- **Lap-Sitting**

At Sunbeams we actively discourage lap-sitting. Children should be taught to seek comfort/attention through other means, for example the school hand hold or hug. If a child attempts to sit on your lap, explain to them that this is not what we do here, and ask them to sit next to you if it is appropriate.

At times, children may in such crisis or distress that they hold you in a way which is not described as above (for example 'front on' hug/lap-sitting). If this should happen please ensure that you have informed a senior member of staff to protect yourself. You may be asked to make a note of this, this will be in order to record and monitor the amount of times the student is doing this to staff to see whether this is a 'controlling' behaviour, or whether the child is displaying distressed behaviour regularly.

- **Tickling**

Many children enjoy tickling games and although Sunbeams do not wish to disallow this, care should be taken at all times to restrict tickling to hands, arms and back.

Please note that although we have a touch policy and believe that contingent touch can be a positive experience for the children/young people that we care for, this does not mean that you have to touch children/young people, and it should also be realised that some children/young people will not want to be touched. Please respect this.

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the children/young people in their care. Therefore if a child/young person is likely to be at risk from harm if you do not physically intervene in an emergency situation, you must take action. The action you take will be dependent on the dynamic risk assessment that you take at that moment in time.

Parents/carers will be made aware of this policy when their child/young person is admitted to this setting.

Where children and young people need to be moved or escorted due to inappropriate or dangerous behaviour please see Achieving Positive Behaviour Policy (1.13)

If you have any questions or would like a further discussion regarding this policy, please speak to your manager at the earliest available opportunity.

This policy was adopted on	20 th April 2015
Policy updated	April 2026
Date to be reviewed	April 2027
Signed on behalf of the management committee	
Name of Signatory Susan Carr	
Role of Signatory Manager	

Reviewed By	Date
Sue Carr	24/04/2024
Sue Carr	12/07/2025
Sue Carr	27/04/2026