



Touch (Safe and Supportive Physical Contact) Policy

Approved: March 2026

Approved by: Local Advisory Board

Next Review: March 2027

Touch (Safe and Supportive Physical Contact) Policy

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out when and how staff may use supportive, appropriate touch to help pupils feel safe, regulated and ready to learn, and how any restrictive physical intervention (RPI) is governed. It should be read with:

- Behaviour for Relationships Policy – RH 2026
- Positive Handling Policy – 2026 RH
- Safeguarding/Child Protection, Intimate Care, H&S, SEND and Anti-Bullying policies (listed on the policies page).

It implements the DfE's Behaviour in schools (Feb 2024) and Use of reasonable force in schools (effective until 31 March 2026), and we will update to reflect Restrictive interventions in schools from 1 April 2026. [[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk](#)], [[gov.uk](#)], [[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk](#)]

2. Principles

1. Calm, safe, supportive culture: Touch is used proportionately and purposefully within a whole-school behaviour culture that teaches routines, reinforces expectations, and prioritises de-escalation.
2. No “no-touch” policy: It is not illegal to touch a pupil, and at times touch will be proper and necessary (e.g., comfort, guidance, first aid). Schools should not have a no-contact policy.
3. Trauma-informed, needs-led: Supportive touch can help regulation and reduce escalation when used thoughtfully and with empathy.
4. Minimum necessary force, for the shortest time: Where restrictive intervention is required to keep people safe, staff use no more force than is needed, time-limit the intervention, and record it.

3. Definitions

- **Supportive (safe) touch / physical intervention (non-restrictive):** brief, appropriate contact used to reassure, regulate or guide (e.g., light touch on shoulder for attention; holding a young child's hand while walking; comfort if distressed).
- **Restrictive physical intervention (RPI):** any use of reasonable force to control or restrain a pupil to prevent injury, serious damage to property, significant disruption, or an offence. 'Reasonable' means no more than is necessary in the circumstances.

4. Legal and guidance framework

- DfE Behaviour in schools (advice for headteachers and staff, Feb 2024) [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)
- DfE Use of reasonable force in schools (effective to 31 Mar 2026) and DfE Restrictive interventions in schools (effective 1 Apr 2026) [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk\]](#)
- This policy aligns with Rose Hill's Relationship and Behaviour and Positive Handling policies.

5. When supportive touch may be appropriate

Examples include:

- Comforting a distressed pupil with their consent (verbal or non-verbal).
- Guiding a pupil safely in crowded/shared spaces (e.g., light touch at shoulder/elbow; holding a young child's hand while walking as a class). [1](#)
- Curriculum/therapeutic tasks (e.g., modelling PE technique; hand-over-hand/under-hand support for pupils with complex needs, as part of a planned programme).
- First aid/medical support as required.
- Regulation for pupils who benefit from calming, containing touch as agreed in their plan (e.g., hand to shoulder/upper back), taking trauma history and sensory profile into account.

Staff always consider the pupil's wishes, cultural and SEND factors, and the likely perception of the touch by the pupil and others.

6. When restrictive physical intervention (RPI) may be necessary

Staff may use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from: injuring themselves or others; seriously damaging property; committing an offence; or seriously disrupting good order and discipline. This power applies to all staff and those temporarily in charge of pupils. Decisions are based on a dynamic risk assessment weighing the risks of intervening versus not intervening. RPI is not used as punishment or to enforce routine compliance; it is time-limited, proportionate, and recorded in line with the Positive Handling Policy.

In addition, Rose Hill Primary School currently has *four* members of staff who have completed BellsCroft's *Physical De-escalation Training* programme, which covers de-escalation, breakaway/escape skills and (where relevant) restrictive techniques delivered with medical review and risk assessment.

7. Prohibited/unsafe touch

Touch is never used to meet an adult's need, for punishment, or in ways a pupil finds unwanted, uncomfortable or invasive. Contact with genitals, chest/breast or bottom is prohibited except where necessary for agreed Intimate Care procedures.

8. Safeguards and child voice

- Consent & choice: staff seek consent, explain what they are doing, and stop if a pupil refuses or becomes distressed (unless immediate safety requires intervention).
- Open practice: staff avoid closed-door, lone situations for planned work involving touch; visibility is maintained wherever possible.
- Escalation: any marks/injuries, disclosures, or unusual reactions are reported to the DSL and logged in line with safeguarding policy.

9. Alignment with Rose Hill's Relationship and Behaviour Policy

Supportive touch and (rare) RPI are part of a wider behaviour system that:

- Teaches and practices routines, uses consistent classroom expectations (e.g., meet-and-greet, visual prompts) and de-escalation.
- Uses proportionate sanctions and positive recognition within the behaviour curriculum.
- Logs behaviour concerns and serious incidents on the school's online behaviour log per policy.

10. Reasonable adjustments and SEND

- We make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND, including sensory/communication needs, and plan any use of touch in EHCPs/support plans in consultation with parents and professionals.
- Where supportive holding would be re-traumatising or sensory-aversive, alternative regulation strategies (e.g., proprioceptive activities, sensory breaks) are prioritised.

11. Recording, reporting and informing parents

- Supportive touch: not routinely recorded unless part of a plan or where notable (e.g., a pupil objected).

- RPI: recorded promptly using the school's form/system and shared with parents in line with Positive Handling Policy.

12. Training and competence

- All staff are briefed on this policy and the Behaviour for Learning routines.
- Key staff receive training in de-escalation and RPI as required by the Positive Handling Policy; staff only use techniques for which they are trained.
- Staff involved in RPI receive debrief and recovery time; incidents are reflected on to reduce recurrence.

13. Communication with parents/carers

- We explain this policy to parents/carers and, where touch is part of a plan (e.g., regulation, therapy, intimate care, or potential RPI), we agree details in writing.

14. Monitoring and review

- Senior leaders sample records, monitor use of touch/RPI, and report themes to LAB.
- Policy review: annually, and again in summer 2026 to embed DfE's new restrictive interventions guidance.

Appendix A — Staff quick-reference

Do

- Use supportive touch when it clearly meets a pupil's need (reassure, regulate, guide), after checking consent.
- Keep contact brief, minimal and respectful; be alert to how the pupil may perceive it.
- Prioritise preventative strategies and de-escalation first.
- If RPI is necessary, use no more force than needed, for the shortest time, and record and inform.

Don't

- Use touch to meet your own need (comfort, reassurance).
- Use RPI as punishment or routine compliance.
- Ignore a pupil's refusal or distress (unless there is immediate risk).