

Norfolk Institute of Performing Arts

Acceptable Contact Policy

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role.

A 'no touch' approach is impractical for most staff and it may, in some circumstances be proper or necessary to touch a pupil. The school recognises that physical contact is a potentially complex area and the school also fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding students and teachers and for protecting their welfare.

During training and teaching and particularly for the performing arts, some physical contact may occur between staff and pupils. It may be necessary to physically guide a pupil towards becoming aware of correct muscle actions, breathing techniques and postural issues.

When physical contact is made with pupils, this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper and necessary:

- To demonstrate exercises or physical techniques during vocational classes.
- To give first aid/treatment by trained staff.

At the start of each academic year, and for all new pupils, a general question should be asked to check for permission to touch if contact is necessary during classes. Opportunity should be given for any child to refuse permission.

Acceptable Contact Staff Guidance

- If contact during a class needs to be detailed and close to the front of the torso, a relaxed “May I?” should be asked when approaching a child.
- The intention behind all physical contact is professional and unambiguous.
- Any touching that occurs is clear, direct and necessary.
- Any pupil has the right to refuse to have “hands on” tuition at any time.
- Teachers should be especially aware of corrections close to the pelvis and should try to keep to the minimum contact in this area.
- Consideration will be given to the age of the pupil and the vulnerability of the adolescent years.
- If teachers are in close physical proximity of a pupil, it is advised to have several other pupils around, or another adult.
- All physical touching is to enhance the training.
- Always put the welfare of each student first.
- Contact under any circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment.

Practices Never To Be Sanctioned:

- Allowing or engaging in horseplay, physical or sexually provocative games.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a student, even in fun.
- Failing to act on and record any allegations made by a student.

Incidents That Must Be Reported:

If any of the following incidents occur, they should be immediately reported to the directors and the designated safeguarding lead for child protection:

- If you accidentally hurt a student.
- If a student appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a student misunderstands or misinterprets your actions.

Pupils should be encouraged to discuss any worries they may have with any member of staff. Both pupils and staff should feel free to report any concerns to the directors.

One-To-One Situations

Staff should avoid spending time alone with any pupil outside of timetabled classes, save in essential one-to-one situations. The following guidelines are in place to assist staff who may be working with pupils in a one-to-one situation.

With pupils of either sex, especially during adolescent years, the following guidelines apply:

- Leave the door of the room open. If this is not possible, inform the directors of the time and location of the meeting and why it must take place behind closed doors.
- All teaching rooms have windows.
- Keep a clear distance between pupil and staff.
- Invite another pupil to attend if you suspect the situation may become emotionally charged.
- End the conversation if there are signals of emotional dependence.
- Report any ambiguous behaviour by a pupil to the directors and DSL without delay.
- Keep notes of the content of interviews with dates and outcomes.
- Pass the pupil on to another member of staff if any signs from the pupil make the member of staff uneasy.