



Safe Touch and Positive Physical Contact Policy

Legal and Policy Framework

This policy clarifies the operational boundaries for appropriate, non-restrictive physical contact, aligning directly with the **"Other physical contact with pupils"** section of the Department for Education's (DfE) framework, **Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools**, which came into effect on 1 April 2026.

Core Philosophy and the ban on 'no-contact' rules – Group Sessions

Redgate Sports' rejects **"no-contact" policies**. Blanket bans on physical contact are unlawful and prevent staff from delivering necessary pastoral care, reassurance, or defensive protection. Physical touch is acknowledged as a vital element of trauma-informed care.

Permissible categories of touch

Touch is categorised into two distinct areas, neither of which constitutes a restrictive intervention or the use of reasonable force:

- **Nurturing and Reassuring Touch (Pro-Social):** Small, culturally sensitive gestures intended to comfort a student experiencing distress. Examples include a supportive hand on the shoulder, a side-by-side guiding hand, or an open-ended handshake.
- **Instructional and Practical Touch:** Contact required to safely demonstrate a skill, deliver first aid, or support physical health needs. Examples include guiding a hand during a sports coaching session, adjusting safety equipment, or dressing a minor wound.

Operational Protocols for Staff

- **Consent and Profile Check:** Staff must read every student's referral information to determine any specific trauma histories or sensory triggers before implementing physical contact. Where possible, verbal consent should be explicitly requested
- **Anatomical Restrictions:** Any safe physical touch must be limited to neutral body zones—specifically the arms, hands, upper back, and shoulders. Contact

with any sexually sensitive areas is strictly prohibited and constitutes a safeguarding breach

- **Adult Discretion:** Physical contact must never meet the emotional or social needs of the adult; it must always be child-centric and explicitly justified by the student's distress or immediate instructional requirement
- **Reporting Misinterpreted Touch:** If a staff member believes a gesture of safe touch was misinterpreted by a student, parent/carer, or visitor, they must log this immediately with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Lone-Working

Core Principle – 121 Sessions

While Redgate Sports recognises that positive, supportive physical touch can play a role in a child's emotional regulation, this principle is fundamentally altered during 121 Lone-Working scenarios. When a staff member is working completely alone with a student without an adult witness, the priority must shift to maximising the physical safety of the staff member, protecting the student from an uncorroborated trauma trigger, and protecting the professional integrity of the staff member against safeguarding allegations.

Complete Restriction on Comforting Touch

- **No Unsolicited Touch:** Staff members working in a 121 environment must strictly avoid any form of physical comfort, including but not limited to: side-hugs, patting shoulders, holding hands, or placing a hand on a student's arm
- **Verbal-First Regulation:** Emotional distress or dysregulation must be managed entirely through verbal reassurance, supportive tone of voice, calm breathing exercises, and open body language
- **Managing Student-Initiated Contact:** If a student seeks physical comfort (eg: attempting a hug), the lone staff member should gently guide them into an alternative, non-intimate boundary, such as a "high-five," or use a gentle side-step while verbally explaining: *"I can see you are upset, and I am right here to help you, but let's sit down and talk about it."*

Mandatory Proximity and Spatial Boundaries

- **The "L-Shape" Positioning Rule:** Staff should never stand directly face-to-face with a 121 student (which can feel confrontational or cornering) or directly behind them. Staff must position themselves at a 90-degree angle (side-on) to the student. This maintains a trauma-informed posture and allows the staff member a safe exit route if a sudden physical escalation occurs.

- **Line of Sight Mandate:** Any 121 session involving a student with a history of physical escalation or sensory needs will take place in an environment where there is an appropriate line of sight with another adult

Necessary Task-Related Contact (Guiding & Support)

If a lone staff member must touch a student to assist with a specific skill, or a documented medical/sensory need, the following controls are mandatory:

- **Explicit Verbal Consent:** The staff member must ask the student for permission out loud before making contact (e.g., *"I am going to place my hand near yours to show you how to use this racquet. Is that okay?"*).
- **The Hand-Under-Hand Method:** Wherever practical assistance is required, staff must place their hand *under* the child's hand. This gives the child total control and allows them to pull away instantly if they feel uncomfortable, eliminating any perception of coercion.

Mandatory "Unintended Contact" Logging Protocol

Immediate Documentation: If a lone staff member makes physical contact with a student during a 121 session outside of normal everyday coaching interactions, eg:

- accidental (eg: catching a falling child), protective (eg: blocking a sudden blow)—it **must be logged with the Designated Safeguarding Lead**.
- **Protective Audit Trail:** The log must explicitly state the exact context, the reason for the contact, the duration, and the immediate follow-up actions taken. This ensures an immediate, transparent audit trail to protect the employee from delayed or misconstrued allegations.

This policy is recommended for approval by:



Dan Thorp
Redgate Sports Founder

Date: 26/08/26

POLICY REVIEW:

Redgate Sports review all policies every August. Policies may be reviewed and amended more frequently if the need arises. Changes in legislation and guidance or learning from incidents/near miss event may require a review and change to take place.

Policy/ Procedure	Date Last Reviewed	Amendments Made	Date Next Review	Amended By
Restrictive Intervention			26/08/27	

This policy is circulated to all staff annually. The policy is also circulated to all referring partners.

Redgate Sports holds staff training 3 times a year and aspects of this policy are included in every training session.

This Policy has been developed by the Redgate Sports team and approved by the Board.