

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT POLICY

Last updated: November 2023

The purpose and scope of this policy statement

Prima Dance Academies work with children and families as part of its activities. The purpose of this policy statement is to ensure clear guidelines around appropriate and consensual physical contact as part of dance education.

This policy statement applies to anyone working on behalf of Prima Dance Academies including senior managers, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students. This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in the UK.

What is physical contact?

Dance is a physical activity. Dance education can benefit from appropriate physical contact between students and teachers within the classroom setting.

Times in which a teacher may consider using physical contact:

- When they believe that a student may injure themselves
- When demonstrating a concept (for example with a foot or knee)
- When correcting posture and alignment of the back or ribcage
- When a position needs supporting (such as to demonstrate leg height)
- When moving dancers in relation to one another
- When guiding students into a space or activity

Students may also be encouraged to hold hands with each other during exercises, as part of partner-work elements of dance education. Other appropriate contact may include:

- Handshakes
- Hand-holding or shoulder hugs (not face-to-face) for comfort
- Assistance with uniform e.g. socks and shoes or hair ties

Where a child needs assistance with changing or toileting great care must be taken so that the child is assisted in the way that involves the least physical contact. Parents/guardians are encouraged to practice changing with difficult items of clothing (leotards/tights) with their child at home. All students must be toilet-trained and be able to use a toilet unaided.

Aims

Prima Dance Academies aim to equip teachers with the tools to demonstrate such concepts through vocabulary, self-demonstration or encouragement of a student's self-exploration. In some instances, physical contact may be necessary in addition to this.

The guiding principle when making any physical contact with a student is to ensure it is necessary, that the student has given their consent, and that the student is comfortable.

Prima Dance Academies recognise responsibility for the safeguarding and welfare of both students and teachers.

Code of conduct

It is important to contextualise physical contact with a student. Staff will assess that the following parameters are considered, before instigating contact:

- ensuring that other children or another adult is present
- ensuring that no favour is shown to individual children
- that comforting contact only occurs with a specific reason until the child is calm (e.g. holding a hand until a child has stopped crying)

If a teacher is to make physical contact with a student for educational purposes, the following procedure must take place. Prima Dance Academies will train all teachers, volunteers and support staff in this methodology.

1. The teacher will assess what is appropriate in relation to the individual student. They will also assess location and the needs of others within the classroom
2. The teacher will explain and self-demonstrate their teaching point, clearly outlining the means of and/or benefit of correct placement, how to prevent injury etc.
3. The teacher will gain consent from the student before any contact is made
4. All teachers will act with sensitivity and care, without using force
5. Even if consent is given by a student one occasion, it should not be assumed that it is given for all cases and consent should always be sought

This code of conduct will be available to all staff and volunteers, for full transparency. All staff are subject to an up-to-date Enhanced DBS certificate.

Emergency procedures

Teachers have a duty of care to all students. When a student is in danger to themselves or may cause danger to others a teacher must intervene. The primary means of this intervention is verbal. In the event that a student can only be prevented from injuring themselves through immediate physical contact (e.g. preventing a student from losing their

balance), then the teacher may do so, recognising that it will not have been possible to ask for consent. In such circumstances, the teacher should make sure the student is comfortable afterwards. This principle also applies in the event that first aid is required, taking into account the standard parameters of (paediatric) first aid.

Informing staff

We recognise that physical contact can cause distress for certain individuals. All students have a right to learn in a safe and comfortable environment. Everyone has a role to play in enacting this. Teaching staff and assistants will be made aware of how individual needs can be met. Any individual with specific needs will have their details made known to all staff with whom they come into contact.

All teachers and assistants are encouraged to discuss with the staff team if they have questions or are not clear on any part of these guidelines.

All parents and guardians will be signposted to this policy as part of student registration.

We will review the plan we have developed to address appropriate physical contact at regular intervals, in order to ensure best possible practices.

Contact details

For any advice in relation to this policy, in the event that you are concerned about any physical contact, or if you have any doubt or uncertainties, do not hesitate to contact us at info@prima.dance.

This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding Policy.

We are committed to reviewing our policy regularly. This policy was last reviewed in November 2023.