

# SESMA Martial Arts UK

Developing Confidence & Self Esteem since 1989

## Touch Policy

A Touch Policy means that members of staff can physically guide, touch or prompt children in appropriate ways at the appropriate times. It is extremely important that staff and instructors read and understand the policy to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to hold/touch children and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

### **Why do we touch?**

Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive and good quality care for the children in our care. Used in context, and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions and enhances children's emotional and physical well being.

At our SESMA Martial Arts, we may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so as a form of comfort. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt children if they require personal care, assistance with techniques, dressing or in very rare occasions as an act of physical intervention ( DFE guidance - Use of Reasonable Force).

### **How do we touch?**

#### **Hugging**

Staff who are using touch for comfort are encouraged to use a "school hug". This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child'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 the adult. This can be done either standing or sitting.

#### **Hand holding:**

Children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is acceptable if the hand holding is requested by the child or if the adult holds out their hand and it is willingly taken by the child. If hand holding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children, this can become a restraint. Therefore, the use of the "school hand hold" is encouraged. This is done by the adult holding their arm out and the child is encouraged to wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child's for a little extra security if it is required.

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:**

Lap-Sitting is discouraged. If a child attempts to sit on an adult's lap, we explain to them that this is not what we do at SESMA Martial Arts and ask them to sit next to an adult if it is appropriate. At our martial arts school we do recognise that sometimes when a child is in a state of distress sitting on a chair or offering an arm for reassurance is not enough, and that they may need to be comforted through greater physical contact.

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If a child needs reassurance and comfort and it is felt that sitting on an adult's lap is the most appropriate way to comfort a child quickly then we will always try and do so in the presence of another adult, even if it involves calling out to draw attention to yourself. If a child needs comfort or support when you are away from other adults it is recommended that the incident is reported to another staff member as soon as possible to ensure protection of both the child and adult involved. This is in line with safeguarding procedures.

### Adults in our martial arts school will:

- Respect an individual's personal and intimate space
- Have an understanding that not all people feel comfortable about physical contact and that they have a right to have their feelings respected
- Acknowledge children's learning both verbally and through touch, where appropriate (e.g. hand on the shoulder, handshake, pat on the back, high five, or light brief touch on the hand)
- Welcome parents and visitors to the SESMA Martial Arts both verbally and if appropriate with a handshake or light touch
- Model appropriate behaviour, through greeting people with a handshake and acknowledging achievements of other adults through hand on the shoulder, handshake, pat on back
- Reward appropriate behaviour e.g. asking children to pat themselves on the back or shake hands
- Approach distressed children from the side by offering to sit with them or by offering to hold their hand or putting an arm around them
- Ensure that positive touch takes place appropriately, always in public, and sometimes with verbal explanation (e.g. "You look upset would you like to put your hand in mine?")
- Follow the SESMA related policies e.g. Physical intervention, Behaviour, Safeguarding.

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### **Pupils in our martial arts school will be taught to:**

- Respect an individual's personal and intimate space
- Comfort distressed children with their agreement by offering to sit with them and by offering to hold their hand or put their arm around them
- Use a setting specific acknowledgement of achievement e.g. give themselves a pat on the back
- Discuss their feelings and ask for support from others if they need it
- Understand the importance of appropriate touch to their wellbeing
- Respond appropriately when others ask them not to touch them and seek appropriate adult help if necessary
- Feel confident about asking others not to touch them
- Discuss and develop their understanding of positive and appropriate touch when working with other children
- Distinguish positive and appropriate touch using age-appropriate supporting materials.