

1. Physical Contact Policy

1.1 Policy Statement

This organisation is committed to providing a **safe, inclusive, and supportive environment** for all children and young people. We recognise that physical contact is often a necessary and appropriate part of gymnastics coaching.

All physical contact will be carried out in a way that prioritises the **safety, dignity, wellbeing, and individual needs** of each child.

We are committed to ensuring that all contact is **appropriate, proportionate, and respectful**, and that children feel safe, understood, and supported at all times.

1.2 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide clear guidance on **appropriate physical contact** in a gymnastics setting
- Safeguard children and young people from harm
- Protect staff from misunderstandings or allegations
- Promote consistent and professional practice across the organisation

This policy should be read alongside the organisation's **Physical Intervention (Restraint) Policy**, which covers situations involving risk and restrictive intervention.

1.3 Principles

All physical contact must:

- Be **necessary** for the child's safety, development, or wellbeing
- Be **proportionate** to the situation
- Be the **least intrusive option available**
- Be carried out in an **open and transparent manner**
- Respect the child's **dignity, personal space, and individual needs**

Staff must always act in a way that would be considered appropriate by a **reasonable and informed observer**.

1.4 When Physical Contact is Appropriate

In a gymnastics setting, appropriate physical contact may include:

- **Spotting** to support safe participation and prevent injury
- **Guiding or supporting movement** to assist skill development
- **Providing physical support** where a child requires assistance
- **Responding to a child in distress**, for example offering reassurance

All contact must be relevant to the activity and carried out in a safe and professional manner.

1.5 Good Practice for Physical Contact

Staff will:

- Clearly **explain the reason for contact** before it happens, where possible
- Use **age-appropriate and accessible language**
- Be mindful of the child's **verbal and non-verbal responses**
- Adapt their approach based on the child's **comfort and understanding**
- Ensure contact takes place in an **open environment**, visible to others
- Avoid unnecessary one-to-one situations where possible

1.6 Supporting Children with SEND

We recognise that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may experience physical contact differently.

Staff will:

- Take reasonable steps to **understand each child's individual needs and preferences**
- Be aware of **sensory sensitivities or aversions to touch**
- Adapt communication and approach accordingly
- Use alternatives to physical contact where appropriate
- Follow any **individual support or behaviour plans**

Staff will take additional care to ensure that contact is **predictable, explained, and supportive**, reducing the risk of distress.

1.7 Inappropriate Physical Contact

Physical contact must never:

- Be unnecessary, excessive, or unrelated to the activity
- Be used as a form of punishment or control
- Cause pain, distress, or embarrassment where avoidable

- Involve contact with intimate areas of the body (except in an emergency)
- Be secretive or take place outside of appropriate supervision
- Be influenced by personal feelings rather than professional judgement

Any concerns about inappropriate contact must be reported in line with safeguarding procedures.

1.8 Children's Voice and Choice

Where appropriate, children and young people will be:

- Encouraged to **express how they feel about physical contact**
- Supported to understand why contact may be necessary
- Reassured that their feelings and boundaries are respected

Staff will always take a child's response seriously and adjust their approach where it is safe to do so.

1.9 Relationship to Physical Intervention (Restraint)

This policy relates to **everyday, appropriate physical contact**.

Any use of force to restrict a child's movement or manage risk is covered under the organisation's **Physical Intervention (Restraint) Policy**.

1.10 Training and Staff Responsibilities

All staff will receive appropriate training in:

- Safeguarding and child protection
- Professional boundaries and appropriate conduct
- Behaviour management and de-escalation
- Awareness of SEND and inclusive practice

Staff are responsible for ensuring their practice is **safe, consistent, and in line with this policy** at all times.

1.11 Monitoring and Review

Practice will be monitored by management to ensure that physical contact remains appropriate and consistent across the organisation.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required.

Version	Date Approved	Approved By	Next Review
1.0	03/08/2021	Louise Combellack - Manager	Aug 2022
1.0	10/08/2022	Louise Combellack – Manager	Aug 2023
1.0	01/06/2023	Louise Combellack – Manager	June 2024
1.0	06/06/2024	Louise Combellack – Manager	June 2025
1.0	10/06/2025	Louise Combellack – Manager	June 2026

Version	Date Approved	Summary of Changes
2.0	10/04/2026	<i>Separating out all of information regarding restraint to the physical intervention policy.</i> <i>Clear guidance given on appropriate contact and inappropriate contact.</i> <i>More information on consent and communication included</i> <i>SEND Section included</i>

Signed: *Louise Combellack* Senior Manager

Date: 10/04/2026