



**Performing Arts Training
Physical Touch Policy**

Introduction

Dancing is a physical skill, and in order to help facilitate students' learning, at times physical contact between teacher and student is necessary. This may take the form of physical

correction/guidance, or assistance with partnering in dance. Touch may also be necessary when fitting costumes for performances, and will always be limited to helping students with things they cannot do themselves, for example doing up costumes that have fastenings in the back. If first aid is needed, only essential physical touch will take place.

In all cases, teachers will treat any physical contact with due sensitivity and care, and will always follow the rules set out in this policy and in the Safeguarding Policy, which are there to protect everyone.

Students are encouraged to speak to their teacher or a Director they feel comfortable with, if for any reason they are uncomfortable with corrections.

Physical contact at WLSD

All physical contact is made for the sole benefit of the student's learning, and should be made with caution and care. Students should feel safe and empowered to say 'no' to any physical correction they do not feel comfortable with. All physical contact is made according to a clear framework and set of guidelines, with awareness and sensitivity.

- Students are approached gently and from within their eyeline (this includes eyeline in the mirror).
- Students are never surprised with a physical correction.
- Touch is used as a guide - students will never be touched aggressively.
- Sometimes students directly ask for a specific physical correction. Teachers only agree to this if the correction is deemed useful and safe for the dancer, i.e. teachers will not forcibly stretch students, even if they ask.
- Physical correction does not take place in any sensitive parts of the body: the buttocks, chest area, genitalia or anywhere close to genitalia. The face, neck and head are also sensitive areas, therefore staff caution is advised and active consent is sought. During pas de deux rehearsals, students and teachers practise safe touch around the waist and pelvis, which are two major areas of contact necessary to learn classical partnering.
- Teachers take into account any injury that the young person may be working with, and exercise caution and care while correcting.
- Physical corrections are used to guide the student and are carried out only within their physical range, i.e. teachers do not force students' bodies into extreme positions with the aim of increasing flexibility or turnout.
- Teachers create space and possibility for the student to either say 'no' to being touched or to say 'stop' when the correction is happening.
- If teachers give a physical correction and realise that something isn't right or the correction hasn't gone the way they expected, or they accidentally touch the student in a different place to what was intended, they will stop, apologise, check that the student is OK, and immediately contact the DSL.
- Occasionally, it may be appropriate for staff members to offer physical comfort to a child who is in distress; this will always be with the child's consent and with appropriate touch - i.e. a reassuring touch to the shoulder or a one-armed hug.
- Dance, in particular, can mean that students work in partners or in groups and therefore physical contact may take place between students. Staff are mindful of this and discuss and demonstrate the correct way of partnering or using physical contact in dance that is appropriate and professional. Staff ensure that all students understand what will happen and consent to physical contact with each other.

Empowering students and maintaining awareness of needs

It is the staff's responsibility as trusted adults to create an environment in which young dancers feel safe and empowered. Members of staff are required to reiterate wherever possible that students have agency over their bodies and that they are encouraged to clearly articulate their boundaries.

Members of staff retain an awareness of each student's individual circumstances and set of needs, and act accordingly. This could relate to a range of specific needs, for example if a student is neurodivergent.

The students go through many changes as they grow, and may feel very sensitive about their bodies as they experience puberty. Care is be taken to physically correct the students sensitively, and never in a way that could be interpreted as negativity or judgement towards their ever-changing bodies.

Staff remind students whenever possible that it is important that they use their voices and feel confident to speak out if they are ever uncomfortable when being corrected. Students are encouraged to let a teacher know immediately if they ever feel unexpected discomfort or pain during a physical correction or during partnering. Students should understand that this is healthy, respectful and useful communication with a teacher - which will help to guide and inform their practice. Students are regularly reminded that they must come forward and tell a teacher/Director or someone they trust, if they feel uncomfortable.

Revised date: September 2026
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