



Encompass Dance Academy

Safe Touch Policy

This policy guidance on safe touch and physical contact should be read alongside the Encompass Dance Academy safeguarding children and safeguarding adults policies. Any deliberate harm to children, young people, or adults will be treated as gross misconduct. This policy statement applies to anyone working on behalf of Encompass Dance Academy, including managers, paid staff, examiners, volunteers, sessional workers, and students. They must abide by this guidance, all other appropriate safeguarding policies, and relevant legislation, including the Children Act 1989, 2004, the Care Act 2014, and the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Staff must recognize the power imbalance between children and adults and ensure that their authority is never misused. Sexual relationships with a child under the age of 18 where the adult is in a position of trust are an offence, even if it is a consensual post-16 relationship.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all physical contact between instructors and students is conducted in a professional and safe manner that prioritizes the well-being and comfort of every individual. As professionals, we all have a safeguarding duty to our students. Physical contact may be required for administering first aid, comforting a distressed child, or making technical corrections to support safe dance practice. Appropriate professional touch is often an essential part of teaching and can be beneficial as a kinaesthetic teaching strategy. It is essential that dance teachers have a clear and legitimate purpose for any physical contact so as not to cause distress and to always adhere to safeguarding policies.

Principles of Safe Touch

- All physical contact should be appropriate to the context of dance instruction and focused solely on correcting alignment, posture, or technique.
- Instructors must seek consent before initiating any physical contact by asking the student's permission (e.g., "May I adjust your arm position?"), except in emergency situations.
- Students have the right to refuse physical corrections at any time without explanation or penalty.
- Any touch should be clear, brief, and necessary, avoiding sensitive areas.
- Alternative methods such as verbal instructions, visual demonstrations, and self-adjustments should be used whenever possible.
- Instructors should be mindful of cultural and personal preferences regarding physical contact and respect individual comfort levels.

Guidelines for Instructors

- Always explain the reason for any physical correction before making contact.
- Use light touch and avoid prolonged or excessive contact.
- Be aware of student reactions and immediately stop contact if a student appears uncomfortable.
- Encourage students to communicate openly about their comfort level regarding physical corrections.
- Maintain professional boundaries and refrain from unnecessary or personal physical contact.
- When working with students, instructors should demonstrate corrections first and allow students to attempt self-adjustments before offering physical guidance.
- Avoid private situations when physical touch is required and conduct corrections in an open or observable space.
- Use the student's name to make a connection, reinforcing that corrections are directed at the individual and not just their body.

Student and Parent Rights

- Students (or parents/guardians of minors) may opt out of physical corrections at any time.
- Students should feel comfortable discussing any concerns with their instructor or school management.
- Reports of inappropriate contact will be taken seriously and handled in accordance with school policies and applicable laws.
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to discuss any preferences or concerns regarding physical touch with instructors to ensure student comfort and confidence.
- Alternative class options should be provided for students who prefer not to participate in partner or group exercises involving physical touch.

Reporting Concerns

Any student, parent, or staff member who feels that touch has been inappropriate should report their concerns to a Designated Safeguarding Lead. Reports will be handled with confidentiality, professionalism, and prompt action. A clear escalation process will be in place to ensure that concerns are addressed properly and transparently. It is important to recognize that an unusual or unexpected reaction to professional touch may indicate abuse in another area of a child's life. Any such observations should be documented and reported in line with safeguarding policies.

If a child discloses an instance of inappropriate, unsafe, or illegal touch, or if a staff member, contractor, or volunteer witnesses unsafe, inappropriate, or illegal touch, it is their duty to report this information.

Conclusion

This policy is designed to promote a safe and respectful learning environment for all. Instructors, students, and parents are encouraged to review and adhere to these guidelines to ensure a positive experience at Encompass Dance Academy. The designated safeguarding lead for Encompass Dance Academy is Olivia Timbey. Any concerns or queries should be raised with them.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

For questions or further clarification, please contact:

Encompass Dance Academy

Unit 2, Burslem Business Park, Reginald Street, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 1DU

missolivia@encompassdance.co.uk

07979 394150

This policy is signed by:



Date: 01/02/2025

