

Theatrix UK

Physical Contact & Appropriate Touch Procedure

Effective from: September 2026

Date Adopted: 23rd August 2026 **Date of last review:** 23rd August 2026

To be reviewed on/before: 23rd August 2027

Theatrix UK recognises that appropriate physical contact can be a normal and sometimes necessary part of working with children in **drama, dance and musical theatre**.

Physical contact may occasionally be required to support a child's safety, demonstrate technique, position a movement, provide first aid or offer appropriate reassurance.

However, all physical contact must be **appropriate, necessary, proportionate, professional and respectful of the child's personal boundaries**.

This procedure applies to all Theatrix UK staff, teachers, assistants, volunteers, chaperones and other adults working on behalf of Theatrix UK.

1. Our Approach

The safety, dignity and comfort of the child must always come first.

Physical contact should:

- Have a clear and appropriate purpose;
- Be suitable for the child's age and the activity;
- Be limited to what is necessary;
- Take place openly wherever possible;
- Respect the child's wishes and personal boundaries;
- Never be secretive or unnecessary; and
- Always comply with Theatrix UK's safeguarding procedures.

Staff should never assume that a child is comfortable with physical contact simply because they have been comfortable with it previously.

2. Consent & Communication

Before making physical contact to assist with an activity, staff should explain what they would like to do and, where appropriate, **ask the child's permission**.

For example:

"Is it okay if I move your arm slightly to show you the position?"

If a child says **no**, moves away, appears uncomfortable or otherwise indicates that they do not want to be touched, this should be respected wherever it is safe to do so.

Staff should use verbal instructions or demonstrations as an alternative wherever possible.

Children should be encouraged to understand that they are allowed to communicate when they are uncomfortable with physical contact.

3. Physical Contact During Dance

Physical contact may occasionally be necessary when teaching dance to:

- Demonstrate positioning;
- Correct alignment;
- Assist with posture;
- Support balance;
- Demonstrate partner work;
- Prevent injury; or
- Safely teach a movement.

Where possible, teachers should **demonstrate first and use verbal corrections before physical corrections.**

If physical correction is required, the teacher should explain what they are going to do.

Contact should be brief and limited to the area necessary to make the correction.

Particular care should be taken around areas of the body that could reasonably be considered private or sensitive.

4. Drama & Musical Theatre Activities

Some drama and musical theatre activities naturally involve physical interaction between performers.

This could include:

- Holding hands;
- Partner work;
- Group movement;
- Stage combat exercises;
- Choreography; • Character interaction; or
- Staged physical contact.

Children should be told what an activity involves before participating.

Where physical contact forms part of a scene or choreography, staff should ensure that the contact is **age appropriate, rehearsed, controlled and comfortable for everyone involved.**

Children should never be pressured into physical contact that makes them uncomfortable.

5. Choreography & Partner Work

Where choreography involves children touching or supporting one another, staff should teach appropriate boundaries.

Children should understand:

- Where they are expected to place their hands;
- What movement is going to happen;
- How to perform it safely;
- That they should communicate if something feels uncomfortable; and
- That inappropriate or unnecessary touching is not acceptable.

Any lifts or physically demanding partner work must only be introduced where staff are satisfied that it can be performed safely.

6. Comforting a Child

There may be occasions when a child is upset and seeks physical reassurance.

Appropriate contact might include:

- A brief hug initiated or clearly welcomed by the child;
- Holding a child's hand;
- A hand on the shoulder; or
- Sitting nearby and offering reassurance.

Staff should respond naturally but professionally.

Where possible, physical reassurance should take place **openly and in view of other people**.

Staff should be particularly mindful of the child's age, individual needs and response to physical contact.

7. First Aid & Emergencies

Physical contact may be necessary when:

- Providing first aid;
- Responding to an injury;
- Preventing a child from falling;
- Moving a child away from immediate danger; or
- Responding to another emergency.

Where possible, staff should explain what they are doing before touching the child.

In an immediate emergency, staff may take reasonable action necessary to protect the child or another person from harm.

Any significant incident should be recorded in accordance with Theatrix UK's First Aid and Emergency Procedures.

8. Toileting & Intimate Care

Theatrix UK staff **do not provide intimate toileting care**.

Staff will not:

- Wipe a child after using the toilet;
- Change nappies or pull-ups;

- Change soiled underwear;
- Assist with intimate cleaning; or
- Provide unnecessary assistance with dressing or undressing.

Where a preschool child requires this assistance, their parent/carer must provide it.

This should be read alongside the **Theatrix UK Preschool Toileting Procedure**.

9. Costumes, Microphones & Show Preparation

During performances and show weeks, staff may occasionally need to assist children with:

- Costumes;
- Costume fastenings;
- Hair;
- Headpieces;
- Props;
- Radio microphones or microphone packs; or
- Other performance equipment.

Children should be encouraged to manage independently wherever possible.

Where assistance is necessary, staff should:

- Explain what they need to do;
- Ask permission where appropriate;
- Keep assistance brief and professional;
- Maintain the child's privacy;
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact; and
- Wherever possible, provide assistance in an open or appropriately supervised environment.

Staff must follow Theatrix UK's backstage and safeguarding procedures at all times.

10. Physical Contact Between Students

Children should also be encouraged to respect each other's personal space and boundaries.

Unwanted physical contact such as:

- Pushing;
- Hitting;
- Kicking;
- Inappropriate touching;
- Deliberately invading another child's personal space; or
- Continuing physical contact after another child has asked them to stop will be addressed by staff.

Children should be encouraged to tell a trusted adult if another person makes them feel uncomfortable.

11. Contact That Is Not Appropriate

Staff must never:

- Use physical contact as punishment;
- Force affection from a child;
- Initiate unnecessary intimate contact;
- Engage in physical contact that could reasonably be considered sexual or inappropriate;
- Encourage children to keep physical contact secret;
- Ignore a child's request for physical contact to stop where it is safe to do so;
- Engage in rough or inappropriate play with children; or
- Use physical contact in a way that could reasonably cause pain, humiliation or distress.

12. Physical Intervention for Safety

There may be exceptional circumstances where reasonable physical intervention is necessary to prevent:

- A child seriously injuring themselves; • A child seriously injuring another person;
or
- An immediate and significant safety risk.

Physical intervention should only be used when necessary and should be **reasonable and proportionate to the immediate risk**.

It should never be used as punishment or simply to gain compliance.

Any significant physical intervention must be reported to the Principal/Designated Safeguarding Lead and appropriately recorded. Parents/carers should be informed where appropriate.

13. One-to-One Situations

Staff should avoid placing themselves in situations where physical contact with a child takes place unnecessarily out of sight of others.

Where one-to-one teaching occurs, Theatrix UK's safeguarding arrangements for one-to-one sessions must be followed.

Professional boundaries apply regardless of whether other adults are present.

14. Reporting Concerns

If a child, parent/carer or member of staff is uncomfortable about physical contact that has taken place, they should report the concern to the **Principal or Designated Safeguarding Lead**.

Any allegation or concern regarding inappropriate physical contact by an adult must be **taken seriously and managed in accordance with Theatrix UK's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**.

Staff should not attempt to investigate safeguarding allegations themselves.

15. Staff Responsibilities

All staff, teachers, assistants, volunteers and chaperones must:

- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- Consider whether physical contact is genuinely necessary;
- Explain physical corrections before making them;
- Seek the child's agreement where appropriate;
- Respect verbal and non-verbal signs that a child is uncomfortable;
- Use verbal instruction and demonstration wherever possible;
- Ensure contact is appropriate to the activity;
- Report safeguarding concerns immediately; and
- Remember that the child's safety, dignity and comfort come first.

16. Our Principle

Theatrix UK recognises that theatre and dance can naturally involve physical interaction. Our aim is not to remove appropriate contact from teaching, but to ensure it is always handled **safely, respectfully and professionally**.

Our staff should follow a simple principle:

Explain first.

Ask where appropriate.

Use the minimum contact necessary.

Respect the child's boundaries.

Keep contact professional and observable.

Stop if the child is uncomfortable.

Report anything that causes concern.

Policy Review: This procedure will be reviewed regularly and updated when necessary.

This procedure should be read alongside the **Theatrix UK Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Preschool Toileting Procedure, EDI Procedure, Performance & Show Procedure and Staff Emergency Procedure**.

Theatrix UK – Drama, Musical Theatre & Creative Opportunities for Little Ones