

ISAAC-CLARKE ACADEMY OF DANCE

Acceptable Contact Policy - Updated 1st September 2022

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for teaching staff to have physical contact with students, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. A 'no touch' approach is impractical for most staff and it may, in some circumstances be proper or necessary to touch a student. Isaac-Clarke Academy of Dance recognises that physical contact is a potentially complex area and fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding students and teachers and for protecting their welfare.

When physical contact is made with students this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

Examples of where touching a student might be proper and necessary:

- Holding the hand of a student at the front/back of the line to guide them
- When comforting a distressed student
- When a student is being congratulated or praised
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises or physical techniques during classes
- To give first aid/medical investigation/treatment by first aid trained staff.

Teaching staff should avoid spending time alone with any student save in essential one-to one circumstance. The following guidelines are in place to assist staff who may be working with students in a one-to-one situation:

- Leave the door of the room open - all teaching rooms have windows.
- Keep a clear distance between student and staff.
- Invite another pupil to attend if you suspect the situation may become emotionally charged.
- End the conversation if there are signals of emotional dependence.
- Report any ambiguous behaviour by a student to the Principal without delay.
- Keep notes of the content of interviews with dates and outcomes.

During training and teaching and particularly for the performing arts, some physical contact may occur between teaching staff and students. It may be necessary to physically guide a student towards becoming aware of correct muscle actions, breathing techniques and postural issues.

“Acceptable Contact” Guidelines

At the start of each term, and for all new students, a general question should be asked to check for permission to touch if contact is necessary during classes. A relaxed “May I?” should be asked when approaching a students and opportunity should be given for any student to refuse permission.

- The intention behind all physical contact is professional and unambiguous.
- Any touching that occurs is clear, direct and necessary.
- Any student has the right to refuse to have “hands on” tuition at any time.
- Teachers should be especially aware of corrections close to the pelvis and should try to keep to the minimum contact in this area.
- Consideration will be given to the age of the student and the vulnerability of the adolescent years.
- If teachers are in close physical proximity of a student, it is advised to have several other students around, or another adult.
- All physical touching is to enhance the training.
- Always put the welfare of each student first