

Physical Contact Policy for Teachers at SLDS

Teaching dance is a physical activity and a teacher will sometimes need to make physical contact with a student for the following reasons:

1. To show an idea (sometimes it is more effective to demonstrate on a student than oneself)
2. To correct the student's posture / placement
3. To help to guide the student to another position in the dance studio
4. To help a student to 'feel' a rhythm, or movement action (holding hands skipping for example)
5. To dance with the student in a partnership, or as part of a close group formation
6. To help to push student further, physically (to improve flexibility for example)
7. To help to console a child who is distressed (especially very young children)

This physical contact can be extremely effective and so at South London Dance School we continue to use it as needed, but strictly under the following guidelines:

- Teachers will use verbal instruction / feedback and, where possible, personal demonstration, before using physical contact. Next, standing closer to a student and gesturing to help with the explanation and so can be enough, meaning physical contact is not always necessary.
- Teachers will explain why and how they would like to correct the student's position and seek permission of the student before making any physical contact. At all times, teachers will remain sensitive to the student's wishes and put their welfare first.
- Teachers will not touch a student in any area of the body which could be considered 'sensitive' e.g. inner thighs, gluts, top of hamstring, chest, hip flexor etc.
- Where possible, teachers will avoid using physical contact in the situation of a one-to-one lesson with a student, unless another adult is present in the same studio.
- If, in order to aid the student's progression, a teacher needs to physically push a student into a deeper stretch position for example, or adjust the students position within a stretch, then the student must be happy for them to do so and at all times there must be an open line of

conversation with reference to pain level and whether or not the student wishes to continue with the stretch. Before doing this type of work, teachers must be fully informed about the possible risks of this type of physical intervention and have the necessary knowledge to ensure the practice is as safe as possible. Students must be fully warmed up before stretching any stretching exercises.

- If a child is distressed and the teacher thinks that physical contact might be helpful in consoling them, then the teacher should ask the child to ascertain whether or not they would like physical contact from them and that any physical contact given is appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Teachers should always be aware of the possibility that some students might consent to above moments of physical contact because they feel it is the 'right response as a good dance student', when in reality, they do not feel comfortable about it. Having a group conversation once a term and encouraging all students in the class to participate, supported by one another, may help to reveal any issues such as this.
- Teachers encourage their students to report any concerns about their own approach as well as the approach of other members of the teaching team.
- If a teacher has any questions or concerns about how to safely give physical feedback to their students then they should request a meeting with the Principal at the earliest opportunity to discuss suitable approaches.

Use of physical feedback in our classes is outlined in our Terms and Conditions with the below point *** to which parents / carers / students have agreed upon joining the school. This policy is also available for parents / carers / students upon request.

**** 'You understand and agree that teachers at SLDS may use tactile feedback and instruction with students to support verbal feedback and instruction where appropriate.'*