ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL

SETTING THE STANDARD

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT IN DANCE POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2026

1. Introduction

The Royal Ballet School (the School) recognises that teaching classical ballet is a physical activity and appropriate physical contact between students and teachers in class is essential to ballet training in order to help students achieve their best and to fulfil their potential.

Kinaesthetic feedback, through touch and physical contact between teacher and student, is a valuable instructional tool in dance education, particularly in ballet, where precision, alignment, and refined movement quality are essential. When used appropriately, with sensitivity and empathy, it offers students a finely tuned, high-quality learning experience that supports both their technical development and overall proprioception.

In ballet training, kinaesthetic feedback allows students to physically experience corrections that may be difficult to grasp through verbal instruction alone. This helps them internalise movement patterns more effectively, deepening body awareness and accelerating the acquisition of complex technical skills, something many students find highly beneficial to their progress.

In addition to kinaesthetic feedback, the School recognises and accepts that physical contact will also take place in pas de deux classes, where teachers demonstrate with students in ways that may involve supporting and lifting, and in choreographic teaching, where teachers demonstrate positions and movements to the students by moving parts of the students' bodies and by moving dancers in relation to each other.

The School upholds the autonomy of students to withhold or withdraw consent to physical contact, including kinaesthetic feedback. The school acknowledges that neurodivergent students or students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs may experience challenges with certain forms of physical contact. The School will engage with students on a case-by-case basis in order to consider reasonable adjustments to physical contact in dance.

This policy aims to ensure that kinaesthetic feedback and other forms of physical contact are conducted in a manner that maximises the pedagogical benefit and minimises the potential for harm, unintentional discomfort, or the normalisation of inappropriate forms of touch. It sets out the conditions under which kinaesthetic feedback and other forms of physical contact may be given and provides guidelines for ensuring this is done appropriately and safely.

2. Kinaesthetic feedback

Kinaesthetic feedback is feedback that students feel rather than see or hear. It is usually given during class, whereby a teacher makes use of touch to correct a student's posture or placement of limbs or guide a movement. Kinaesthetic feedback is often the most effective and quickest form of providing feedback in dance training. When it is not possible for teachers to use Kinaesthetic Feedback, they should look for alternative methods for providing feedback. For example, if the feedback is anatomical then teachers might refer to a diagram or demonstrate on themselves. Consideration should be given to what form of feedback would be most effective in a given situation, with kinaesthetic feedback seen as one option. Teachers may use their discretion in this respect.

The following conditions should be met before making use of kinaesthetic feedback:

1. The teacher has intentionally and specifically spoken to the class about using kinaesthetic feedback and explained the reasons for using it.
2. The teacher has demonstrated how they provide kinaesthetic feedback, either on themselves or on a student volunteer.
3. Students have been given the opportunity to express the desire not to receive kinaesthetic feedback by discussing it with the teacher away from the class.
4. Students have been signposted to an alternative member of staff who they could approach to discuss any concerns that may arise for them during the year regarding kinaesthetic feedback.

Points 1 to 4 should be actioned at the start of each new term by the student's Year Group teacher, or at the start of the first class if the teacher is teaching that class for the first time. Teachers may use their discretion to briefly ask for consent in the moments before offering kinaesthetic feedback while a class is in progress (in "real-time"). However, it is accepted that, so long as conditions 1 to 4 are in place, this is not a requirement, nor is it always considered practically possible.

The following guidelines around how to deploy touch correctly when giving kinaesthetic feedback are provided:

1. The student should be able to anticipate the kinaesthetic feedback they are about to receive, and for this reason it is preferable that they are approached from the front.
2. Teachers should use a gentle touch of their hand to apply light pressure when making adjustments to the student's body.

The following are not permitted:

1. The use of any object or instrument.
2. Tapping or poking a student or applying pressure with the fingernails.
3. Contact with the groin area, inner thighs, buttocks or breast area.
4. The forcing of any body part into any position.

3. Guidelines for physical contact in the teaching of pas de deux and the teaching of choreography

The teaching of pas de deux and choreography requires a thoughtful and sensitive approach that respects students' individuality and boundaries while supporting their technical development, skill acquisition, and artistic growth. In both pas de deux and choreography, whether learning existing work or creating new work, the following guidelines should be adhered to:

1. Demonstrations with Staff: Teachers should, where possible and deemed necessary in the first instance, demonstrate any lifts, grips, or partnering techniques with another member of staff to help students understand the intended learning outcomes.

2. Demonstrations with Students: A teacher should only demonstrate with a student if it is the most effective method to guide movement and support the student's learning. This could be for the learning benefit of the partner and/or the dancer being partnered.

3. Consent for Demonstrations: A teacher must never demonstrate with a student unless consent has been given, along with an explanation of the intended learning outcome and the reason for doing so.

4. Clarity in Assistance: When supporting and assisting students with demanding lifts (e.g., acting as a spotter or safety net), the teacher must clearly communicate how they will assist and what grip or level of touch they will use.

5. Intervention for Safety: It is reasonable for a teacher spotting a lift to intervene with touch in the best way possible to protect the student if they are deemed to be in danger.

4. The use of Kinaesthetic Feedback by guest teachers, choreographers or repetiteurs

All external guests are required to receive a safeguarding briefing by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) before they begin work at the School. During this briefing, they will be asked if they have a need to make use of kinaesthetic feedback or other physical contact for pas de deux or choreographic purposes. If the external guest does have such a need, the DSL (or deputy) would then require that the guest read and agree to this policy.

5. Policy adherence

The Artistic Director and Artistic Managers are encouraged to observe how teachers offer kinaesthetic feedback to students and provide ongoing feedback to teachers on whether the guidelines in this policy are being followed. They must swiftly address any instances of incorrect application of physical contact directly with the teacher concerned. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed if there is any concern that physical contact has been made in unsafe manner or may have resulted in harm.