

Physical Touch and Handling Policy

2023

Policy Statement

The aim of this policy is to safeguard children and staff during any physical contact or activity that could be an infringement of their health, safety, security and well-being. The school also aims to work within Statutory Legal requirements, DFE and LA Guidelines.

Due to the nature of the children in our care, their age maturity and backgrounds, we endeavour to support children in a variety of different ways. We wish to help children feel wanted and valued at all times in the school. Many of our children may not understand, or are still learning to understand the appropriateness of physical contact. Children look to us for approval and are testing out responses all the time.

Overall, the school has a policy of no physical contact, however, we understand that it is often appropriate for children to be given some physical contact and comfort, but this must always be offered with the following caution:

1. Always ensure there are other adults are around.
2. Never show favour to individual children.
3. Never touch a child in the area between the waist and mid-thigh or near the chest.
4. Never touch a child in a way that could be mis-interpreted as being anything other than friendly and professional appropriate adult-child support.
5. Where a child tries to get closer than appropriate, for example sitting facing you during a hug, the message should always be along the lines of, "I like you and I enjoy being with you, but I would rather you held my arm/hand like this/sat next to me".
6. Some very active children sometimes calm down and focus on a lesson when having a gentle stroke e.g. on their back. In this case such a support mechanism must be written into the child's Care Plan.
7. Never kiss a child, and do not encourage children to kiss adults/peers other than their parents/guardian.
8. A child should only sit on an adult's knee for a short time and for a specific reason such as following an injury, and not too close to the body and only if the child instigates it.
9. Tickling and stroking is not appropriate, neither is playing with hair; either the child playing with an adult's or an adult playing with a child's. (Quickly putting their hair back up is acceptable, but just into a pony tail so that it is quick).
10. For children within Early Years Foundation Stage, appropriate relationships are still being established, and there is a greater need for a more nurturing environment where it may be more appropriate for closer physical contact during some activities. The above cautions still apply, except that sitting on a knee, may be more acceptable until the child is established and confident in school.

Appropriate touches include:

- Hand shakes
- Shoulder hugs
- Holding hands (if instigated by child) during outings
- Guiding children using "Gentle Hands"
- Restraint approaches for trained staff only

Response to Intimate care such as toileting

Where children require help with changing or toileting, the dignity of the child must be maintained at all times. Great care must be taken to ensure that all physical contact is specifically and only for the purpose of the operation being carried out. If the child is able to change themselves this should be encouraged. If unable to do so, two adults should be present to protect both the child and staff.

Children's Response to Touch

Staff must always be aware that all children interpret and react to touch in different ways. Some children are over-demonstrative and try to demand a great deal of affection and physical contact, whilst others shy away from or have a dislike of physical contact. We must never assume that a child will accept a touch that is meant as a friendly gesture.

There may be children in our care who have backgrounds where there has been inappropriate physical contact, or even emotional, physical or sexual abuse. These children will be confused about adult-child contact and will need very sensitive support and care. Wherever there is physical contact, this must be seriously considered.

Child Protection

Wherever a member of staff feels uncomfortable about the way in which a child or adult is using or abusing physical contact, this must be immediately discussed with a member of the safeguarding team and recorded on CPOMs. This may need to be taken further by the DSL or deputies.

Further details are available from the school Safeguarding/Child Protection leads and from the Keeping Children Safe in Education document. Staff must be careful not to make a child feel rejected if they have been over demonstrative physically.

Where children make impulsive emotional approaches such as "I love you", never reject or let down, but always respond positively by such as, "That must mean that you like me a lot, and I like you as well. I am especially pleased with you when you do your best work...". If this type of approach becomes inappropriate, or regular, seek advice from a senior member of staff.

Emergency Procedures for Physical Intervention

Although the school has a general policy of 'No Physical Contact' there may be the occasional time when all other avenues have been explored. Teachers have a 'duty of care' to all pupils. If a pupil is becoming a danger to him/her self or others, we cannot do nothing. Obviously our first line of approach will be verbal, using a variety of de-escalation techniques, interventions and instructions.

Where these have not worked, there may be the need to intervene physically to stop someone putting themselves or others in danger. Examples of these could be:

- A child running towards a busy road
- An angry child about to hurt someone
- A SEN child who is unaware of personal boundaries
- A SEN child who may hurt other children out of frustration
- A serious fight

- A child damaging school property

Where this might happen, the intervention must be using minimal force, and only enough to stop the incident.

Regard must be made to The Education Act 1996 The child(ren) must be made aware of what is going to happen if the situation does not stop. In an escalating or dangerous situation, reasonable, calm and considered responses could be:

- Blocking a child's path
- Holding, pushing or pulling away from the incident
- Leading by the arm
- Guiding pupil away with hand in centre of the back

Such an incident must be reported fully in writing to the Headteacher by recording it on CPOMs at the first opportunity, preferably the same day and never more than 24 hours after the incident.

Teaching Assistants and Lunchtime Supervisory Staff must not intervene physically unless they have completed appropriate training.