

Touch and Physical Contact Policy

Northgate Primary School



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Touch and Physical Contact Policy

Our school policy on touch and physical contact has been developed with due consideration of neuro-biological research and studies based on and around the positive impact of touch. Our key aim is to facilitate a safe and happy school where children and staff alike enjoy coming to school and experience positive relationships with all whom they come into contact with. There will be times when staff are required to have close physical contact with a child, age and needs dependant. It is important for the children to feel safe, secure and loved in their environment.

All staff have received training in safeguarding & child protection which is repeated annually.

Rationale

The quality of a child's relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Our policy takes into account the extensive studies relating to attachment theory, child development and special educational needs.

Touch can be used to regulate a child's emotions, as it triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Our policy on Touch has been developed in the context of the Local Authority Child Protection Procedures and Policies.

In order to protect children and school staff from allegations under Child Protection procedures, some schools and Local Authorities have adopted 'No Touch' policies. However, we are adopting an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch in special cases as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning. Research shows clearly that healthy pro-social brain development requires access to safe touch as one of the means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, sad or angry child. It is essential for all children to learn the difference between safe and unsafe touch and to experience having their strongest emotions contained, validated, accepted and soothed by a significant adult. The developmentally appropriate use of safe touch is defined by situations in which abstinence would actually be inhumane, unkind and potentially psychologically damaging.

Supporting a distressed child

In states of distress, touch can often be the only means of maintaining a connection with the child when he or she can no longer hear or make use of words or soothing tone/eye contact and therefore is in danger of dissociating, with all the detrimental effects that this can bring.

Staff will use appropriate care when touching children and will be sensitive to those children to whom touch may not be appropriate, such as a child who has a history of physical or sexual abuse or has particular cultural or religious views.

Children with particular needs will have their own Pupil Passport which will have any personal requirements recorded for staff to be aware of.

Intimate Care

The child should be involved as much as possible in their intimate care. Allow the child to be as independent as possible. This can be for tasks such as removing clothing or wiping private parts of a child's body. Support the children in doing everything that they can for themselves. Confident, assertive children who feel their body belongs to them are less vulnerable to abuse.

- If a child is fully dependant on you then talk to him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible
- Always ensure that a child's privacy is protected
- An adult who is not familiar to them will never support a child in intimate care
- Every child is to be treated with dignity & respect
- Be responsive to a child's reactions
- Make sure the practice of intimate care is as consistent as possible
- The parent should be consulted about the intimate care that is given to their child
- It's our legal obligation to meet the needs of children with any delays in any area of their development. We work in partnership with parents on an individual basis to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of each child (recorded in Pupil Passport)

Staff should report to SLT if they are concerned that during the intimate care of a child;

- They accidentally hurt a child
- The child seems sore or unusually tender in the genital area
- The child has very strong emotional reaction without apparent cause (sudden shouting or crying)

All staff must ensure that they protect themselves by following these guidelines.

- Always tell another member of staff when you are doing a change or accompanying a child to the toilet
- Always ensure that you are visible to other members of staff
- In some instances, it may be appropriate for 2 members of staff to change a child
- Always wear protective gloves & aprons and dispose of nappies in yellow sacks
- Always wash hands thoroughly after supporting a child with intimate care

In nursery, nappies are to be changed in the single stall bathroom on a designated change mat. This is enclosed enough to give the child privacy yet not out of sight of other staff.

Comforting a child

In the Early Years there are times when a child may ask to sit on an adult's lap. Our aim is to help our children to become as independent as possible during this time. With this in mind a child will first be encouraged to sit alongside the adult, on their own chair, while they calm down and regulate. Reparative care may include the child needing to sit on an adult's lap. If so, this should be sideways sitting and within

sight of other colleagues. This will be age and stage appropriate. Once calm is restored for a child in extreme distress, they should be moved off the adult's lap, to sit alongside them.

Hand holding is not necessary in school unless a child is using it as their way of communication (example - leading an adult to something they want). If there is a situation where a child is refusing to move then taking their hand/wrist/arm or physically moving them is not an option. The adult must wait until the child is ready to move themselves independently.

Children should not be picked up by an adult unless it is recorded in their Pupil Passport due to developmental/medical needs.

- Each staff member is responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- Staff work, and should be seen to work, in an open and transparent way and always in partnership with parents
- The same professional standards are always applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity
- Staff continually monitor and review their practice and ensure they follow the guidance provided by the provision
- If a member of staff is concerned by a colleagues actions they must follow the Low-Level Concerns policy

At no point and under no circumstances should staff members use touch to satisfy their own need for physical contact or reassurance. It should always be the child who instigates any sort of physical contact.

All staff must be clear about this policy when working with children.