



Use of Touch Policy

We want our pupils to:

- ◆ *Be eager, excited, curious and engaged in learning.*
- ◆ *Have a sense of self and are happy, confident and emotionally healthy.*
- ◆ *Be able to co-operate and communicate socially.*
- ◆ *Be healthy and safe.*
- ◆ *Feel equipped to make life choices, recognise their own achievement, take responsibility for themselves and behave in a way that enhances their well-being and the well-being of others.*

Introduction

Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive and good quality care for the children and young people we support. Used in context, and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the children and young people we care for. In play or for emotional reasons children of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

Aims

At Laurel Avenue Community Primary School we aim to apply touch in order to support the wellbeing and safety of our children and young people. This means that a member of staff is able to physically guide, touch or prompt children in an appropriate way at the appropriate times. The aim of this policy is to set out the reasons why we may choose to hold / touch children and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

We believe that contingent touch can be a positive experience and important when used with discretion. Touch is not appropriate in all situations and children are taught about how to be safe through other areas of the curriculum such as PSHE lessons which address making safe choices and involve discussions around when touch is or isn't ok. We realise that some children will not want to be touched and we respect this at all times.

Broad Guidelines

We may choose to use touch for a variety of reasons, generally touch would be for comfort, safety or reward. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt students if they require personal care; support with attention, as a technique to aid with behaviour management; as part of manual handling; first aid; physiotherapy or assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc.

Touch must only be given with the permission of pupils and staff involved; this may include peer to peer touch (a safe hug or massage) or staff to pupil touch. Staff should follow safeguarding guidance to ensure they are not putting themselves or a pupil in a vulnerable position. When possible and appropriate, use of touch should be witnessed by another member of staff. Touch should be avoided on a one to one basis in isolated areas of school unless by prior agreement as part of a behavioural or care plan.

How touch is used in Laurel Avenue Community Primary School

Physical contact with Pupils

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary.

This policy acknowledges that innocent and well-intentioned physical contact can sometimes be misconstrued and staff are expected to follow the guidelines laid out in this policy.

Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- ◆ *Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school;*
- ◆ *When comforting a distressed pupil;*
- ◆ *When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;*
- ◆ *To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;*
- ◆ *To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching;*
- ◆ *To give first aid.*

1. Safe Hug

At our School, we encourage staff that are using touch for comfort or reward to use a 'Safe hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and the adult's hands on the shoulders limits the ability of the child to turn themselves onto you. This can be done either standing or sitting.

2. Holding Hands

We recognise that it is sometimes appropriate to hold hands with adults as a means of supervision. At our school we encourage all children to be independent, however we can use a hand hold for supervision, as part of a risk assessment whilst outside the classroom with a particular pupil or to give reassurance and to communicate security and comfort if this was deemed appropriate for the emotional well-being or safety of the child concerned.

3. Lap Sitting

At our School we actively discourage lap-sitting. Children are encouraged to seek comfort/attention through other means, for example a safe hug. If a child attempts to sit on your lap, we would explain to them that this is not what we do here, and ask them to sit next to a member of staff or peer if this is appropriate.

4. Intimate Care

Some pupils require a higher level of personal care around toileting. Please refer to individual intimate care plans and our intimate care policy - Toileting and Personal/Intimate Care Guidance for Schools and Early Years settings in Durham.

5. Moving and Handling

If pupils require complex or repeated physical handling or mechanical support moving around school, staff refer to individual handling plans with Health Care Plans and our Safer Person Handling Policy. Staff involved in manual handling and hoisting receive appropriate training.

6. Restrictive Physical Handling

Some pupils require restrictive intervention to support with behaviour and keep themselves or others safe. Please refer to individual risk management plans and our The Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy. Staff involved in restrictive physical intervention receive appropriate training. Parents are made aware as soon as we are aware that RPI may need to be used to keep the pupil or others safe and would sign to agree the framework within which an approach has been agreed.

7. First Aid

When administering first aid it is often appropriate and necessary to use touch. All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and are able to administer treatment for minor first aid incidents such as a minor bump, cut or graze. More serious incidents will be dealt with by a qualified first aider. Parents / carers will be informed if first aid has been administered. Please refer to individual medical care plans and our Health and Safety Policy and Staff Handbook.

8. Physiotherapy

Some of our pupils may require physiotherapy. The physio will come into school to see the designated pupil. It is good practise that the lead TA attends these sessions to be shown, take records of exercises given and sometimes put the pupil at ease when communication can be an issue.

Where possible these exercises should be completed independently however there are occasions where touch, of a supporting arm or hands to encourage and support the use of, and flexing of, muscles and tendons, is applied. The physio will advise and direct

staff to ensure good practise, parents will be aware and have agreed to school facilitating these routines.

At times, children in crisis or distress initiate physical contact in a way other than those described above (e.g. 'front on' hug/lap sitting). If this should happen we would give the child guidance as to the more appropriate methods of touch listed above.

*The use of touch is discussed openly and regularly between staff.
Gender and cultural factors have relevance in issues of touch. The emotional and communication needs of the individual will be discussed with all concerned and due equal consideration will be given.*

Equality Impact Statement

The Governors have reviewed this policy giving due regard to their responsibilities with respect to the equalities agenda, in line with recent legislation. They believe that the policy reflects a positive attitude and approach to all members of the school community. This policy recognises that physical contact is a sensitive issue for some cultural groups and staff will ensure their practice reflects this.

Signed: G Davison

*Headteacher
Date: February 2017*

Signed: C Linfoot

*Chair of Community and SMSC Committee
Date: February 2017*

Review: February 2020