



Policy on Physical Contact

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Northwood Primary School

Policy on Physical Contact

We endeavour to support children in a variety of ways, considering the nature of the child, their age, maturity and background. We wish to help children feel wanted and valued at all times in the school.

Many of our children either do 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.

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 or responsible children 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 appropriate adult-child support.
5. Where a child tries to get closer than appropriate, 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 like this."
6. Some very active children sometimes calm down and focus on a lesson when having a physical or sensory intervention (eg stroke of the back of the neck). In this case such a support mechanism must be written into the child's Care Plan.
7. Cuddles should be short and side by side.
8. Never kiss a child, and do not encourage children to kiss adults other than their parents.
9. 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. If a child may need to sit on a member of staff's knee for longer term support, this must be written into the child's Care Plan.
10. Tickles are not allowed.
11. For children within Early Years, 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 or longer cuddles may be more acceptable until the child is established and confident in school.
12. 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.

**Exceptions would be made in a physical Intervention using only Team Teach approaches with trained staff.

Appropriate touches include:

- Handshakes
- Shoulder hugs
- Linked arms
- Holding hands during playtimes or outings
- Guiding children using "Caring Hands"
- Team Teach approaches for trained staff only

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

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.

Wherever a member of staff feels uncomfortable about the way in which a child is using or abusing physical contact, this must be immediately discussed with a senior member of staff and recorded on an Incident Form. This may need to be taken further into the Child Protection arena.

Further details are available from Designated Safeguarding Lead in school.

Staff must be careful not to make a child feel rejected if they have been over-demonstrative physically. (See 5 above).

Physical Intervention

Occasionally staff may need to use physical intervention to maintain the safety of pupils. We believe that physical intervention should be a last resort and only used following every possible de-escalation technique.

Where children have challenging behaviour and it is likely to lead to a situation in which physical intervention may need to be used, staff must conduct a dynamic risk assessment based on their knowledge of the child and the current situation to assess whether physical intervention is necessary to prevent harm to the child or others.

All staff are trained and rehearsed in managing conflict and aggressive behaviour, including physical intervention where absolutely necessary. Training is provided on a regular basis. Approaches will be reviewed in the light of Government and LA recommendations and amended where appropriate.

Only staff who have received appropriate training are allowed to use physical intervention and such intervention must be within the guidelines of that training. Identified members of teaching and support staff have been trained in Team Teach, the LA preferred method of physical intervention.

Following every Physical Intervention, the appropriate section of the 'Numbered and Bound Book' must be completed and discussed with the child, parents/ carers and the Headteacher. At this review, strategies will be discussed to try to prevent this type of incident reoccurring.