

Touch Policy

September 2020

At our schools, we have a touch policy. This means that a member of staff is able to physically guide, touch or prompt children in appropriate ways at suitable times. It is extremely important that you have read and understood this policy to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to hold/touch children and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

Why Do We Use Touch?

We may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general we would normally do so for either comfort or reward. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt students if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc.

How Do We Use Touch

Hugging

At our schools, we use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands in the children's shoulders and arms. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and having the adult's hands on the shoulder/arms limits the ability of the child to turn themselves into whoever is giving the hug. This can be done either standing or sitting.

Hand-Holding

We recognise that children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is compliant. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children, this can become a restraint. Therefore, we encourage the use of the 'school hand-hold'. This can be done by the adult holding their arm out, and the child is encouraged to wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child's for a little security if it is required.

In summary, it is generally deemed appropriate to touch others on the upper arm which would appear to be regarded as a neutral zone in most cultures.

Lap-Sitting

At our schools we actively discourage lap-sitting. Children should be taught to seek comfort/attention through other means, for example the school hand hold or hug. If a child attempts to sit on an adults lap, the adult should explain to them that this is not what we do here and suggest they sit next to the adult if it is appropriate.

Please note that although we have a touch policy and believe that contingent touch can be a positive experience for the children that we care for, this does not mean that members of staff have to touch children, and it should be realised that some children will not want to be touched. Please respect this.

We also have our Handling policy on restraint and follow Norfolk Steps, please ensure that you are familiar with both.

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the children in their care. Therefore if a child is likely to be at risk from harm if you do not physically intervene in an emergency situation, you must take appropriate action. The action you take will be dependent on the dynamic risk assessment that you make at that moment in time.

Parents and Carers will be made aware of this policy when their child is admitted to the schools.

If you have any questions or would like a further discussion regarding this policy please speak to the Head Teacher or a member of the Leadership Team at the earliest available opportunity.