

# **Physical Contact Policy**

## **Statement of intent**

There will be occasions when the staff will need to have close physical contact with the children in our care. We feel that some close physical contact is vital for young children in order to help them develop into well balanced, secure happy individuals, ready to meet the new challenges of school and beyond.

## **Aim**

We will ensure that there are clear boundaries for physical contact in order to protect everyone involved, age maturity and backgrounds will be respected and we will endeavour to support children in a variety of different ways.

## **Methods**

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:

- Always ensure there are other adults or responsible children around.
- Never show favour to individual children.
- Never touch a child in a way that could be mis-interpreted as being anything other than friendly appropriate adult-child support.
- Cuddles should be short and child initiated, or at parents request for comforting purposes.
- Never kiss a child, and do not encourage children to kiss adults other than their parents.
- A child should only sit on an adult's knee for a short time and for a specific reason such as following an injury,
- For children within 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, or longer cuddles may be more acceptable until the child is established and confident in nursery.
- 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.

Appropriate touches include:

- Hand shakes
- Shoulder hugs
- Linked arms
- Holding hands during playtimes or outings

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.

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 manager and recorded in the incident book. This may need to be taken further into the Child Protection area.

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.

We have a ‘duty of care’ to all children. If a child 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:

- An angry child about to hurt someone
- A serious fight
- A child damaging property

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

Such an incident must be reported fully in writing to the manager at the first opportunity.