Physical Contact/Touch

**Policy**

During a child’s time with us, inevitably there will be occasions when the staff will need to have close physical contact with the children in their care. Indeed, we feel close physical contact is vital for children in order to help them develop into well-balanced, secure, happy individuals, ready to meet the new challenges of school and beyond. However, we are very aware of the need for clear boundaries for physical contact in order to protect everyone involved.

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with children, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role.

**Procedure**

* It is not always possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Staff should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.
* Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be recorded as soon as possible as an incident.

*Staff should:*

* be aware that even well intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer.
* never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent
* always be prepared to explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny
* never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights.
* Physical contact, which occurs regularly with an individual child or young person, is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this is part of a formally agreed plan (for example in relation to a child with SEN or physical disabilities). Any such contact should be the subject of an agreed and open school policy and subject to review.
* Where feasible, staff should seek the child's permission before initiating contact.
* Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and – so far as is possible - use a level of contact which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.
* Extra caution may be required where it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to staff being vulnerable to allegations of abuse. It is recognised that many such children are extremely needy and seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances staff should deter the child sensitively by helping them to understand the importance of personal boundaries.
* The general culture of 'limited touch' should be adapted, where appropriate, to the individual requirements of each child. Young children or those with special needs may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The arrangements should be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the child's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny.
	+ The setting will ensure they have a system in place for recording serious incidents and the means by which information about incidents and outcomes can be easily accessed by senior management.
	+ Provide staff, on a "need to know" basis, with relevant information about vulnerable pupils in their care

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