

TOUCH POLICY

2020-21



COVID UPDATE

During the COVID crisis it is advised that staff have no physical contact with children except in the circumstances of administering first aid where it is not possible for children to do this themselves or for medical/intimate care support as per their individual care plan. In such cases staff must wear PPE. In some cases physical intervention may be needed for the safety of a child. This needs to be immediately referred to the Senior Leadership Team and the risk assessment followed. If a child requires comfort then parents should be contacted.

Purpose

At Avenue Junior School we understand that there may be occasions when we need to have physical contact with children. As part of our duty of care to your child, there may be times when they need comforting or reassuring or in a minority of circumstances to remove a risk to other children or staff. We may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for comfort. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt students if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc. It is important for staff and parents to have a clear understanding of the school's guidelines for physical contact.

Summary

- We use a sideways hug when children want to hug – this is our 'school hug'
- Sometimes children do like to hold hands, this is natural. Hand holding would never be used as a method of control.
- We discourage lap sitting
- A member of staff will always respect a child's choice to not be touched
- Staff have a 'duty of care' to pupils. If they believe there is a risk of serious harm, they will take action and, following school procedure, may physically intervene to remove a child.
- All staff have been trained in de-escalation strategies by Norfolk County Council.

A full policy is available on request from the school office.

Status

Recommended

Who/what was consulted?

This policy has been reviewed by the TLP committee including the Designated Governor for Child Protection/Safeguarding, Nania Poulson. All staff have been consulted.

Relationship to other policies

- Whole School Policy for Safeguarding, including Child Protection
- Positive Behaviour, Discipline and Anti-bullying,
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Keeping Children Safe in Education DFE 2020
- Working Together to Safeguard Children DFE 2019
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings. DFE October 2019

Roles and responsibilities

This policy applies to:

- All staff
- Parent volunteers
- Work Experience Students
- Governors
- Parents/Carers

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

The aims of this policy will be monitored alongside the Whole School Safeguarding Policy, including the Self Review Tool for Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools.

Date approved by Full Governing Body:

Date for review: Autumn 2021

At our school, we have a touch policy. This means that as a member of staff you are able to physically guide, touch or prompt children in appropriate ways at the appropriate 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 terms we would normally do so for either comfort. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt students if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc. Staff should take care and use their professional judgement when deciding whether to provide invention/assistance to a child who does not require such care, even if the child requests help. Staff should ask themselves how others may view their actions. Staff should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their reasons or intentions.

How Do We Use Touch?

Hugging

At this school staff that are using touch for comfort should use a 'school 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 limit the ability of the child to turn themselves into you. 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 is 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 extra 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 school lap-sitting is not allowed. 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 your lap, explain to them that this is not what we do here, and ask them to sit next to you if it is appropriate.

At times, children may in such crisis or distress that they hold you in a way which is not described as above (e.g. 'front on' hug/lap sitting). If this should happen please ensure that you have informed a senior member of staff to protect yourself. You may be asked to make a note of this, this will be in order to record and monitor the amount of times the student

is doing this to staff to see whether this is a 'controlling' behaviour, or whether the child is displaying distressed behaviour regularly.

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 you have to touch children, and it should also be realised that some children will not want to be touched. Please respect this.

We also have within our Behaviour Policy and Positive Handling Policy, a section on restrictive intervention, please ensure that you are familiar with this.

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

Parents/carers will be made aware of this policy when their child is admitted to this school.

If you have any questions or would like a further discussion regarding this policy, please speak to your line manager at the earliest available opportunity.