



St Peter & St Paul

CofE Primary School

Touch Policy

2019 - 2022

(This policy has been drafted having regard for the school's Christian ethos.)

	Date	Signed
Agreed by Staff:	October 2019	Mr Steve Ginn Head Teacher
Agreed by Governors:	October 2019	Mrs N Ford Chair of Governors
Lead:	Senior Leadership Team	
Review date:	October 2022	

Our School Mission Statement

We see it as our mission to grow the whole child - intellectually, emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually. To provide them, within a Christian environment, with every learning opportunity possible and to empower them to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Touch Policy

Rationale

Research has recognised that physical touch is incredibly important for a child's development. Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive, good quality care and to support natural interactions. It is also essential to the development, emotional well-being, care and education of our pupils. Touch is the earliest sensory system to become functional and is the foundation of all other sensory systems. Positive touch is beneficial for both psychological and physiological development.

However, in the current social climate there is a tendency to associate touch with intimacy and sexuality. Safeguarding children from inappropriate physical interactions is crucial but it is also essential to recognise that the use of positive, appropriate touch is incredibly important for a child's well-being, sensory regulation and emotional security.

In order for teachers and other school staff to be aware of what the school considers to be appropriate, it is very important to have a school 'touch' policy.

Our policy on touch has been developed with due consideration of neuro-biological research and studies based on and around the positive impact of touch.

- We define the appropriate use of touch as that in situations when abstinence would actually be unkind and potentially psychologically or neuro-biologically damaging. Examples include the natural and beneficial use of touch in the comfort of a child who is in an acute state of distress.
- Not to reach out to a child in such circumstances could be re-traumatising and neuro-biologically damaging.
- Failing to physically soothe a child when in the face of intense grief and/or upset can lead to a state of hyper-arousal in which toxic levels of stress chemicals are released in the body and brain. (The severely damaging long- term effects of this have been well researched worldwide and are well documented.)
- In certain states of distress, touch can often be the only means of maintaining a connection with the child when he or she can no longer hear or make use of words or soothing tone/eye contact and is therefore in danger of dissociation, with all the detrimental effects that this can bring.

Aims

The aims of this policy is to provide guidance for staff and volunteers and to acknowledge that gentle, safe holding is considered appropriate if a child is hurting either him or herself or others. It is also considered appropriate if the child is damaging property or is so out of control that verbal attempts to engage him or her have failed.

Appropriate Touch

By 'Appropriate Touch' we mean touch that is not invasive, humiliating or could possibly be considered erotic or flirtatious. We agree that 'appropriate' places to touch are shoulders, arms, and back. Staff will invite children to sit closely and occasionally, with young children, on their lap and the frequent use of the 'School Safe' hug is offered and given.

Staff

Staff at St. Peter and St. Paul school routinely engage in physical touch with pupils for the following reasons:

- To aid and develop communication
- To offer physical support and guidance
- To offer reassurance and support
- To physically intervene and manage challenging behaviours
- As physical prompting and support
- To support pupils with personal care routines
- To protect pupils from other children or themselves
- To carry out therapy programmes
- To respond to pupils' physical contact

The staff at St.Peter & St.Paul School are trained in the safest and gentlest means of holding a child, which is entirely designed to enable the child to feel safe and soothed and to bring him or her down from uncontrollable states of hyper-arousal. As a result, staff are encouraged to:

- Initiate and respond warmly to appropriate touch from children.
- Interact with the children, including physical interaction.

This creates the nurturing, warm, caring environment that is so enabling for our children.

Staff are advised that they need to openly discuss, if asked, why they are using physical touch with children.

Staff are advised to be sensitive to signals (non-verbal and verbal) that indicate that a child dislikes touch.

Staff are trained in safeguarding issues and realise that they need to consider race, gender, age, sexual identity, background and identity when considering the issue of personal touch.

Occasionally children may engage in physical contact that staff find inappropriate. Staff should withdraw from these situations as soon as possible and these should be discussed with a senior leader. If staff feel it is not appropriate to respond to physical contact from a child, staff should avoid open rejection and should try to divert and redirect the child instead.

Staff should ensure that they follow agreed behaviour plans and physical intervention practices at all times in order to protect pupils and themselves.

Governing Body

Where staff act in line with this policy they will be supported by the school and the governing body.

Positive Handling of Pupils

Positive Handling describes a broad spectrum of risk reduction strategies. Positive handling is a holistic approach involving policy, guidance, management of the environment, and deployment of staff. It also involves personal behaviour, diversion, diffusion, and de-escalation. Risk assessment identifies positive prevention strategies and how a pupil may need to be supported in a crisis.

Good personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in our school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in our school respond positively to the discipline and control practiced by staff.

It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable, proportionate and necessary force may be required. The school acknowledges that physical techniques are only a small part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in this school:

- Clearly understand the 'Positive Handling' policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where use of force is necessary.
- Are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' stipulate that reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do any of the following:

- Self-injuring
- Causing injury to others

- Committing a criminal offence
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether the behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere within school (this includes authorised out-of-school activities).

As teaching and non-teaching staff work in 'loco parentis' and have a 'duty of care' towards their pupils, they could be liable for a claim of negligence if they fail to follow the guidance within this policy. Trained staff will use positive handling techniques to reduce risks presented by children's challenging behaviour which may arise at any time.

The application of any form of physical control inevitably carries an attached risk of unintended harm and this places staff and the school at risk of potential litigation. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow this policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention. Staff must be aware that they are responsible for:

- Assessing risks (dynamic risk assessment) related to individual circumstances which may arise in the course of their day-to-day duties and
- Making judgments about when the use of force is necessary and the degree of force which may be regarded as necessary to manage a situation.

Staff need to be aware that they are required to justify their decisions in writing through the recording and reporting procedures following an incident. Reference can be made to the Positive Handling Policy for detailed information and the appropriate procedure.

Naturally, staff are also aware of touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising or experienced as erotic by the child. Should any such touch be used at any time, it would be deemed as the most serious breach of the Code of Ethics warranting the highest level of disciplinary action.

Link Policies and Guidance

- See also 'Intimate Care and Close Personal Contact', 'Safeguarding' and 'Behaviour' policies.
- These interventions are fully in line with guidelines set out in the government document “
- Government Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force, July 2013
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2019

Training

- In-house Safeguarding training takes place during P.D. days. In addition, the teachers and teaching assistants have regular training and the midday supervisors have safeguarding/de-escalation training.

Conclusion

All staff are highly aware of both damaging and unnecessary uses of touch.

The staff in school are highly aware of the current atmosphere where, due to fears of abuse, touch as a natural and as a vital form of human connection has almost been vetoed in some schools. Our policy adheres to the belief that every individual needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch and that in a number of circumstances touch can be very positive and to avoid touch altogether could be psychological damaging.

Period of Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

Document History

Version	Date	Comments
Issue 1	March 2013	Initial draft adopted by governors
Issue 2	July 2015	Reviewed and confirmed in line with current guidance.
Issue 3	October 2019	Reviewed and updated in line with current legislation and guidance.