

Sudell Primary School



An Aldridge Community Academy

Physical Contact Policy

Policy written by Vice Principal) January 2016

Reviewed: December 2016

Review date: December 2018

Responsible person: Vice Principal

Principal: Helena Lewis

Chair of Governors: Claire Aspin

INTRODUCTION

Because of the nature of the children in our care, their age maturity and backgrounds, we endeavour to support children in a variety of different ways.

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.

OVERVIEW

Staff may have cause to have physical contact with pupils for a variety of reasons:

- To comfort a pupil in distress (as long as this is age appropriate)
- To gently direct a pupil (again, age-appropriateness has to be considered)
- For curricular reasons (e.g. in physical activities such as PE, Drama, etc)
- In an emergency to avert danger to the pupil
- In rare situations when physical restraint is warranted

It is often appropriate for children to be given some physical contact and comfort, but this must always be offered with the following caution:

1. Always ensure there are other adults or responsible children around.
2. Never show favour to individual children.
3. Never touch a child in the area between the waist and mid-thigh or near the chest.**
4. Never touch a child in a way that could be misinterpreted as being anything other than appropriate adult-child support.
5. Where a child tries to get closer than appropriate, the message should always be along the lines of, "I like you and I enjoy being with you, but I would rather you held my arm/hand like this".
6. Cuddles should be short and side by side.
7. Never kiss a child, and do not encourage children to kiss adults other than their parents.
8. A child should only sit on an adult's knee for a short time and for a specific reason such as following an injury, and not too close to the body. If a child may need to sit on a member of staff's knee for longer term support, this must be written into the child's Care Plan.
9. Tickling is not appropriate.

10. 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 school.
11. 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. (See Intimate Care Policy for further guidance)

****Exceptions would be made in a physical intervention using only Team Teach approaches with trained staff.**

Appropriate touches include:

- Hand shakes
- Shoulder hugs
- Linked arms
- Holding hands during playtimes or outings
- Guiding children using “Caring Hands”
- Team Teach approaches for trained staff only

Children’s response to touch:

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.

Child Protection:

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 senior member of staff and recorded on a Cause for Concern form. This may need to be taken further with regard to Child Protection.

Staff must be careful not to make a child feel rejected if they have been over-demonstrative physically. Refer to No. 5 above.

Where children make impulsive emotional approaches such as “I love you”, never reject or let down, but always respond positively by such as, “That must mean that you like me a lot, and I like you as well. I am especially pleased with you when you do your best work...”.

If this type of approach becomes inappropriate, or regular, seek advice from a senior member of staff.

Emergency Procedures for Physical Intervention

Contact in emergency situations should be proportionate and necessary and as a last resort. Teachers have a ‘duty of care’ to all pupils. If a pupil 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:

- A child running towards a busy road
- An angry child about to hurt someone
- A serious fight
- A child damaging school property

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

Regard must be made to The Education Act 1996 (Circular 10/98).

The child(ren) must be made aware of what is going to happen if the situation does not stop.

In an escalating or dangerous situation, reasonable, calm and considered responses could be:

- Blocking a pupil’s path
- Leading by the arm
- Guiding pupil away with hand in centre of the back

Such an incident must be recorded fully using IRIS Adapt and the Team Teach section must be fully completed, a member of SLT must be informed, preferably the same day and never more than 24 hours after the incident.

Only staff that have Team Teach training should physically respond to a child, unless not responding would endanger the child or another person or cause serious damage to property.

In all situations when physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:

- The pupil’s age and level of understanding as to why physical contact is made

- The pupil's individual characteristics (e.g. whether the physical contact might be misinterpreted or resented, this includes issues of the relative gender of staff and pupil)
- The location where the contact takes place (e.g. it should not take place in private without other witnesses present)
- It should not become an habitual act between a particular staff member and an individual pupil
- Physical contact should never be made as a punishment or in order to inflict pain
- All forms of corporate punishment are prohibited
- Physical contact should not be made with either participant's neck, breasts; abdomen, genital area, other sensitive body parts, or to put pressure on joints

The policy on physical contact between staff and pupils should be read in conjunction with other school policies, in particular the Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and the Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy.

Should physical contact between staff and pupils lead to an injury suffered by either party, a written report must be completed as soon as possible.

Any complaints about physical contact should be dealt with using the school's complaints procedure. In cases of serious allegations, the Child Protection Procedure should be used.

PHYSICAL CONTACT BETWEEN STAFF AND PUPILS

'DOs' AND 'DON'Ts'

DO

- Know the school policy and other related policy documents
- Discuss with a senior member of staff if you are unsure about any aspects of the policy
- Be aware of pupils' individual characteristics
- Assess the situation before acting
- Stay calm and do not over-react
- Remember that you have an obligation to safeguard the welfare of pupils in your care
- Consult your Professional Association or Trade Union if you have any concerns
- **Report concerns over physical contact between other staff and pupils to your line manager, the Principal or Vice Principal**
- **Record any serious incidents in the appropriate format as soon as possible**

DON'T

- **Place yourself at risk through your actions**
- **Act in anger**
- **Have physical contact with a pupil in a private situation**
- **Have frequent physical contact with the same pupil**
- **Allow situations to get out of control**