The Grange School

Touch Policy

January 2018

To review January 2019

THE GRANGE SCHOOL

The Grange School is committed to the best quality care and highest standards of safeguarding for our children. Our Touch Policy should be read with regard to the following:

. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
. Positive Behaviour Policy
. SEN and Inclusion Policy
. Exclusion Policy
. Health & Safety Policy
. Staff Discipline Policy
. Complaints Policy

Aims and Objectives

. To ensure that safeguarding of children is paramount at all times

. To create, maintain and monitor a physically and emotionally secure environment for children and adults

. Ensure that all physical touch is reasonable, proportionate and necessary

. Ensure that children in distress receive appropriate comfort, including physical touch if necessary

. Touching should be carefully considered or avoided in conditions that are private and in areas where there is no open access. Whenever possible, a second member of staff should be present

. To ensure that staff are made aware of their own personal risk assessment when working with children

. To ensure that any allegation or complaint is dealt with in line with our Complaints Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures and Allegations Against adults policy, with due regard for the law and its processes

. Ensure children are aware of their right to refuse the offer of touch as a physical response to distress and ensure staff only use appropriate touch in line with the child's own wishes and feelings of security

Definition

'Touch' is defined as a physical response to trauma, distress and human emotional need that would comfort, protect and enhance secure relationships.
Staff acknowledge that for some children, a physical response may be an essential way of communicating if there is little or no spoken language, or a sensory impairment that makes communication difficult. To this end, staff will respond to children in distress / emotional need, including a need to share happy emotions, with appropriate touch.

Appropriate Touch

All staff are aware of the definition of appropriate touch; noted here as touch that is not invasive, humiliating, sexual or causing physical or emotional discomfort. Agreed places for appropriate touch in order to comfort or congratulate a child are: back, arms, shoulders and hands.

The holding of a child's hand in accordance with a child's verbal, or non-verbal request, is a response to an emotional need. As shaking hands is a widely-used, friendly greeting, and holding hands a common appropriate parental response to emotional need, it has been deemed appropriate for use in our school.This particularly applies to younger pupils seeking comfort or reassurance during separation from their primary carer.

Staff in our school acknowledge that some children may instigate hugs when seeking comfort or reassurance. When this happens, staff are urged to only ever respond with a sideways hug, whilst disengaging themselves as quickly as possible.

Staff are urged to teach children about appropriate touch in a sensitive, age-appropriate way, whenever the opportunity arises and in-line with the Jigsaw PSHE scheme of work.

On occasions, we may need to hold pupils to keep them safe. Low-level physical interventions, such as an elbow guide, arm around the shoulder (from the child's side) or a held hand may be used to encourage a child to stay still or to move. Staff should aim to use the elbow, shoulders and arms whenever possible, if needing to guide or hold pupils. Any body contact should be against the hip only - sideways.

Where possible, staff who work closely with younger children should avoid sitting them on their laps. One alternative is to use the long bone of the adult's leg, with the child sitting sideways, with their legs facing outwards (side saddle). This should only be used when absolutely necessary. This reduces the risk of misunderstandings and allegations.

Music and PE teachers may need to touch a child to demonstrate an appropriate posture or technique, or to ensure safety during lessons. Teachers must ensure that this is appropriate for the activity / situation. When demonstrating a skill or posture, a teacher should tell the pupil in advance of touching them. If the pupil is unhappy about the 'touch', they should be given the opportunity to decline the physical contact.

We acknowledge the growing cultural belief that believes it is safer to refrain from any touch due to anxieties that allegations of abuse may be made, and that indeed, instances of abuse do occur in the world. Staff are also aware of, and highly skilled in, the use of other methods of comfort, de-escalation and the control of undesirable behaviour. However, staff believe that providing a good quality emotional environment may sometimes require the use of touch.

Children need to be educated in what constitutes appropriate touch, so that they can recognise the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. This helps each child to respond appropriately to others and to seek help in threatening or uncomfortable situations.