

Fox Hollies School

Appropriate Touch Policy



Autumn 2018
To be reviewed autumn 2019

Rationale

Physical touch is an essential part of human relationships and is often essential in order to provide daily quality care for the young people we support. It is vital when working with our pupils that all staff are aware of what kind of touch is appropriate and what potentially involves pupil's privacy, dignity and what might put the member of staff at risk from having his/her intentions or motives misunderstood. Everyone should have a clear and shared understanding of what is acceptable between staff and pupils.

Aims

To provide guidelines for appropriate touch.

To ensure a consistent approach across school.

To raise parent/carer awareness about types of touch within school.

Teach pupils to develop their understanding of touch in a consistent way.

Purposes of touch

Touch is important and may be used routinely for any of the following reasons:

1. For **communication**: to reinforce communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself, such as to respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social connections. This is particularly likely to occur during intensive interaction (see appendix) or day to day greetings (hand-shakes, hugs etc.).
2. For **educational reasons**: as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication (see appendix) for students at early communication levels, and to direct children in educational tasks and essential skills. (e.g. hand over hand assistance). As support or guidance, for example, during transitions between activities and during swimming or P.E. sessions.
3. To **play**: play activities naturally include touch. Students of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.
4. For **therapy**:(e.g. massage, sensory stimulation, physiotherapy, rebound therapy etc.) provided either by the therapist or by another member of staff carrying out a therapy programme or following therapy advice.
5. For **emotional reasons**: to communicate affection and warmth, to give reassurance and to communicate security and comfort.

6. For the **purposes of care**: touch is necessary in order to carry out personal care for many of the students we support at Fox Hollies Special School including: showering/washing/teeth, toileting, menstrual management; changing/dressing; medical/first aid and administration of medication (refer to medication authority).

7. To **give physical support and mobility assistance** in order for the students to function within the school and community. This assistance may take the form of directionally guiding through touch which supports movement of the students e.g. elbow, shoulder, foot touch; e.g.physical movement of limbs by a staff member and/or whole body support e.g. swimming, physical education program, toileting, transfers to and from wheelchairs, loss of balance and seizures/administering medication.

8. To **protect** children and young people from danger by physically intervening and managing challenging behaviours including the use of restraint, while following the recognised guidelines and policies of Fox Hollies School (see FH Behaviour Plan 2018) and the pupils individual Risk Assessments and behaviour plans.

Types of Touch

For therapy- Ensure that deep pressure is used when massaging and not a light tickle touch.

For emotional support – If a student is upset or displaying distress then a shoulder hug sideways on would be recommended here. If a student attempts to give a full frontal hug then staff should model a more appropriate position. If a student approaches and tries to kiss you it is essential that they are redirected to a more appropriate form of greeting , eg “Shake my hand”.

For personal care – To respect the students’ dignity when supporting with personal care the adult should inform the pupil what they will be doing next, verbally and accompanied with symbols and sign.

NB-Personal care routines for males will be carried out by the same sex staff as much as is logistically possible. If the students demonstrate that they are sexually aware it is not appropriate for the opposite sex to carry out the routines.

NB- Tickling should not be used as a form of behaviour management or reward as it is generally invasive and can lead to sexual stimulation.

Guidelines for Management

Touch needs to be used appropriately, in view of other people.

Staff need to be clear and open about why they are using touch and be able to explain their practice.

The use of touch should be discussed openly and regularly between staff.

Staff need to vocalise their intended action of touch to the student particularly during physical support, therapy and care assistance.

As far as possible, the young person involved should consent to any touch given and staff should be sensitive to any verbal and non-verbal communication they give that might indicate that they don't want to be touched. It should always be considered by staff that for touch to provide positive experiences it should be consensual.

Staff should be sensitive to any changes in the young person's behaviour (e.g. over excitement or negative reactions) that might indicate the need to reduce or withdraw touch, particularly during play or intensive interaction.

The students we support should be given opportunities to touch each other while interacting and playing as would happen naturally for any child or young person. Attention should always be given to ensure that both parties are happy with this.

Staff should be sensitive to the danger of touch being misunderstood and triggering sexual arousal and must be alert to all feedback signals from the person they are working with so as to withdraw.

Some students we support may occasionally inadvertently touch intimate parts of a member of staff's body when there is no sexual intent or understanding. The staff member should withdraw without giving significant negative feedback in this situation. As far as possible student privacy will be respected and staff/students will deal in a sensitive manner with personal management issues.

Staff should wear personal protective equipment eg. Disposable gloves when toileting, showering, changing, first aid administration where contact with body fluids is possible/likely.

Principles

Staff should be aware that even well meaning physical contact can be misconstrued by child or observer.

Staff should be mindful of where it is appropriate to touch. Hand to elbow for massage.

All behaviour plans should be signed by parents so they are in agreement with any Positive Handling Techniques. Ensure all incidents involving any physical interventions are logged.

Be aware of individual pupil Risk Assessments in relation to touch.

Parents should sign a consent form to consent to their child being touched through the form of massage, intensive interaction or other therapies.

Staff should be sensitive to cultural or religious views with regard to touch

Related documents

Staff Handbook

Pupil prospectus

Teachers' standards

Code of Conduct

Safeguarding Policy

KCSIE

Behaviour policy

Team teach guidance

Appendices

Consent forms massage

Behaviour plan template-signature

Intensive Interaction guidelines

**Autumn 2018
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Policy adopted by the WGB:

Signed **Chair of GB**

Date

APPENDIX

From www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk

- ***Intensive Interaction***

Who is Intensive Interaction for?

Intensive Interaction is designed to meet the learning needs of people who are still at early stages of communication development. At one extreme, this may be a person who is very 'difficult to reach', living a socially isolated life, perhaps having a range of self-stimulatory behaviours and not showing motivation to be with other people. Equally, the approach is for people who may be highly social in many ways and have many successful interaction activities with other people. Yet such a person may still need to develop further knowledge and ability in areas like: use and understanding of eye contacts and facial expressions, taking turns in exchanges of behaviour, developing and furthering vocalisations toward the threshold of speech. Indeed, some of the people for whom the approach would have meaning may be people who have some speech and language ability, but would still benefit from further learning and development in the area of the 'fundamentals of communication'.

- ***Fundamentals of Communication***

The fundamentals of communication can be characterised as things like:

Learning to give brief attention to another person.

To share attention with another person.

Learning to extend those attentions, learning to concentrate on another person.

Developing shared attention into 'activities'.

Taking turns in exchanges of behaviour.

To have fun, to play.

Using and understanding eye contacts.

Using and understanding of facial expressions.

Using and understanding of non-verbal communication such as gesture and body language.

Learning use and understanding of physical contacts.

Learning use and understanding of vocalisations, having your vocalisations become more varied and extensive, then gradually more precise and meaningful.