

Alverton Primary School

Safe Touch Policy

Aims

At Alverton Primary School we understand that appropriate relationships between staff and pupils are paramount to promoting the safeguarding of children at our school.

The DfE's guidance document, 'Use of Reasonable Force in Schools', which was published in 2013, makes clear that there are occasions when physical contact with a pupil, other than reasonable force, is appropriate and necessary.

This Safe Touch Policy has been created with the aim of ensuring that all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities in terms of appropriate and inappropriate touch when involving pupils.

All children are entitled to receive an education in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected. The school will dedicate itself to ensuring that no pupils feel threatened or disrespected, in terms of physical contact between themselves or a member of staff.

Why use touch?

Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the children we care for. It can also be key to developing fundamental social, behavioural and attention skills whilst offering physical support to those pupils who need it. We understand that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate but that safe touch is sometimes necessary.

In Alverton Woodland Nursery, we recognise that children need contact with familiar, consistent carers to ensure they can grow and develop socially and emotionally. This may include, at times, children asking or needing to be cuddled or held by a member of the EYFS staff, to support them settle and to reassure them.

The school recognises that the only appropriate places to touch pupils are on the shoulders, arms and back.

The guidelines that follow describe the school's procedures on the use of appropriate physical touch which may be used for any of the following reasons:

Communication

Touch is beneficial as part of the process of communication (eg hand on shoulder when speaking). Touch enables staff and pupils to respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social connections.

Educational Tasks

Touch can also be used to direct children in educational tasks and developing skills. Physical support may also be necessary in activities such as PE as staff may need to touch children to

support and guide them when demonstrating how to use sporting equipment or develop sports skills.

Mobility

Physical support may be used as guidance and/or to help with mobility or as part of an activity where a pupil needs support when moving. We understand that there are times when a member of staff will need to hold a pupil's hand, either to guide them or to prevent them from being physically harmed.

Emotional reasons

Touch is an effective way to communicate affection and warmth. It gives reassurance and can communicate security and comfort. Touch enables the person to develop understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate them. Touch can offer reassurance and support, comforting distressed or upset pupils, communicating warmth, comfort and reassurance and to develop positive emotions.

Younger pupils may sit on an adult's lap if they require comfort or reassurance, particularly in the case of distress; this type of contact is only made with the consent of the child. When children are upset, adults are advised to use their knowledge of the child and the support that child may benefit from to make a judgement as to whether or not physical contact is the most suitable course of action. If this is the case then adults must maintain this physical level of support for only as long as necessary and stop when the child's emotions are regulated.

It is inadvisable to encourage a child to sit on a lap for reasons other than they if they are upset. If a child needs support to sit and focus with peers the supporting adult is advised to sit by them to offer encouragement and not to ask them if they would like to sit on a lap.

The school understands that pupils are not always aware of the boundaries between staff and pupils and thus may try to engage in physical contact such as lap-sitting or inappropriate hand-holding and hugging. Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff will explain to the pupil why it is unacceptable.

If a pupil is unhappy with any form of safe touch, the member of staff will retract immediately in order to respect the pupil's wishes.

Medical Care

Touch may be needed to provide medical care such as First Aid (see relevant guidance) and to support pupils with their medical and / or physical needs in line with their Individual Health Care Plans.

Intimate Care

Touch is necessary in order to carry out and support pupils' personal care and intimate care routines (see Intimate Care Policy).

Roles and Responsibilities

- All members of staff at our school have a duty of care towards pupils, and must be aware of the boundaries involving physical contact.
- The Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for conducting annual safeguarding training for all members of staff and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.
- The Headteacher / DSL is responsible for ensuring that, where it is used, all staff engage in safe touch with pupils.
- Staff should ensure that they understand the reasons that they are using touch and how to use it effectively.
- All staff have a responsibility to ensure safe and appropriate practice at all times.
- All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or unsafe at our school as a result of inappropriate touch.
- All members of staff have a responsibility to report any instances of inappropriate touch to the Headteacher / DSL.
- The school has a responsibility for ensuring that they create and promote a culture in which pupils' wishes and feelings are respected.

Reasonable Force

It is recognised that in specific circumstances of to prevent pupils injuring themselves or others, damaging property, committing an offence or to maintain good order and discipline at the school or among pupils, members of staff have the power to use reasonable force.

Please see "The Use of Reasonable Force" in our Behaviour Policy.

We follow the guidelines set out by Cornwall Council on the use of reasonable force and the DfE Use of Reasonable Force (2013) advice.

Reporting Inappropriate Touch

- If a pupil attempts to engage in any inappropriate touch, the member of staff involved will report this immediately to the Headteacher / DSL.
- If another member of staff suspects or witnesses inappropriate physical contact, whereby the member of staff is willingly involved, they will report this to the Headteacher / DSL immediately.
- The Headteacher / DSL will keep a written record of all instances of reported inappropriate touch.
- Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

Training of Staff

The Headteacher / DSL will conduct safeguarding training for all members of staff in relation to safe touch.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to The Children Act 1989.

This policy will also have due regard to the following guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- DfE 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2018
- Guidance for Safer Work Practices for Adults who work with Children and Young People (2015)
- DfE 'Use of Reasonable Force in Schools' 2013

This policy should be read and implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy

Behaviour Policy

Intimate Care Policy

Policy written: October 2022

Next review: October 2024 (or sooner if new guidance is published)