



## Touch Policy

**Date of Policy:** Autumn 2017

**Review Date:** Autumn 2020

**Member of staff Responsible:** Headteacher

This document is to provide guidelines in relation to staff members physical contact with children in school. It intends to give staff a clear picture of appropriate contact with pupils in their care.

### **Introduction**

At Spixworth Infant School, we recognise that there are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff members to have physical contact with the pupils in their care but it is crucial that they only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role. A 'no touch' approach is impractical and in some circumstances inappropriate. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background.

### **When And How Might Staff Have Physical Contact With Children?**

#### **Hugging**

At this school, we encourage staff to use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and the adult's hands on the shoulders limits the ability of the child to turn themselves into the member of staff. Children who run up to staff and hug staff 'front on' should gently remove the child's hands from around their back and move themselves into the sideways hug position.

#### **Hand-Holding**

We recognise that children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is compliant. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children, this can become a restraint. Therefore, we encourage the use of the 'school hand-hold'. This is done by the adult holding their arm out, and the child is encouraged to wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child's for a little extra security if it is required.

In summary, it is generally deemed appropriate to touch others on the upper arm which would appear to be regarded as a neutral zone in most cultures.

#### **Lap-Sitting**

At Spixworth Infant School children to not sit on the laps of members of staff or volunteers.

#### **Other forms of physical contact**

Some activities that children carry out may require staff to initiate physical contact. Some examples of times when this might be appropriate may be:

- \* Guiding a child's hand for writing activities
- \* Helping them to use tools correctly
- \* Positioning their hands correctly on a musical instrument
- \* Supporting children in PE to ensure apparatus is used safely or to correct their positioning

Staff should use their own professional judgement about appropriate touch in such circumstances and should report any incidents where an action may be misinterpreted to the Head Teacher immediately.

### **Intimate care**

Spixworth Infant School has a policy on intimate care which gives advice and guidance on physical contact with children in these circumstances. Parental approval will be sought in cases of on-going intimate care.

### **Children with Special Educational Needs**

It is acknowledged that some children with Special Educational Needs or those who have a disability may require more physical contact from staff. Where this is the case there should be a plan in place that has been discussed with parents. Records must be made of these discussions and a copy should be given to the Head Teacher.

### **Use of Physical Intervention**

The use of physical intervention to control a child's behaviour should, wherever possible, be avoided. It should only be used to manage a child or young person's behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children or an adult, to prevent serious damage to property or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances. When physical intervention is used it should be undertaken in such a way that maintains the safety and dignity of all concerned. At Spixworth Infant School Staff have been trained to use the 'Step On' method of physical intervention. In situations where restrictive physical interventions may need to be employed regularly, i.e. with children with extreme behaviours associated with learning disability or autistic spectrum disorders, a physical intervention plan must be discussed with and signed by the parents. In all cases where physical intervention is required the incident and subsequent actions must be recorded on the physical intervention form. A copy of this must be given to and discussed with the Head Teacher and the parents of the child.

Please note that although we have a touch policy and believe that contingent touch can be a positive experience for the children that we care for, this does not mean that you have to touch children, and it should also be realised that some children will not want to be touched. Please respect this.

Staff have a 'Duty Of Care' towards the children in their care. Therefore if a child is likely to be at risk from harm if you do not physically intervene in an emergency situation, you must take action. The action you take will be dependent on the dynamic risk assessment that you take at that moment in time. If the action you take in an emergency situation does not adhere to guidance from the 'Step On' training then the Head Teacher must be informed immediately and a physical intervention form must also be completed.