

Fakenham Primary Federation

ACCEPTABLE TOUCH POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with

- Whole School Policy for Safeguarding, including Child Protection
- Behaviour Policy
- Whistle blowing Policy
- Staff Code of conduct
- Safer working guidance document

Purpose

At Fakenham Primary Federation we understand that there may be occasions when we need to have physical contact with children. As part of our duty of care, there may be times when they need comforting or reassuring or in a minority of circumstances to remove a risk to other children or staff. We may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for either comfort or reward. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt students if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc. It is important for staff and parents to have a clear understanding of the schools' guidelines for physical contact.

Summary

- We use a sideways hug when children want to hug – this is our 'school hug'
- Sometimes children do like to hold hands, this is natural. Hand holding should never be used as a method of control.
- Young children may climb on to trusted adult's laps; staff should never encourage this and ensure this does not happen where they are a lone adult.
- 'Touch' should be to meet a child's need not an adult's need.
- A member of staff will always respect a child's choice to not be touched
- Staff have a 'duty of care' to pupils. If they believe there is a risk of serious harm, they will take action and, following school procedure, may physically intervene to remove a child.
- Staff will be trained in de-escalation strategies by a Federation trained STEP tutor.

Why Do We Use Touch?

We may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for either comfort or reward. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt students if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc. . Staff should take care and use their professional judgement when deciding whether to provide invention/ assistance to a child who does not require such care, even if the child requests help. Staff should ask themselves how others may view their actions. Staff should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their reasons or intentions.

How Do We Use Touch?

Hugging

At our schools, we encourage staff that are using touch for comfort or reward 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 limit the ability of the child to turn themselves into you. This can be done either standing or sitting.

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. The adult should offer their hand not grab a child's hand. 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 our schools we discourage lap-sitting but we recognise this may be natural for very young children. Children should be taught to seek comfort/attention through other means, for example the school hug. You can ask them to sit next to you if it is appropriate.

In a small minority of cases if a child needs to be 'calmed' it may be deemed appropriate to use lap-sitting; this should always be in the presence of another adult. Guidance should be sought from those trained in positive handling.

Physical Intervention in an emergency

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the students in their care. Therefore, if a student 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 make at that moment in time. It could include

- Guiding children by the shoulders out of a room
- Holding a child if they are a risk to themselves or others
- Separating two or more children

An adult or child should be sent to the office asking for assistance from a senior member of staff or pastoral lead.

If a child repeatedly require physical intervention in an emergency then a risk assessment and risk management plan will be written and further STEP training will be sought.

What to do if a child touches in an inappropriate way

At times, children may in such crisis or distress that they hold you in a way which is not described as above (e.g. 'front on' hug/lap sitting). If this should happen please ensure that you have informed a senior member of staff to protect yourself. You may be asked to make a note of this, this will be in order to record and monitor the amount of times the student is doing this to staff to see whether this is a 'controlling' behaviour, or whether the child is displaying distressed behaviour regularly.

Listening to children

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. Staff are expected to respect the wish of children.

This policy applies to:

- All staff
- Parent volunteers
- Work Experience Students
- Governors
- Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will be made aware of this policy when their child is admitted to this school.

If you have any questions or would like a further discussion regarding this policy, please speak to the Executive Headteacher, Senior Deputy headteacher, an alternate DSL or Pastoral Lead.

Digitally signed: *C. Howard* Chair of Governors

Date: September 2024

Review Date: September 2026