

Friar's Grove Primary



Statement on the use of Touch (Based on Essex Model Policy)

January 2024

How Do We Use Touch?

There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with pupils for a variety of reasons, for example:

- ❑ to comfort a pupil in distress;
- ❑ to gently direct a pupil;
- ❑ for curricular reasons (for example in PE, Drama etc);
- ❑ in an emergency to avert danger to the pupil or pupils;
- ❑ to praise a pupil
- ❑ in rare circumstances, when Restrictive Physical Intervention is warranted.

In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:

- ❑ the pupil's age and level of understanding;
- ❑ the pupil's individual characteristics and history;
- ❑ the location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present).

Within Friar's Grove Primary School this means that a member of staff may physically guide, touch or prompt children in appropriate ways at appropriate times.

Physical contact will not be made with the participants neck, breasts, abdomen, genital area, other sensitive body parts, or to put pressure on joints. It will not become a habit between a member of staff and a particular pupil.

Hugging

At Friar's Grove Primary School, 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' cuddling and the adult's hands on the shoulders limits the ability of the child to turn themselves into the adult.

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 and initiated by the child. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children, this can become a physical intervention. Therefore, we encourage the use of the 'offering an arm'. 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 hand or arm for a little extra security if it is required.

Lap-Sitting

At our school we actively discourage lap-sitting. If a child attempts to sit on an adult's lap, the adult will explain and ask them to sit next to them if it is appropriate.

Carrying

Carrying a child is to be discouraged as it does not promote independence and slows physical development and regulation. It is never acceptable to carry a child because it is quicker to move them. There may be some occasions where it may be appropriate to carry a child if it is the safest option at the time or if it is part of a child's planned provision or support.

These may include (but are not limited to):

- Transferring to specialist equipment such as hoists, changing facilities or wheelchairs
- Where a child or others are in immediate danger
- Where a child has difficulty coming away from a parent who is holding them, and there is pre-agreed written agreement with the parent that this is the only safe way for the child to be handed over to a member of school staff.

If carrying a child is required for their support and provision, this must be clearly outlined in a written, a manual handling risk assessment must be carried out and training given to staff who will be carrying the child.

Individual Approaches

Please note that although we have a touch policy and believe that physical contact can be a positive experience for the children that we care for, this does not mean that adults have to use physical interventions with children.

It should also be realised that some children will not want to be touched. Once aware of this, this will be respected by all adults, unless there is an issue of safety.

We recognise a child's individual needs and where necessary make necessary adjustments for children with disabilities or Special Educational Needs. If a child requires specific physical

contact or intimate care, this will be clearly stated and explained in their One Plan or EHCP and agreed with the child's parents.

Physical Intervention

If a child requires the use of physical intervention to guide, steer or prevent harm we will follow the guidance from the Department for Education (Use of Reasonable Force – advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governors). Before using any physical intervention, staff will use the de-escalation techniques explained in the school's Behaviour Policy.

Any use of physical intervention must be recorded on CPOMS and a 'Physical Intervention Record' attached to the CPOMS incident report. Parents will be informed by either the class teacher or a member of the Leadership Team if physical intervention was used.

Communication

Any adult in school who is concerned about any incident involving touch relevant to this statement should discuss this with the Senior Management Team promptly.

Parents/carers will be made aware of this statement on touch when their child is admitted to this school and updated about any incidents in line with this policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Friar's Grove *Physical Intervention Policy* found in the *Behaviour, Whistleblowing* and also the *Intimate Care Policy*.