

Touch Policy



Policy updated by Mr Grogan (Headteacher) in consultation with all staff: February 2024

Policy approved by Governors: March 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Taylor".

Chair of Governors

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mr M Grogan".

Headteacher

Policy shared with staff and shared on the school website: March 2024

'Never settle for less than your best'

TOUCH POLICY

Our school motto

Never settle for less than your best.

Our Vision

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, each member of our community will flourish as resilient, respectful and adaptable individuals prepared for life's journey. Along the way we will encourage and inspire each other to continue growing as beacons of light in our own lives and the wider world.

Our Mission Statement

St. George's Central seeks to provide quality education rooted in the Christian faith, serving the spiritual, moral, and educational needs of the community of which it is part.

Introduction

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with children, however, it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the pupil's individual needs and any agreed care plan.

Here at St. George's Central CE Primary School and Nursery, we see touch as an everyday act of communication by a physical means to indicate approval, affection or sympathy. Pats on the shoulder, a held hand or an arm around a shoulder are powerful and appropriate actions. Touching can be a positive reinforcement to relationships and a comfort in times of distress. It can also be an effective reinforcement to academic achievement.

Not all children feel comfortable about certain types of physical contact; this should be recognised and, wherever possible, adults should seek the child's permission before initiating contact and be sensitive to any signs that they may be uncomfortable or embarrassed. Staff should acknowledge that some children are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the child. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one pupil, in one set of circumstances, may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child.

Any physical contact should be in response to the child's needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Adults should therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action by them or a colleague could be misinterpreted, or if an action is observed which is possibly abusive, the incident and circumstances should be immediately reported to the manager and recorded. Where appropriate, the manager should consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Extra caution may be required where it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. Staff need to be aware that the child may associate physical contact with such experiences. They also should recognise that these pupils may seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances staff should deter the child sensitively and help them to understand the importance of personal boundaries. A general culture of 'safe touch' should be adopted, where appropriate, to the individual requirements of each child. Children with special educational needs or disabilities may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning and support their emotional regulation. The arrangements should be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the pupil's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny.

'Never settle for less than your best'

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12

Physical contact should take place only when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity. It should take place in a safe and open environment i.e. one easily observed by others and last for the minimum time necessary. The extent of the contact should be made clear and undertaken with the permission of the child. Contact should be relevant to their age/understanding and adults should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.

Staff should only ever be making physical contact with the upper part of the body and this primarily should be the hands, arms and shoulder area (unless when supporting children to change shoes and socks). If children are going to sit on staff laps they should sit side on, positioned on the long bone of the leg. If staff are sitting on the floor with children they once again should have the pupil sitting to their left or right side, or as described above – never should a pupil be sat between the legs.

Personal care

There may be aspects of personal care which fall within this policy such as:

- helping a child to rub in suncream to face, neck and ears;
- tying hair back;
- when getting changed for PE.

We promote and encourage that all children should undertake as much personal care for themselves as possible including the above tasks. However with our younger children, some support may be needed.

Intimate care

Sometimes it is necessary to toilet train or have to change pupils due to a range of bowel conditions associated with autism, SEND or due to pupil's delayed development. The school have an intimate care policy for this specific circumstance which should be referred to. Intimate care does not fall within the touch policy.

Safeguarding staff and pupils

Staff should always be mindful of the physical context of their actions. If accusations of inappropriate physical contact with pupils are made then these accusations can only be proven unfounded if witnesses are present. Touching as previously defined should be carefully considered or avoided in conditions that are private and in areas where there is no open access.

Policies

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with policies:

- Intimate Care Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Complaints Policy.

Governors

The governing body reviews this policy every two years. The governors may, however, review the policy earlier than this, if the government introduces new regulations, or if the governing body receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

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