

## Northwick Park Primary and Nursery Academy

### **Physical Contact with Children Policy**

The children in our school need to be dealt with sensitively, respectfully and with care. Therefore this policy is not intended to deter any proper physical contact between adults and children. Staff should respond to pupils in their care in a way that gives expression to appropriate levels of affection and provides comfort in order to ease any distress shown by the child.

1. It is important (particularly with older children) that any physical contact is not misinterpreted by the pupil.
2. Any contact should reflect the educational and social needs of the pupil e.g. physical contact is likely to occur in some PE and drama activities.
3. Physical contact should not arouse any anxieties - i.e. consideration should be given to pupils who may have suffered abuse and/or neglect.
4. Physical contact should only be given when in full view of other adults. Staff should endeavour not to be alone with a pupil. (Male staff need to be particularly conscious of this).

"Guidance on the use of Physical Intervention and force, including other physical contact in all Educational Establishments, in Essex Local Authority: May 2011" -

#### 1. The use of force-Challenging Behaviour

In the context of challenging behaviour, physical intervention with pupils is the positive use of 'reasonable' force (no more force than is needed), in order to avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's or young adult's action, or by removing the physical object which could be used to harm themselves or others. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. Control means either passive physical contact (standing between pupils), or restraint (physically holding in order to bring a pupil under control). Educational establishments should also note that the use of force is only lawful if its use is reasonable, proportionate, necessary, and where no more force than is necessary is used. They should ensure that there is clear guidance for their staff on the differences between a controlling and restraining force, and should take into consideration that there are differing levels of restraint; however, where a young person's or child's movements are severely restricted, it is strongly recommended that staff who may be involved in employing such techniques should undergo specialist training.

2. Physical Intervention: The use of Force - as an integral part of a child's and or young adult's daily physical management care.

The use of force as an integral part of a child or young adult's care should always be defined by specific individualised programmes, involving both the parents/guardians and the pupil where appropriate.

Detailed guidance for schools can be found in the following document: "Guidance on the use of Physical Intervention, including other physical contact in all Education Establishments, in Essex Local Authority: May 2011".

It is also important for all schools to note the following:

- Any physical restraint techniques should ONLY be used within an environment which aims to anticipate and defuse; therefore, proactive and preventative approaches need to be clearly defined by a school within its Behaviour Policy;
- Physical intervention to control or restrain a pupil should be used as a last resort and should take into consideration the following: student need, age and stage of development;
- Any techniques involving physical intervention i.e. either to control or restrain a pupil should observe certain principles of minimal reasonable force, and these can be found in the above guidance - Page 10;

The DfE and Department of Health does not endorse any specific physical intervention techniques, and, while there is nothing to stop an educational establishment from modifying a technique that they have selected or even inventing their own methods, provided they ostensibly comply with the principles of minimal reasonable force and are said to be 'non harmful', then the educational establishment has done all it reasonably can to act in a responsible manner.

While educational establishments are at liberty to commission their own providers for staff training, it is important to note that such providers should deliver training and developments which is specifically relevant to children/young people and educational settings. Colleagues should also be aware that there is currently no mandatory quality control for assessing whether methods are safe, effective or ethical; however, Essex County Council endorses the techniques used for proactive and preventative behaviour management approaches and the use of force which is delivered by PRICE, who are also BILD (British Institute of Learning Disabilities) accredited.

Further details can be obtained from the Children's Support Services, and the Learning and Development and Health and Safety divisions of the County Council on the Essex website.

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### **Control through physical contact**

There are occasions in school when control can be maintained by holding a child in a manner, which does not carry the force of physical constraint.

1. Re-engaging a child in their educational activities by an arm, on the shoulder or by leading them back to their seat.
2. Diverting a child from disruptive or destructive behaviour by similar means.
3. Pupils engaged in inappropriate physical behaviour may be successfully separated by being guided away calmly and gently.
4. Verbal instructions should always be given before making contact with a child.

### **Physical Restraint**

Physical restraint is the positive use of force in order to protect a child from hurting himself/herself, others or seriously damaging property. There is a continuum of possible styles of restraint from holding a hand through to secure holding to restrict kicking, punching etc. (Physical contact would usually be related to older pupils).

1. The use of physical restraint should always be a last resort, when all other attempts to control have failed, or appear insufficient to reduce the risk of danger that the pupil presents to themselves or others.
2. If the need arises to restrain a pupil, it should be in the presence of another member of staff whenever possible.
3. The minimum of force should be used and the pupil must continuously be offered the opportunity to regain self control.
4. Whilst restraining a pupil, the member of staff involved should maintain a calm voice and reassure the pupil at all times that they will not be hurt.
5. It may be necessary for another member of staff to relieve the staff member engaged in restraint, in recognition that restraint may be traumatic for staff.
6. The dignity of the pupil should be considered at all times.
7. Pupils must not be directed or held by their clothing.
8. Be aware of a child's 'personal' areas on their body and do not make contact with them.
9. All incidents where physical restraint has been necessary, must be clearly recorded on an event sheet and the Headteacher informed as soon as possible.
10. Staff must not put themselves at risk through restraining a child, do not attempt if there are any medical conditions or any underlying reasons why they should not be dealing with the situation.

**Restraint should never be carried out in anger by staff.**

#### **Avoiding Incidents of Aggressive Behaviour.**

1. Always use a calm, clear and positive approach.
2. Speak firmly and quietly.
3. Attempt to distract the pupil from the object of his/her aggression.
4. Staff should avoid being alone with a pupil who is presenting challenging/aggressive behaviour. Always seek support from a colleague whenever possible.

#### **Violence to staff**

Staff should not put themselves at risk when restraining children. If threatened with physical violence, staff should attempt to steer away from confrontation and retreat from the conflict situation. If this is not possible, staff should use the minimum amount of force necessary to defend themselves.

#### **Children who 'borrow' items.**

1. If a member of staff suspects a child of concealing items they should not have, it should be dealt with sensitively.
2. Members of staff should inform a senior member of staff, with the child present, if the child will not show what they are concealing.
3. Children will usually respond, by a member of staff holding out their hand and asking for whatever they are concealing. If this is the case, quietly explain that taking things that do not belong to them is considered to be stealing.

4. Inform parents if the incident occurs.
5. Staff should not try to take concealed items out of pockets etc that the child is wearing.

#### **Child Protection**

Staff should be aware that any form of physical contact with children could involve them in future child protection procedures. It is therefore very important that any physical contact cases with children are logged on an event sheet, and that any witnesses are listed so that the person involved with investigating the incident (usually the Headteacher) can obtain information which may be given in evidence in any child protection case.

#### **Parents**

If a member of staff is threatened by parent/carer, it should be reported immediately to the Headteacher. A decision will then be made whether the incident should be reported to the police. The incident should be recorded on an incident sheet.

**Policy updated: December 2014**

**Policy review: December 2017.**