

# POSITIVE TOUCH POLICY

<b>This policy was approved by the Local Governing Body on:-</b>	<b>January 2024</b>
<b>The policy owner is:</b>	<b>Arden Grove Infant and Nursery School</b>
<b>This policy will be reviewed by the Local Governing Body in: (unless earlier review is recommended by the Trust)</b>	<b>January 2025</b>
<b>Policy Version:</b>	<b>V2 (2023)</b>
<b>Signed by the Chair of the Local Governing Body:</b>	<b>Mrs Claire Hannant</b>
<b>Ratified by the Local Advisory Board:</b>	<b>January 2024</b>

## **1. Introduction**

At Arden Grove Infant and Nursery School we feel that the quality of a child's relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Our Positive Touch Policy takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory, child development and special educational needs, (for example autism) that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the relevant additional school policies; Behaviour and Emotional Regulation Policy, Physical Intervention Policy, Intimate Care Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

## **2. Our Philosophy**

Arden Grove Infant and Nursery School and our specialist social and emotional mental health unit, The PLACE, have adopted an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning.

All staff are trained in house by Emotion Coaching UK and Norfolk Steps practitioner trainers within the first half term induction period of employment, so that they understand preemptive and preventative methods to support a child to self-regulate; to manage their emotions and their bodies safely.

We understand therefore, that many of the emotional, and therefore behaviour, challenges that children present derive from poorly developed stress-regulation systems. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child's emotions, triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body.

For this reason Arden Grove Infant and Nursery School feel it is important to understand how they can best support children to develop good stress-regulation systems. All staff have an awareness of the basics of neuroscience and some of the important changes that take place in the body when the stress response is activated.

When focusing on physical intervention, staff are trained in a range of graduated responses to support children and as part of this, to restrain children when required. Restraint is only ever a last resort and our staff understand that not all holding is restraint. We are clear that we use appropriate touch to support our children to self-regulate and be ready and prepared for learning and indeed life.

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 child, in one set of circumstances, may be inappropriate in

another, or with a different child. In all situations where physical contact between staff and children takes place, staff must consider the following:

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

**Arden Grove Infant and Nursery School and The PLACE staff may use different types of touch and physical contact. These are:**

### **1. Casual / Informal / Incidental Touch**

Staff use touch with children as part of a normal relationship, for example, comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. This might include taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or putting an arm around the shoulders. These actions are reassuring and supportive and can prevent a situation from escalating.

### **2. General Reparative Touch**

This is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child's emotions, triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Reparative touch may include sitting on an adult's lap (with face to face always being avoided) and where possible within sight of other colleagues. This will be age and stage appropriate. Other examples of this type of touch include patting a back, squeezing an arm, hand or foot massage, whole class peer massage approaches and activities based on the Principles of Theraplay which are designed to build connection and fun.

### **3. In Play**

Our staff may adopt a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship. Contact in play may include an adult playing interactively in role play and imaginative games, in chasing and catching games, guiding construction or sensory exploration activities where adults may guide a child's hands to explore different materials or textures etc

### **4. Positive Handling/Restrictive Intervention**

Positive Handling/Restrictive Intervention will only be used in order to stop students:

1. causing injury to themselves
2. causing injury to other pupils
3. damaging property

**For full details please refer to our Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy.**

## **Teaching our children about appropriate touch**

Our policy adheres to the belief that every individual needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch.

We define 'Appropriate Touch' as touch that is not invasive, humiliating or could possibly be considered as eroticising/flirtatious.

Staff are expected to be fully aware of this policy document, and fully aware of touch that could be considered invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising, or experienced as eroticising in any way whatsoever. Should any such touch be used it would be deemed as the most serious breach of the Code of Ethics warranting the highest level of disciplinary action.

Our Safeguarding Policy and Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy further outline the necessity to ensure all children are safe in their bodies and their feelings and how the staff at Arden Grove Infant and Nursery School and The PLACE work together to ensure this is the case. Where staff are acting in the best interests of the child, they will be supported by the school.