

St Teresa's R.C. Primary



Touch Policy

March 2017

St Teresa's Primary School



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Date - March 2017

Date for review - Autumn 2019

Our goal at St Teresa's is to ensure that all children are safe and happy, working in a secure environment. Therapeutic touch is used in situations where children are distressed. In these situations research has shown that it would be unkind or increase the child's distress if touch was not employed. When children are very distressed they often ignore information provided by their senses for example they may no longer see or no longer hear. When a child is distressed, touch can be the only means of maintaining a connection with the child.

Gentle, safe contact (open mitten strategy) is appropriate if a child is hurting either himself or others or is damaging property and is so distressed and out of control that all verbal attempts to reduce/stop the behaviour have failed. Such interventions are supported and documented in the government document "New Guidance on the use of Reasonable Force in School" (DfEE 1998). All adults that use safe contact techniques are trained in the safest and gentlest means of touching a child to feel safe and soothed and to calm them down when they are very distressed. These techniques are used to prevent the child from exposing themselves or others to physical or psychological harm.

Staff are highly aware of the current climate where, due to fears of abuse, touch, which is an important form of human contact, has been almost vetoed in some schools. Our policy is based on the understanding that every individual needs to appreciate the difference between *appropriate* and *inappropriate* touch and that the use of appropriate touch can support pupils in a positive way.

Staff recognise that in some circumstances it may be more appropriate for the adult to employ alternative strategies e.g. talking to the child, allowing the child to write about or draw how they are feeling. Staff will use their professional judgement when deciding the most appropriate strategy, taking into account a range of factors which will include, the age of the child, the child's known history and any other relevant factors.

Palm massage and shoulder-holding may be employed to soothe an anxious child.

Staff will avoid any form of touch which is invasive or could be confusing or traumatic. Use of these forms of touch would be considered a breach of the Code of Conduct governing the behaviour of staff and would be subject to disciplinary action.

Only staff who have been appropriately trained may use restraint techniques. These will only ever be used in exceptional circumstances. The Physical Restraint Log must be completed to record occasions where restraint or any form of touch which may be perceived as invasive, confusing or traumatic has been employed.

Please refer to our "Intimate Care" policy for details relating to pupils with additional needs eg. nappy changing.