

Guidelines on Touching, Holding and Physical Restraint

Touching: In this context, touching can be defined as "everyday acts of communication by physical means to indicate approval, affection or sympathy".

Staff should feel able to express 'parental' affection towards the children with whom they are working. They should also feel positive and relaxed about providing comfort to ease a child's distress.

However, staff should be mindful of the physical context of their actions. We have greater protection from accusations of inappropriate physical contact with children if adult witnesses are present. Whilst there are occasions when touching will need to take place in private (e.g. comforting after bereavement, etc) staff should avoid touching when behind closed doors, in remote situations, etc., and should ensure that a colleague is either present or close-to-hand. All staff need to be sensitive to the age of the pupil and the gender issues involved. **For example, it would be inappropriate for male staff to engage in any act with pupils that might be seen as cuddling.**

Holding: Holding can be defined here as the use of physical contact to direct or calm children that falls short of physical restraint and the restriction of liberty.

Staff should feel able to reinforce what they have said to a child by means of holding, if the verbal instruction has not been heeded. For example, staff may stand in the way of a child who wishes to leave, place a hand on the child's arm or hold the child if he or she is highly distressed.

On other occasions, a child may be successfully diverted from destructive or disruptive behaviour by being led away by the hand, arm or by means of an arm around the shoulder.

Holding is a technique which can be employed to convey a sense of safety to a child who is undergoing a temper tantrum and can be used to good effect to demonstrate to a child who may be out of control that the adult is in control of the situation. However, the child should be held in a way that does not escalate the situation. This positive use of holding should be recorded and described in the child's notes at the earliest convenient moment.

How a child is held, and in which circumstances, will also depend greatly on the age and gender of the child, and to a large extent on the nature of his or her individual special educational need. It will be more appropriate to hold firmly onto some children when out and about in the environment, than on to some others. **Staff need to think about how they are holding a child and why.**

If staff have any suspicion that holding has contributed to a slip or a fall, etc., they must report the matter in the Incident Book and to the Head teacher as soon as possible. Any slip, fall or other accident occurring to a member of staff or a pupil, should be recorded on accident forms available from the School Office. **Children should not be carried, unless absolutely necessary, have a buggy available or appropriate strategies. At no time should children be lifted, without Manual Handling and Safety six guidelines, or given 'piggy back' rides.**

Where it appears that holding is being used frequently with a particular child, a review should be held to investigate exactly what are its functions for the individual concerned. One of the outcomes of such a meeting will be the drafting of a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP)

Physically Restraining: Restraint can be defined as the "positive application of sufficient force to ensure by physical means alone, that a pupil does no injury either to him/herself, a member of staff, another pupil or to property". **Staff must be able to show, though, that had such force not been used,**

immediate significant damage or danger would have occurred.

Corporal punishment is not allowed at this school. Restraint should not be seen or used as a punishment, but as a safety measure.

However, staff should be clear that "the taking of any action immediately necessary to prevent injury to any person or serious damage to property" is not prohibited.

Staff are permitted and required to take "action" where:

- a) they have concerns that a child is about to run away
- b) to protect a child from harming him/herself and others
- c) seriously damaging property

The kinds of "action" will be worked out on an individual basis and defined as far as is possible, in the child's PSP. **We should not hesitate to act for fear that our actions will be misconstrued as being punitive - provided the danger is immediate and that reasonable and moderate force is employed in restraining a child, staff will be supported by the Head Teacher, the Governors and will be protected in the eyes of the law.**

All incidents where restraint has been employed must be recorded on the log sheet attached to the PSP and reported in writing to the Headteacher as soon as possible after the incident. A copy of the log would be sufficient.

Physical restraint must not be used to:

- a) force compliance with staff instructions
- b) once the child being restrained has regained self- control

Restraint always works best when two or more members of staff are involved. Not only can a second adult be of physical and emotional support in handling the situation, but he or she can also ensure that the process does not degenerate into a struggle or grapple. Staff will also be better placed to respond if the facts of a situation are challenged, when more than one adult has been involved.

Actions from this review :-

- **The updated guidelines will be placed in the Staff handbook and on the network**
- **A log sheet to capture all incidents of restraint will be attached to all existing PSPs where needed**

Reviewed April 2008