



PATRON
HM THE QUEEN



Oxford

Appropriate Touch Policy

Policy Date: 7th August 2018

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This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- DfE guidance Use of Reasonable Force, July 2013

Aims:

- So that staff/learners know what options are available to them
- So that staff/learners know what is unacceptable
- So that staff know the agreed procedures and documentation to use
- So that learners and staff feel safe and secure

Scope

- To help manage and modify behaviour from inappropriate to more appropriate behaviour
- To define what is acceptable/unacceptable behaviour.
- To ensure a safe, secure and positive environment in which individuals are valued
- To help learning
- To make explicit to ourselves and to others how we are working
- To link with other policies (behaviour, code of conduct, acceptable use)
- To ensure consistency between learners and staff

Ethos

- No-one (staff, learners, volunteers or visitors) should be touched in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe
- Staff's ultimate aim for learners is that they are able to independently manage themselves appropriately both in and out of school
- Staff should always aim to help the learners to understand what are safe/unsafe behaviours and feelings and what is appropriate in different settings

Physical Contact:

For many of our learners, physical touch is a form of communication and such contact may not be dependent on age or ability. Seeking physical contact may also indicate an unfulfilled sensory need. If staff are in doubt about the underlying need for physical contact they must refer to their line manager. Learners who have a sensory need for touch will have strategies in place to manage this which have been agreed by the Occupational Therapist. However, staff are aware that instances of physical contact can be misconstrued. Whenever possible, more than one person should be present in a situation or activity which requires close contact, e.g. comforting a distressed learner must not take place in remote or locked areas. Where it is not possible for 2 members of staff to take part in these activities then a second member of staff must be made aware of the activity and the location.

Learners will be treated with dignity and respect and encouraged to have age-appropriate physical contact. Staff need to help learners develop this age-appropriate contact.

There are a number of learners who require physical contact to support their needs and to enable them to access a broad and balanced curriculum. This is achieved in the following ways:-

- Light massage to support learners in coping with stressful situations delivered by appropriately trained staff
- Assisting learners with daily personal care routines
- Using physical prompts to assist learner's mobility, e.g. alighting from minibuses
- Giving learners physical support to access off-site activities
- Staff may use a particular strategy to support learners who have difficulty sitting or remaining in the classroom, i.e. by sitting either side of the learner. This strategy should be agreed by all concerned with the learner and written into the learner's Personal Support Plan

Acceptable Touch:

Staff/Learners

- Sideways hug
- Seated next to staff
- Supportive hand on shoulder/arm/ hand/upper back
- Massage (as detailed above)
- Administration of First Aid

The above list will help staff to keep themselves safe from allegations of abuse. Staff will always seek to reassure and comfort a learner who is distressed for whatever reason. Whilst the learner may seek out physical conduct (e.g. sitting on lap), staff should ensure that their responses are appropriate as well as supportive.

Unacceptable Touch:

Staff/Learners

- Touching a learner's genitals, breasts, buttock, thighs except for personal care as agreed in the individual's personal care plans
- Kissing a learner
- Carrying a learner
- Face to face hug
- Allowing a learner to sit on your lap

Staff must be aware of gender issues with front-on hugs. Some learners may seek sexual gratification from this. Where a learner seeks out physical contact which is inappropriate in a school setting (front-on hugging, sitting on lap, kissing) staff should seek to draw out more appropriate contact without rejecting the learner or hurting his/ her feelings e.g. "Thank you for being kind. I like it when

we shake hands/ high five instead.” Some learners may display Sexually Inappropriate Behaviours (SIBs), perhaps due to past abuse. It is important that staff give the message consistently about what is appropriate physical contact to prevent our learners from being vulnerable to future abuse or becoming future abusers. Staff may choose to use social stories to help the learner understand what is/ is not acceptable physical contact with school staff. Accidental inappropriate touch may occur as part of a Team Teach physical restraint or in movement around school e.g. touching a female learner’s breast during a single-elbow hold. In such an incident, staff should:

- Apologise to the learner and ensure they know it was unintentional
- Record details of the incident on Behaviour Watch
- Inform parents/ carers
- Inform Designated Safeguard Lead

Acceptable Touch:

Learner/Learner

- Linking arms at break times (not in lessons)
- Sideways hugs at break times

Staff should always reinforce the learners’ rights to say ‘no’ to physical contact from learners/ staff. Learners should not be encouraged to make physical contact with others if they are uncomfortable with it.

Unacceptable Touch:

Learner/Learner

- Any incidents of learners touching each other inappropriately e.g. sexual touching must be reported to the Designated Safeguard Lead

Through our PSHE curriculum, learners are taught about appropriate touch and protective behaviours. This will help to safeguard our learners as they will be taught what behaviour is acceptable with close friends/ families and what is acceptable with acquaintances, professionals (such as school staff) and strangers.

Sarah Sherwood

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