



THE SHRUBBERIES SCHOOL

USING PHYSICAL CONTACT – Positive Handling

Members of staff may routinely use physical contact with students in order to:

- reinforce other communication, e.g., hand on shoulder while speaking;
- give physical support and guidance;
- give reassurance – communicate security and comfort;
- physically intervene and manage challenging behaviour according to the behaviour plan;
- play, interact;
- role model positive use of touch;
- respond non-verbally;
- give personal care;
- aid protection in hazardous situations;
- give therapy programmes, e.g., massage, physiotherapy programmes;
- respond to students' use of physical contact for communication and making social connections;
- reward and affirm;
- sensitively teach some students who do not want or like touch, the enjoyment and benefit of physical contact;

Knowledge and Understanding

At The Shrubberies we recognise it is important to understand that touch has a vital role in the cognitive development of pupils with special needs especially those with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. It is believed that physical contact is a means of communicating, exploring their environment and is significant to the pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. It is also vital to developing a secure attachment for students with SLD, autism, and sensory processing difficulties. Current issues concerning touch are made explicit and shared with staff at all times.

Consent

When using physical contact with pupils, consent is always sought. Pupils' responses are taken into account at all times and the indication of dislike is interpreted as withdrawal of consent. However it is understood that some physical contact is necessary in cases of personal care. Children will have a personal care plan from KS2 onwards. Opinions and preferences expressed by pupils will be taken into account where appropriate.

Documentation - Whole School



Touch is an important part of a sensory curriculum and permeates throughout a broad learning environment. This includes provision of massage, sensory integration and communication techniques. This is documented through planning and assessment records.

Documentation - Individual Pupils

Where physical contact is believed to fulfill a pupil's specific needs, whether they be educational, developmental, social or emotional, it will be stated on their care plan and/or individual plan.

Teamwork

To safeguard staff and pupils, where possible there are other members of staff present in the room when physical contact is likely to take place. It is noted however, this it is not always possible and that staffing levels do not always permit this.

Recognizing the Potential Hazards

- With students at or beyond puberty, members of staff operate maximum sensitivity to physical contact being misunderstood or misconstrued and triggering sexual arousal.
- Members of staff are sensitive to all feedback signals from the student.
- As far as is possible, staff must give maximum regard to the student's right to give consent to physical contact (there can be exceptions to this in our practice such as personal or medical care or when the safety of the child is at risk).
- Students may sometimes touch an intimate area of a member of staff's body when there is no sexual intent or understanding. It is legitimate and advisable for the member of staff to withdraw from the situation, but it is not advisable to give significant negative feedback at that moment – feedback which may be reinforcing.
- Students may sometimes become sexually aroused during personal care – at this time staff should consider carefully whether to continue at these moments and what the alternatives may be.

This Policy Statement is considered part of the Terms and Conditions of Employment for all staff at The Shrubberies School