

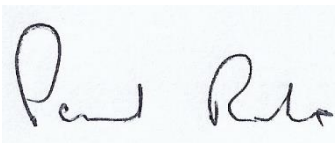


**HALLMOOR
SCHOOL**

Use of touch protocol

Date of Adoption: 29.11.2021	Autumn 1 2021
Review date:	Autumn 1 2022

Chair's name and signature:



Paul Roberts Date:29.11.2021

This protocol is in place to ensure that all staff carry out safe, confident and dignified practice when using appropriate, necessary and/or planned touch.

This protocol should be read and implemented in line with the following;

- Safeguarding Policy
- Whole School Behaviour Policy
- First aid Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Lone Working Policy

Why we use touch

Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of natural interaction with the children we care for.

Touch can be key to developing fundamental social, behavioural and attention skills, whilst offering physical support to those pupils who need it. The guidelines that follow describe the school's procedures on the use of appropriate physical touch. Touch is important and may be used routinely to support many aspects of the following:

- Communication development
- Educational development
- Physical support and development
- Social and emotional development
- Personal development

In all cases, touch will be initiated with the utmost care, in the best interest of the child and allow for the dignity of both child and adult to be preserved. It will also not seek to de-skill the child, but to support their path to the highest level of independence in the following areas as possible.

Communication development

Touch is beneficial as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication (Nind and Hewett, 1994). Touch can be a necessary means to reinforce other communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself. Touch enables staff and pupils to respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication. This is particularly likely to occur during intensive interaction or day to day greetings (hand shakes, high fives etc.) Touch cues, hand over hand signing, physical prompts and Intensive Interaction are aided and developed by the use of supportive touch.

Educational development

Touch can also be used to direct children in educational tasks and in the developing of skills. Physical prompting and support, gestural and physical prompts during learning activities such as hand-over-hand support and hand-under-hand support.

Total body movements, experiencing both fine and gross motor body movements with an adult, may form part of an introduction to a task or be used in order that the pupil may complete a given task. For example, in art it may be necessary to facilitate initial experiences with a new medium or to encourage/develop multi-sensory exploration/experience of natural materials.

Play-based activities naturally include touch. People of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical. Staff must maintain professional boundaries whilst promoting engagement in these situations.

Physical support and development

Physical support of a pupil in activities such as sensory circuits, swimming and Physical Education or to carry out therapy programmes such as massage, sensory stimulation, Tac Pac and Sensory Integration may be offered through a trained therapist or member of staff following a programme assigned by and trained therapist. In these activities, it may be necessary for staff to

- Change a pupil, with adult input ranging from minimal support to total support.
- Holding a pupil on moving and static apparatus.
- Co-active work to develop whole body awareness.
- Physical prompting.

Touch may be needed to help with mobility or as part of an activity where a pupil needs support when moving. It may be appropriate to facilitate correct positioning and to follow physiotherapy programmes.

Touch for safety may be needed for example if a pupil overbalances as a result of a need or through accident.

Social and emotional development

Touch is an effective way to communicate affection and warmth. It produces stress reducing hormones and offers emotional containment, security and comfort. Touch can provide reassurance and support for distressed or upset pupils and support the building of safe and secure relationships. Touch should be carefully considered with pupils who are sensitive to touch, touch defensive or may have a history of receiving negative touch.

Personal development

Some of our pupils require support to develop their ability to meet their own basic needs such as feeding and self-care, drinking, toileting (See Intimate Care Policy), Injury and First Aid (See First Aid policy), other Personal Care such as addressing hygiene issues (Wiping noses, washing faces, washing hands) and moving and securing into vehicles.

Whilst supporting with such activities, staff should seek to maintain the dignity of the child or young person and maintain good levels of hygiene for both parties.

Keeping staff and pupils safe

What is appropriate touch?

Staff should use their professional judgement when initiating touch, taking into account the age, ability, history and need of the child. Staff also need an understanding of the purpose of the touch in consideration of the areas detailed above. Touch instigated by staff should be purposeful and defensible, with a clear benefit to the child or young person.

Misconceptions

Touch could be misinterpreted by other staff or by children and young people. To protect themselves, staff should not lone-work (see long working policy) when working with a pupil and should seek to remain visible by at least one other adult when working with a pupil requires an element of touch.

Concerns

Where there is doubt or concern around appropriate touch, or practice is observed that causes concern, staff must report to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

All staff have a responsibility to ensure safe and appropriate practice at all time.