

Appropriate Touch Policy

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Governor Leadership: Ethos

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Consultation/signing group: SLT / S.Dockray

What the pupils need to know:

- We will learn who can safely touch me.
- We will learn why people needed to touch me.
- We will learn that we can say 'no' if we don't want to be touched.

What every other member of staff needs to know:

- We will always follow the appropriate touch policy.
- We will respect the consent of the children that we work with.
- We will always operate within the current 'Keeping safe Children Safe in Education 2021' guidance.

What every adult (including parents) needs to know:

- Cromwell High School will always ensure the physical and emotional safety of the children in our care.



Cromwell High School.

Appropriate Touch Policy.

Date of policy: Oct 2021

Review date: Oct 2023

Rationale:

Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive and good quality care for the children and young people we support. Used in the correct context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions and is of great use to the children and young people with complex needs including ASC, ADHD and sensory processing issues, with many of your young people and children having their own sensory diets to support them.

Staff often have concerns and fears about the use of touch for various reasons. This policy sets out to clarify the reasons and conditions for appropriate touch with our school:

Legal justifications and guidance:

The policy relates to the outcomes framework in Every Child Matters (2003) and The Children Act (2004)*.

Team-teach (Workbook v2021

Children and Young Persons Act (2008.)

Bild code of practice (2020 5rd edition.)

DFE – Guidance on proper or necessary touch. (20th May 2011.)

DFE – Keeping Children safe in education – Sept 2021

Purposes:

Touch is important and may be used routinely for any of the following reasons:-

For **communication** – to reinforce other communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself. To respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social connections. This is particularly likely to occur during intensive interaction* or day to day greetings (hand shakes, hugs etc.)

For **educational reasons** as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication* for people at early communication levels. To direct children in educational tasks and essential skills.



As support or guidance, for example during transitions between activities and during swimming or P.E. sessions were a verbal explanation would be too confusing or distracting.

To **play**. Play activities naturally include touch. People of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

For **therapy** – (e.g. massage, sensory stimulation, physiotherapy, rebound therapy etc.) either by the therapist or by another member of staff carrying out a therapy programme or following therapy advice. This may also include the activities recommended by the O.T. or behaviour support services.

For **emotional reasons and support**– to communicate affection and warmth. To give reassurance, to communicate security and comfort.

To enable the person to develop understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate them. (see Behaviour plans) Safe, positive touch is one of the key ideas upon which Team Teach is based.

For the **purposes of care**. Touch is necessary in order to carry out personal care for many of the people we support. (see Care documentation, training and guidance.)

To **give medical and nursing care**.

To provide **first aid** when it is required, with all first aiders on site ensuring that they follow the guidance as provided by ST Johns and First Aid direct.

To **give physical support** to people who have physical difficulties (e.g. transfers in and out of wheelchairs) and in order to **guide** people between places, rooms or activities. (see Moving & Handling Policy & guidelines.)

To **protect** children and young people from danger by physically intervening and managing challenging behaviours including the use of restraint, following the recognised guidelines and policies of Team-Teach. (see policies on Behaviour and Safeguarding Children and the individual's Behaviour Plans)


Guidelines:

Staff need to be (transparent) clear and open about **why** they are using touch and be able to explain their practice, giving clear explanations related to the situation and the need that drove them to use touch in an appropriate and safe manner.

There must be clarity and transparency in issues of touch. Wherever possible, a description and rationale for physical contact and the details of it should be documented in the young person's PBP, SEN plan or IEP following discussion with parents and other relevant parties.

The use of touch should be discussed openly, professionally and regularly between staff. Should any staff have any concerns they are to go directly to the named safeguarding team within school. (See Safe guarding policies / Roles in school signage / Induction process for staff.)





People of any age can want and need physical support **which can included the desire or need for touch**. Staff are often concerned about the issue of age-appropriateness. However, **the developmental age, emotional and communication needs of the individual are far more important than actual age**. So, a balance that promotes dignity at all times and functional access to suitable resources must be strived for at all times. **In line with the Team Teach ethos a 'Safe or side hug' should be employed in such circumstances.**

While gender, **SEN needs** and cultural factors have relevance in issues of touch, the emotional and communication needs of the individual are due equal consideration.

(The school is committed to activity respecting the cultural heritage of all pupils and staff, within the wider context of 'Duty of care'. As a school, we always aim to act in the student's best interest.)

As far as possible, the young person involved should always consent to any touch given and staff should be sensitive to any verbal and non-verbal communication they give that might indicate that they don't want to be touched.

It should always be considered by staff that for touch to provide positive experiences it should be consensual.


Staff should be sensitive to any changes in the young person's behaviour (e.g. over-excitement or negative reactions) that might indicate the need to reduce or withdraw touch, particularly during play or intensive interaction. Significant changes in behaviour should be clearly recorded through use of the **'IRIS'** recording formats and any issues brought to the attention of **key staff through the use of CPOMS the school's welfare system.**

The students we support should be given opportunities to touch each other while interacting and playing as would happen naturally for any child or young person. Attention should always be given to ensure that both parties are happy with this type of interaction. **In the case of students that have developed a sexual persona, then the required risk assessments and educational support will be put into place by the schools Personal Growth coordinator or class teacher. As such the concept of 'consent' is a core element of all the new Personal Growth schemes of work.**

Staff must be aware of potential hazards in respect of sexual issues:

- staff must be sensitive to the danger of touch being misunderstood and triggering sexual arousal. Staff must be alert to all feedback signals from the person they are working with.
- the young people we support may occasionally inadvertently or **proactively** touch intimate parts of a member of staff's body when there is no sexual intent or understanding. The member of staff should withdraw without giving significant negative feedback. **Staff should make all effort to keep their reactions to a minimum, with all incident be recorded on CPOMS,** support will be offered and appropriate plans to reduce any foreseeable risks put in place.

It is ***never*** appropriate for staff to touch a young person's intimate body areas except as part of intimate or medical care.



(see policy on Care and Care staff guidelines, the care team are reminded that best practice is to work in pairs whenever possible or to make their duties known to other staff.)

Safe Guarding.

If staff are in any doubt about issues concerning appropriate touch, or observe **any practice** that causes concern, they must take the matter directly to the Welfare Manager (If for any reasons the Welfare manager is off site then staff should contact any of the senior management team or **Head Teacher/DSL**)

Any and all matters relating to any form of misconduct will be fully investigated and documented. The information will then be sent to the relevant parties and law enforcement agencies.

Staff should be aware that there have been many instances of abuse perpetrated in residential care and educational establishments. The best method of prevention is transparency, openness and teamwork, and for staff to maintain their extremely high commitment to **dignity at all times!** **The use of peer supervision and support is very important to this and helps to safe guard all those involved.**

Team-Teach:

As a school, we have adopted Team-teach to help ensure the safety of staff and students at times of challenge or emotional distress. The school aims for all staff to be proficient in its use, however it is not school policy to insist that anyone employs these techniques beyond what is required to full-fill staff's duty of care!

(It is unacceptable that staff trained or untrained make no attempted to keep students safe at times of unforeseen and extreme danger)

Any and all use of Team –Teach techniques must be documented and all efforts by staff should be made to remain within protocol at all times! All actions taken by staff need to show they were in the person's BEST INTEREST and that they were REASONABLE AND PROPORTIONATE. **If staff witness any conduct that they feel is outside of protocol or they feel places a student at risk they are to go directly to the Welfare manager or DSL.**

(**See code of conduct** for Team-Teach – Workbooks v 2021v2 and Cromwell behaviour policy and Core policy)

Conclusion:

Touch is necessary and desirable as part of the development, emotional well being, care, education and quality of life of the students that we support.

This policy outlines when this may be needed and gives staff the direction and security for this to occur positively and productively, while still protecting the people in our care.



Cromwell High School seeks to provide the best possible access to education for all students and safe, realistic and explicit guidance for all staff that need to employ appropriate touch as part of their daily duties. (All guidance is underpinned by required safe guarding training.)





*APPENDIX

* Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction focuses on communication for people who are still basically at pre-speech levels of ability and performance. It is an approach to teaching that is based on the model of care giver-infant interaction and is characterised by regular, frequent interactions between carer and the person with severe learning difficulties. It develops the 'fundamentals of communication'.

* Fundamentals of Communication

- enjoying being with another person
- being able to attend to that person
- concentration and attention span
- carrying out sequences of activity with the other person
- taking turns in exchanges of behaviour
- sharing personal space
- using and understanding eye contacts
- using and understanding facial expressions
- using and understanding physical contacts
- using and understanding non-verbal communication
- using vocalisations with meaning
- learning to regulate and control arousal level

Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

DFE guidance – May 2011.

- holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school
- when comforting a distressed pupil
- when a pupil is being congratulated or praised
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- to give first aid.