

BLACKFRIARS ACADEMY

TOUCH POLICY

Developed:

Revised: October 2019

Review Date: October
2021



TOUCH POLICY

Rationale

Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive and good care for the children and young people we support. Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the children and young people we support, teach and care for.

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 touch.

The policy should be read in conjunction with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 and Blackfriars' policies on Intimate Care, Positive Behaviour and Safeguarding.

Purposes

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

For communication

- to reinforce other communications (e.g. placing a hand on someone's shoulder when speaking to them) or to function as the main form of communication in itself.
- to respond non-verbally 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 greetings ie (hand shakes, high five etc.).

For educational reasons

As part of the process of establishing the 'Fundamentals of Communication' for people at early communication levels. To sensitively direct students in educational tasks and essential skills.

As support or guidance

For example during transitions between activities and during swimming or P.E. sessions.

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 simulation, physiotherapy, rebound therapy etc.) either by the therapist or by another member of staff carrying out a therapy programme or following therapy advice.

For emotional reasons

- 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

For the purposes of care

- touch is necessary in order to carry out personal care for many of the people we support.

To give medical and nursing care

To give physical support

- to people who have physical or mobility difficulties (e.g. transfers in and out of wheelchairs) and in order to **guide** people between places, rooms or activities.
- to protect children and young people from danger by physically intervening and managing challenging behaviours, including any sanctioned use of restraint following the recognised guidelines and policies of the school (PROACT SCIPr UK).

Guidelines

Staff need to be clear and open about why they are using touch and be able to explain their practices.

There must be clarity and transparency in issues of touch.

The use of touch should be discussed openly and regularly between staff.

People of any age can want and need physical support / 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.

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

It should always be considered by staff that for touch to provide positive experiences it should be consensual. As far as possible, the young person involved should 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.

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.

The people 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 safe and happy with this.

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 and so must be alert to all feedback signals from the person they are working with.

The young people we support may occasionally inadvertently touch intimate parts of a member of staff's body when there is no sexual understanding or intent. The member of staff should withdraw without giving significant negative feedback in this situation and the incident should be reported/recorded.

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

If staff are in any doubt about issues concerning appropriate touch, or observe any practice that causes them any concern, they should discuss with a member of the Safeguarding team or the Senior Leadership Team

Staff should be aware that there have been many instances of abuse perpetrated in both schools and residential care establishments. The best method of prevention is transparency, openness and teamwork, and staff should always try to monitor and assist each other in carrying out their work.

Conclusion

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

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

RATIFIED BY THE ACADEMY COUNCIL



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