

Touch Policy for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Introduction

The safety and well-being of all children are of the utmost importance within our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This policy provides clear guidelines for staff regarding appropriate and professional touch with children. It aims to ensure that any physical contact is safe, respectful, and in the best interests of the child, fostering an environment where children feel secure and valued.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

This policy is designed to be in accordance with the following key legislation and guidance:

- **Children Act 1989 & 2004**
- **The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2021)**
- **The Human Rights Act (1998)**
- **The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)**

Staff must also adhere to their own professional standards and codes of conduct, ensuring that all actions are appropriate and justifiable.

Appropriate Touch

There are many situations in which touch may be necessary or beneficial in the EYFS setting. Young children, especially 3 – 4yrs old, require a higher level of comfort, this might include physical touch, compared to an older child who is not in the EYFS. However, we also take into account the developmental stage of each child and their individual needs rather than solely looking at the age of the children.

The following examples highlight situations where touch is appropriate:

- **Comforting or reassuring a child:** For example, placing a hand on the child's shoulder, offering a comforting *side hug*, in some cases allowing the child to sit on the adult's lap in a sideways or forward-facing position when the child is feeling upset or anxious. It is important to note that other adults will be present in the room during these interactions.
- **Guiding or supporting a child physically:** For example, *holding hands loosely* to help a child walk or guiding them during an activity where extra support is needed or *offering an arm*. Using cupped hands or open palm to support this.
- **Accidental or incidental touch:** In the course of normal activities, such as brushing against a child during play or arranging furniture, where the child is not affected negatively by the contact.
- **Physical care:** Supporting children in using the toilet or changing clothes, with due respect for privacy and dignity. More information in the Intimate care policy.

Inappropriate Touch

The following types of touch are deemed inappropriate and must be avoided:

- **Touch that is unnecessary:** Any form of physical contact that is not required or purposeful.
- **Invasive touch:** Any touch that invades the child's personal space, such as touching private body parts unless there is a direct care need (e.g., helping with dressing).
- **Aggressive or rough touch:** Physical contact that could cause harm, discomfort, or distress, including pushing, grabbing, or shaking.
- **Touching that causes distress:** Any physical contact that leads to the child feeling uncomfortable or upset.

Responding to Children's Needs

- **Non-verbal cues:** Staff must be aware of non-verbal cues from children that indicate they are uncomfortable or upset. If a child moves away, resists, or shows signs of distress, staff should stop the interaction immediately.
- **Verbal cues:** Children should be encouraged to verbalize their comfort or discomfort with touch, and staff should respect their wishes.
- **Cultural and personal differences:** Be mindful of cultural backgrounds and individual preferences regarding physical contact. What may be acceptable in one culture may not be appropriate in another.
- **Physical intervention:** Footnote 49 from the Statutory Framework for the EYFS - Physical intervention is where practitioners use reasonable force to prevent children from injuring themselves or others or damaging property. With use of *open mitten* or *closed mitten* to support this.

Staff Training and Accountability

- All staff, including temporary staff and volunteers, will receive regular training in appropriate touch and safeguarding practices, in line with our safeguarding policy.
- Staff will be regularly reminded of the importance of maintaining professional boundaries and using touch appropriately in the context of supporting children's development.
- Any concerns or reports of inappropriate touch will be taken seriously and investigated in accordance with our safeguarding procedures.
- Some staff in the Early Years Unit have been trained in physical intervention training - fixing and stabilising

Parental Involvement and Communication

- Parents and carers will be informed of the policy and have the opportunity to ask questions or express any concerns regarding physical contact with their child.
- As per the guidance in the Statutory Framework for EYFS stating:
3.60 Providers must keep a record of any occasion where physical intervention is used, and parents and/or carers must be informed on the same day, or as soon as

reasonably practicable. This will be recorded on a document accessed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

- If parents have specific concerns or cultural considerations regarding touch, these will be discussed when the child joins the school, and adjustments will be made where feasible and appropriate.

Conclusion

This policy aims to ensure that physical contact with children in the EYFS setting is carried out in a manner that is professional, appropriate, and in the child's best interest. All staff should demonstrate care, respect, and professionalism in their interactions with children, ensuring their safety, comfort, and well-being at all times.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant changes in legislation or guidance, to ensure it remains up to date and relevant.

This policy is designed to protect children and staff, ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for all.

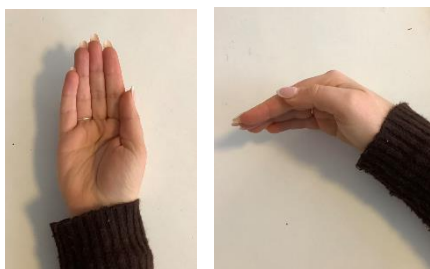
Appendix

Open mittens



- Fingers are together
- Thumb away from the fingers
- The hand should remain in the mitten to avoid the possibility of gripping. Gripping hands can result in bruising.

Closed mittens



- Flat hand
- Fingers and thumbs are together
- The hand should remain in the mitten to avoid the possibility of gripping. Gripping hands can result in bruising.

Side hug



Closed mittens are used either side of the child's shoulders to give the support and comfort.