



THORNABY C. OF E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Touch Policy

At Thornaby Church of England we are a caring community, so we do not regard touch as a negative, but rather 'Positive Touch'. Very few people would adhere to a no touch policy if it applied to people they care about.

Purpose of having a 'Touch Policy'

To set clear expectations about the use of physical touch/support.

To give guidelines about the use of physical touch when physical intervention is required.

To protect the interests and well being of children for whom staff have a shared responsibility.

To protect staff in the fulfilment of their responsibility to children.

Physical Touch

Physical touch is an essential part of human relationships. Staff may well use touch to prompt, to give reassurance or to provide support in P.E. The subject of physical touch and physical intervention has become a focus of concern in schools. Staff can understandably feel uncertain, this policy provides guidance on these issues.

The use of any physical contact should always be undertaken with due consideration, in particular Thornaby Church of England School does not condone the uncontrolled or unconsidered use of force, nor does it condone the use of physical intervention as punishment or intimidation.

Physical prompts, guides and reassurances are necessary in a range of settings. Staff should, when appropriate, feel able to use touch to comfort and communicate with pupils. Such use of touch must be done in a professional manner, avoiding any possible perception of inappropriate behaviour or even abuse.

To use touch/physical support successfully staff must;

- be non-abusive, with no intention to cause pain or injury
- be in the best interests of the child and others
- have a clear education purpose or to improve social relationships
- take account of gender issues

Senior managers should ensure that their staff are aware of any pupil who finds physical touch unwelcome. Such sensitivity may arise from the pupil's background, personal history etc. This information should be recorded in the pupil's central file in the office.

Where can we touch?

In most cultures the places where strangers are allowed to touch are extremely limited. As a general rule, the hands and arms seem to be considered neutral zones, although even here there is some dispute. Whereas women will often say that the whole arm is a neutral zone, in western cultures men tend to limit social contact to the hand and upper arm. Most Team Teach techniques focus on controlling the arms just above the elbow.

At Thornaby Church of England School the appropriate initial focus for positive touch and personal safety is from the elbow to the top of the arm.

With regards to touch and physical intervention

Positive Handling Plans should be used for pupils who have been identified as presenting a risk. The plan details the settings and situations which increase risk. If particular physical techniques have been found to be effective they should be named, along with alerts to any which have proved ineffective or which have caused problems in the past.

All physical interventions should be 'Team Teach' techniques: Help Hug, Standing Wrap, Standing Double Elbow, Sitting Double Elbow and Sitting Wrap.

General principles of good practice indicate that staff should:

- use the minimum amount of force for the minimum amount of time
- avoid causing pain or injury
- avoid holding or putting pressure on joints
- not holding a pupil face down on the ground or in any position that might increase the risk of suffocation

Managers should help staff become competent and confident in dealing with children whose behaviour is challenging. Staff need to know when a physical intervention is appropriate and how to carry it out.

Any touch/physical intervention that occurs should be logged in the physical intervention log.

Reviewed October 2012

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