



Stanton Vale

SCHOOL

Positive Touch Policy

Date Approved by Governors: 26th June 2017

Minute Number: 11/07.17

Date of Review: June 2020

Signed – Headteacher: 

Signed – Chair of Governors:

Rationale:

Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive and good quality care for the pupils we support. Used in context, and with empathy, touch supports the development of natural interactions with our pupils. 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 at Stanton Vale School

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 to another person's 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, and to direct pupils 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 may be quite tactile and physical.

For therapy

- (Massage, sensory stimulation, physiotherapy, rebound therapy etc.) provided 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 and 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:

- 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 difficulties (e.g. transfers in and out of wheelchairs) and in order to guide people between places, rooms or activities.

During **Physical Intervention**

- To **protect** children and young people from danger by physically intervening and managing unwanted behaviours including the use of restraint, while following the recognized guidelines and policies of the school

Guidelines:

- Staff need to be clear and open about why they are using touch and be able to explain their practice.
- 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 or touch. Staff are often concerned about the issue of age-appropriateness; however, **the developmental age and emotional and communication needs of the individual are just as 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.
- 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 do not 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 or negative reactions) that might indicate the need to reduce or withdraw touch. 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 happy with this.
- Staff must be sensitive to the danger of touch being misunderstood and triggering sexual arousal and must be alert to all feedback signals from the person they are working with
- A pupil may occasionally inadvertently 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 in this situation and the incident should be recorded.
- It is *never* appropriate for staff to touch a young person's intimate body areas except as part of intimate or medical care.
- If staff are in any doubt about issues concerning appropriate touch or observe any practice that causes concern they should discuss this with the Designated Lead for Safeguarding.
- Staff should be aware that there have been many instances of abuse perpetrated in education and care establishments. The best method of prevention is transparency, openness and teamwork, and staff should try to monitor and assist each other in carrying out their work.

Summary:

Touch is necessary and desirable as part of the development, emotional well being, care,

education and quality of life of the people 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 pupils at Stanton Vale School.