

Touch Policy October 2025 (No Updates)

This policy defines what is acceptable and unacceptable when coming into physical contact with children in the nursery. Throughout the day children seek touch as a means of comfort and support, our role as practitioners require us to protect and support children at all times, in some circumstances this may result in physical intervention as outlined in the **Behaviour Management Policy**. It is vital we always adhere to the **Safeguarding Policy** in keeping children and ourselves safe.

Physical intervention to restrain children is to be a last resort as the negative consequences include:

- A negative impact on breathing.
- Pain caused from holding.
- A sense of violation.

This policy is not intended to prohibit casual, informal or incidental touch as used as part of a normal relationship, such as comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. General reparative touch is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a worried, angry or sad child. All children need contact with familiar, consistent key workers to ensure they can grow and develop socially and emotionally. At times children need to be cuddled, encouraged, held and offered physical reassurance. To promote good practice and to minimise the risk of safeguarding concerns being raised we have the following guidelines:

- Although we recognise that it is appropriate to cuddle children, we give cuddles only when sought by children needing comfort to support their emotional development.
- Staff are advised to use '**The Nursery Hug**', a sideways-on embrace, in circumstances such as praise. But staff are not to 'correct' a child's hug or turn a child away when a hug is offered.
- We discourage inappropriate tickling, over-boisterous play. Any form of boisterous play should be initiated by the child and take place at appropriate times, to not disturb other children's learning or moments of calm.
- There should be no inappropriate questions such as asking children to tell them they love them and we advise staff to report any such observed practice.
- Staff are respectful of each other, the children and families in the nursery and maintain positive attitudes towards others avoiding escalating conflicts and differences of opinion.
- If it is necessary for a child to be sitting on a member of staff's lap for emotional comfort, the child is to be facing sideways using '**The Nursery Lap Sit**'. Lap sitting face to face with legs straddled around the adult, is deemed inappropriate and could make a child feel intimidated. Lap sitting with a child's back towards the adult provides no emotional support and demonstrates poor interaction skills. Children should always be encouraged to sit beside a member of staff before sitting on an adult's lap.
- Children should have the freedom to explore space within the environment. A child is to **NEVER** be pulled or dragged by the hand, wrist, arm or any other body part. Leading of children should be avoided and for confident children self-leading should be encouraged – '**Child Leading**'.
- There may be occasions when staff require children to move away for safety where an '**Open Hand Mitten Hold**', on the shoulders can be appropriate; keeping fingers together, thumb away, palms parallel to floor. Staff should communicate intention first before guiding children gently with this hold.

- Children should **NEVER** be forced down e.g. to be seated on a chair/floor, or when putting children down to sleep. Staff should consider children's individual needs e.g. they may not be tired enough to sleep, or they may want a story or they may need the toilet etc. Children are to be encouraged verbally, with positive phrases and limited options i.e. "stay sitting" as opposed to "sit down". It is preferable to allow children time to comply to instructions but where a child's basic care needs are at risk of being compromised, a closed hand mitten may be considered to guide the child to the desired area, again, using positive phrases and communicating intention. Negative language may trigger negative thoughts and behaviour and escalate a situation.

By following the nursery's **Behaviour Management Policy** physical intervention to restrain children can be avoided by creating positive attitudes and self esteem in the children at the nursery.