



Use of Touch Protocol

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Introduction

High Point Academy believes that every child has the opportunity to take part in positive and nurturing experiences. Touch and physical contact is essential in order to provide sensitive, high quality care and educational provision. Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of natural interactions with the pupils we teach and care for. This protocol sets out the reasons for physical contact between an adult and pupils.

The 'Use of Touch Protocol' is to be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Moving and Handling Policy
- Care and Control Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff code of conduct and handbook

1. Physical Contact between staff and pupils

Within our school we recognise:

First, that the use of touch constitutes a necessary and integral part of the education of all pupils; that it may be used to facilitate growth or, to meet needs, within the following areas:

- Emotional development
- Educational development
- Physical development
- Personal/social development
- Behavioural development

Second, for many pupils the use of touch is extended. This includes personal care, physical support to access the curriculum in the school and community environments, or physical support to engage appropriately in speech therapy, occupational therapy, hydrotherapy or physiotherapy programmes which are carried out by all school staff and other professionals involved. This support may range from gentle prompting to total physically assisted positioning and co-actively facilitated movement. It may involve the restraint of involuntary movements to stabilise a pupil's body position in order to provide for curriculum/environmental access. For pupils with behavioural difficulties touch may be required to prevent personal injury, injury to others or damage to the environment. The same physical touch may be appropriately deployed in a range of settings.

Examples of a particular gesture might be a hand placed on the pupil's shoulder to:

- Indicate that an adult is nearby, thus providing emotional security for the pupil to complete a given task.
- Let the pupil know that his/her behaviour is inappropriate and that he/she should remain on task.
- Prevent involuntary movements, stabilising pupil's body position.
- Acknowledge a pupils' communication.

Third, that whilst touch is often essential, it should (where possible) be negotiated with the pupil.

Fourth, pupils have a right to be shown dignity and respect by the people working with them.

Fifth, that the nature to touch changes over time 'in line with age appropriate norms.

2. Curriculum (including facilitating access)

2.1 Co-active work

Total body movements — experiencing both fine and gross motor body movements with an adult. This may be as an introduction to a task or in order that the pupil may complete a given task. For example, in art it may be necessary to facilitate initial experiences with a new medium or to encourage/develop multi-sensory exploration/experience of natural materials.

2.2 Handover

Moving the pupil's head (using flat hands) to gain eye contact or to ensure a pupil is able to listen. This is particularly relevant to pupils who experience difficulty in maintaining head control. ***This must never be used as a form of restraint.***

2.3 Sitting round a pupil

- Linked to co-active work
- To aid concentration or focus
- To model correct sitting position

2.4 Support

To facilitate correct position and to follow physiotherapy programmes — when a pupil is standing, kneeling, walking, sitting. This could be sitting behind a pupil giving hip support, sitting with pupils between an adult's legs with the pupil in long sitting position or sitting on an adult's lap to facilitate access to a table-top activity as appropriate to age. Safety Support — this may involve being there to support a pupil if he/she overbalances. It may be necessary to save a pupil as they topple. This could result in accidental bumping or bruising.

2.5 Communication

For pupils having sensory impairment or speech and language difficulties, the use of touch by the pupil or by an adult is an essential method of communication.

2.6 Feeding and drinking

- Total feeding — when a pupil is unable to feed himself/herself.
- Co-active feeding
- Introducing new tasks. (Early skills training).
- Oral skills — for example, lip and tongue awareness: teeth cleaning.
- Generally — this may involve head support, placing food into a pupil's mouth, rearranging the pupils positioning and removing objects from a pupil's mouth.
- Choking — this may involve removing a pupil from the seating that he/she is in, removal of obstruction or putting the pupil in a head down position over the knee or shoulder and slapping them on the back — this may result in bruising.
- Restraining a pupil's limbs where there is involuntary movement or self injury.
- Wiping/cleaning a pupil when they have finished their meal.

2.7 Massage

- Using oils and creams
- Use of prescribed emollients for skin conditions

2.8 Swimming

- Changing a pupil — this will range from minimal support to total support and will include the removal of clothing, putting on armbands, discs, rubber rings, swimming hats (often requires two adults), showering pupils and putting earplugs (parental permission).
- Holding a pupil on moving and static apparatus.
- Co-active work to develop whole body awareness.
- Physical prompting.

2.9 Playtime/outdoor apparatus

- Lifting and supporting.
- Swinging.
- PE games

2.10 Dressing

Support in removal and putting on of clothes.

2.11 Toileting

- Lifting of a pupil, always using hoists where possible.
- Dressing/undressing/changing/pulling pants and trousers or skirts up or down.
- Checking of nappies/pads and pants without necessarily changing them.

- Support on the toilet or specialist toilet chair — this may involve strapping a pupil in, holding pupil's legs whilst they are on the toilet and supported standing/sitting.
- Genital/anal contact — wiping, washing, application of creams/treatments.

2.12 Other Personal Care

- Wiping noses, washing faces, washing hands, cleaning teeth and hair, nail and skin care.

2.13 Comfort

- Massaging/stroking
- Often a pupil initiates holding hands in a range of settings. This may be for different reasons such as security or communication.

2.14 Transporting pupils

- Lifting/supporting pupils in or out of vehicles including wheelchairs and other equipment.
- Strapping pupils into vehicles.

2.15 Injury and First Aid

- Administrating appropriate measures and if necessary consulting First Aider.
- Administration of drugs in and out of school.

3. Personal contact between staff and pupils

3.1 Control

This is positive guidance for pupils: it may or may not involve physical contact.

- Watching or sitting close by pupil.
- Holding hands, linking arms when walking along, safe hands techniques.
- Co-actively working through an activity.
- Sitting a pupil on a chair when others are sitting on the floor.
- Placing hand on shoulder to remind him/her that an adult is there.
- To intervene physically to prevent injury to pupil or others — remove hand if pupil is biting himself, move object from pupil if it is being used in a dangerous way, to stop pupil running, e.g. along corridor, if verbal instruction is not reacted to, lead pupil away from incidents to prevent from getting worse.
- Time out — to remove pupil temporarily from class/activity. Pupil should remain under appropriate supervision of an adult.
- Sitting on floor or on chairs with pupil between two adults — safe hands techniques.

3.2 Restraint

Use of restraint may be necessary with any of our pupils. In instances where a pupil needs to be restrained in order to prevent him/her injuring him/herself or others due to ongoing behavioural difficulties, a risk reduction plan should be negotiated, in which parents are aware of the difficulties and the restraint used. Our staff use Team Teach strategies and are fully trained using an accredited trainer. Techniques are shared with parents and carers. (Further information in our Behaviour Management Protocols and Policies)

At all times we aim to maintain the dignity and safety of the pupils and the staff. Using the breakaway technique or restraints agreed between school and parents/carers may cause accidental bruising. This may involve more than one member of staff.

3.3 Holding in order to feed/change nappy etc

Occasionally it is necessary to hold a pupil in order that he/she may be fed or changed. This may involve light holding of arms — adult hands holding pupil's hand still while being fed, adult hand holding pupils' hands or legs still while nappy/pad is changed or pupil being washed. Holding pupils correctly is done with the advice of other professionals and always with the knowledge of the parents/carers.

3.4 Unacceptable

- To hurt/injure pupil.
- To put members of staff and other professionals at risk
- To regularly restrain a pupil without fully informing the parents/carers and without agreeing a care and control plan.
- To leave a pupil unattended.
- Using another pupil's physiotherapy chair or similar restraining device.

3.5 Using physiotherapy equipment

In order to use the equipment, pupils need to be lifted, supported *and* maneuvered into a variety of positions.

To give pupils appropriate physical access to the curriculum — chairs, stands (may be move short distances to position the pupil at an activity). Gaiters, wedges, wheelchairs, rollators, walking aids (e.g. tripods), trolleys, walking/standing slings with overhead tracking, specialist support chairs, splints and bikes. All moving and positioning is done following advice from a physiotherapist.

3.6 Physiotherapy routines

(in conjunction with physiotherapist)

- Stretching, sitting, standing, teaching to crawl, roll, hydrotherapy, etc.

3.7 Moving without equipment

Free standing with adult support, changing positions to aid independent movement, walking with adult support, holding hands to guide, holding hips, shoulders, elbows to guide, sitting position — long sitting between legs.

3.8 Physical contact necessary for mobility

Mobility between activity transferring pupils to other areas of the school. Pushing in wheelchairs or operating controls on electric wheelchairs.

- Facilitating the use of rollators.
- Pupils requiring physical support to move.
- Pupils requiring physical support between activities due to behavioural difficulties.
- Pupils requiring the security of an adult to move around a large space.
- When the activity is potentially dangerous and approach incorrectly e.g. the wires around a computer area, climbing into/out of the minibus, on and off PE equipment, pupil running out to a taxi/minibus, touching switches, plugs, equipment inappropriately, dangerous behaviour at the swimming pool, etc.

3.9 Risk Assessments

Where staff are engaged in physical contact requiring either restraint or potential injury (to pupil or adult) a **formal risk assessment (RRP) must be completed.**