

Sunbeams Play

A haven for children and young people with Autism

Promoting Health and Hygiene

1.17B Touch Policy

At Sunbeams Play, we have a touch policy. This means that as a member of staff you are able to physically guide, touch or prompt children in appropriate ways at the appropriate times. It is extremely important that you have read and understood this policy to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to hold/touch children and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

Why Do We Use Touch?

We may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for either comfort or reward. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt students if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc.

How Do We Use Touch?

Hugging

At Sunbeams Play, we encourage staff who are using touch for comfort or reward to use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and the adult's hands on the shoulders limit the ability of the child to turn themselves into you. This can be done either standing or sitting.

Hand-Holding

We recognise that children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is compliant. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children, this can become a restraint. Therefore, we encourage the use of the 'school hand-hold'. This is done by the adult holding their arm out, and the child is encouraged to wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the child's for a little extra security if it is required.

In summary, it is generally deemed appropriate to touch others on the upper arm which would appear to be regarded as a neutral zone in most cultures.

Lap-Sitting

At Sunbeams play we actively discourage lap-sitting. Children should be taught to seek comfort/attention through other means, for example the school hand hold or hug. If a child attempts to sit on your lap, explain to them that this is not what we do here, and ask them to sit next to you if it is appropriate.

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At times, children may in such crisis or distress that they hold you in a way which is not described as above (for example 'front on' hug/lap-sitting). If this should happen please ensure that you have informed a senior member of staff to protect yourself. You may be asked to make a note of this, this will be in order to record and monitor the amount of times the student is doing this to staff to see whether this is a 'controlling' behaviour, or whether the child is displaying distressed behaviour regularly.

Please note that although we have a touch policy and believe that contingent touch can be a positive experience for the children that we care for, this does not mean that you have to touch children, and it should also be realised that some children will not want to be touched. Please respect this.

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the children in their care. Therefore if a child is likely to be at risk from harm if you do not physically intervene in an emergency situation, you must take action. The action you take will be dependent on the dynamic risk assessment that you take at that moment in time.

Parents/carers will be made aware of this policy when their child is admitted to this setting.

Where children and young people need to be moved or escorted due to inappropriate or dangerous behaviour please see Achieving Positive Behaviour Policy (1.13)

If you have any questions or would like a further discussion regarding this policy, please speak to your manager at the earliest available opportunity.

This policy was adopted on

20th April 2015

Policy updated

December 2018

Date to be reviewed

December 2019

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of Signatory

Role of Signatory