



Touch Policy

This touch policy will be reviewed annually by the pupil and personnel committee of the governing body.

Date of last review: Summer 2018

Date of next review: Summer 2019

Policy statement

Our policy on touch has been developed with due consideration of neuro-biological research and studies based on and around the positive impact of touch.

We define the appropriate use of touch as in situations in which abstinence would actually be inhumane, unkind and potentially psychologically or neurobiologically damaging. Examples include the natural and beneficial use of touch in the comforting of a child who is in an acute state of distress. Not to reach out to the child in such circumstances could be re-traumatising and neurobiologically damaging. Failing to physically soothe a child when in the face of intense grief and/or upset can lead to a state of hyper-arousal in which toxic levels of stress chemicals are released in the body and brain. (The severely damaging long-term effects of this have been well researched world-wide and are well documented.) In such states of distress, touch can often be the only means of maintaining a connection with the child when they can no longer hear or make use of words or soothing tone/eye contact and therefore is in danger of dissociating, with all the detrimental effects that this can bring.

Gentle safe holding is appropriate if a child is hurting either him or herself, others, or is damaging property and is so incensed and out of control that all verbal attempts to engage him or her have failed. Such necessary interventions are fully in line with government guidelines and our positive handling policy. Certain staff at Carlton le Willows Academy are trained in the safest and gentlest means of holding a child, which is entirely designed to enable the child to feel safe and soothed and to bring them down from uncontrollable states of hyper-arousal (Team Teach). Whilst limits and boundaries in such circumstances can be a vital corrective experience, without such an intervention, the child could also be left at risk of actual physical or psychological damage.

The staff at Carlton le Willows Academy initiate and respond warmly to appropriate touch from all children. Each morning the children are both greeted into the school and then again into their individual classrooms. Interactions in the corridor or at the above times may include a physical interaction. This creates the nurturing, warm, caring environment that is so enabling for our pupils.

The staff at Carlton le Willows are highly aware of the current atmosphere where, due to fears of abuse, touch as a natural and vital form of human connection has been almost vetoed in some schools. Our policy adheres to the belief that every individual needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Staff are highly aware of both damaging and unnecessary uses of touch e.g. touch as an avoidance of the child's feelings and emotional pain, as an avoidance of real contact, as a block to painful memories, as an ill thought out or impulsive act of futile reassurance/gratification, as a block to important therapeutic work and conflict resolution. Equally, when a child is in deep distress, staff are aware when sufficient connection and psychological holding have been established *without* touching.

Appropriate touch

By 'appropriate touch' we mean touch that is not invasive, humiliating or could possibly be considered as eroticising / flirtatious. We agree that 'appropriate' places to touch are shoulders, arms, back. Staff may invite children to sit closely, but not on their lap (upper thighs).

Naturally, staff are also fully aware of touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising, or experienced as eroticising in anyway whatsoever. Should any such touch be used it would be deemed as the most serious breach of the code of ethics warranting the highest level of disciplinary action.

Our child protection policy and positive handling policy further outline the necessity to ensure all children are safe in their bodies and their feelings and how the staff at Carlton le Willows Academy work together to ensure this is the case.

Where staff are acting in the best interests of the child, they will be supported by the Academy.