



Positive Handling and Touch Policy

Statement of Intent

At York Childcare we aim to help children take responsibility for their own behaviour.

This will be done through a combination of approaches including:

- Positive and consistent role modelling
- Providing a stimulating, interesting and challenging learn through play environment
- Setting and enforcing appropriate boundaries and expectations
- Providing positive feedback

However, there are very occasional times when a child's behaviour presents challenges that may require physical handling.

There are two main types of handling:

Positive Handling - The positive use of touch is a normal part of human interaction. At our nursery we will exercise appropriate care when handling children. We will use positive handling in appropriate situations for example:

- Giving guidance to children (such as how to hold a paintbrush, or when balancing/climbing)
- Providing emotional support (such as placing an arm around a distressed child). There may be occasions (for example if a child is hurt/very upset) when a member of staff may feel it appropriate to hug a child to console them
- Physical care (such as first aid or toileting)
- Hand holding providing the child is compliant and it is not as a restraint



Restrictive Physical Intervention - This is when a member of staff uses physical force intentionally to restrict a child's movement against his or her will. In most cases this will be using the adult's body rather than mechanical or environmental methods.

The use of Restrictive Physical Intervention

At nursery we will only use physical restrictive handling as a last resort where all other possible de-escalation skills have been used and where there is a significant risk of harm occurring, for example when:

- A child is injuring themselves or others
- A child is damaging property

Staff will aim to prevent the use of physical restrictive handling by using positive behaviour management (see behaviour management policy) unless the situation calls for immediate action and will only be used to restore safety for all children.

Within our duty of care, staff may use physical restrictive handling if a child is trying to leave the setting and would be at risk of harm. This policy extends beyond the setting boundaries when staff have charge of children off site.

Physical Restrictive Handling will never be used out of anger or as a punishment, and will always be necessary, reasonable and proportionate.

Please refer to our Behaviour Management Policy.

Views on Touch

Touch is essential to provide sensitive and good quality care for the children and young people we support. Used in context, and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the children and young people we care for. In play or for emotional reasons children of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

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 children if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing, walking alongside busy roads etc.



How do we use touch?

1. HUGGING – At nursery we allow practitioners to hug the children, if this is wanted and instigated by the child, and with their consent.

2. 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. At nursery we would encourage all children to be independent however, we would take the hand of a child to give reassurance and to communicate security and comfort if this was deemed appropriate for the emotional wellbeing or safety of the child concerned. Hand holding can be used in circle games and songs where appropriate.

3. LAP SITTING – At nursery, we allow lap sitting for our EYFS children if this is instigated by the child. We would discourage the child from sitting on laps for a significant period of time, instead offering them a chair next to the practitioner to support independence. We rarely allow older children to sit on our laps, unless it is an exceptional circumstance and deemed necessary and justifiable, such as when a child is almost inconsolable.

4. KISSING – At nursery, we do not allow staff members to physically kiss any of the children. If there is an occasion a child kisses a member of staff, they would gently and sensitively explain that we do not kiss like that here, and offer an alternative gesture of warmth, affection or comfort towards the child e.g. a hug or blow a kiss.

At times, children in such crisis or distress decide to hold in such a way which is not described as above (e.g. 'front on' hug/lap sitting). If this should happen, we would give the child guidance as to the more appropriate methods of touch listed above.

The use of touch is discussed openly and regularly between staff. Staff understand that they are responsible for ensuring that appropriate boundaries are observed.

All staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy. They must intervene if they observe any behaviour by a member of staff towards a child that contravenes the policy and places a child at risk of harm. The member of staff will be asked to consider their behaviour, and to repeat safeguarding training. Any such incident will be followed up in supervision to ensure the member of staff understands this policy and their safeguarding responsibilities to children in their care.

Gender and cultural factors have relevance in issues of touch. The emotional and communication needs of the individual will be discussed with all concerned and due equal consideration.



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 we have to touch children and we realise that some children will not want to be touched and we respect this.