

# John Perry Primary School



## Emotional Regulation and Touch Policy

July 2019

Review date: July 2020

## John Perry Primary School Policy for Emotional regulation and Touch



### Introduction

At John Perry Primary school we believe that pupils need to be safe, know how to behave and know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently. For a very small minority of pupils the use of touch may form a vital part of their daily routine and intervention programmes. This policy outlines the recognised methods of Positive Touch that may be used throughout the school day and the reasonable adjustments that can be made to cater for pupils' needs.

### Why we use touch

Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the children and young people we care for. It can also be key to developing fundamental social, behavioural and attention skills, whilst offering physical support to those pupils who need it.

Throughout the school day staff may have cause to have physical contact with pupils for a variety of reasons such as

- To comfort a pupil in distress
- To gently direct a pupil
- For curricular reasons e.g. PE and Drama
- In an emergency to avert danger (*also see Positive Handling Policy*)
- Sensory regulation activities for children with additional needs

When physical contact takes place staff should consider

- The pupil's age and level of understanding
- The pupil's individual characteristics and history
- The location where contact takes place

Touch is therefore an important aspect of development and may be used routinely for any of the following reasons:-

Communication – touch is beneficial as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication (Nind and Hewett, 1994) for people at early communication levels. Touch is necessary to reinforce other communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself. Touch enables staff and pupils to respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social connections. This is particularly likely to occur during intensive interaction or day to day greetings (hand-shakes, high fives etc.) Touch cues, handover hand signing, physical prompts and Intensive Interaction are aided and developed by the use of supportive touch.

Educational Tasks- Touch can also be used to direct children in educational tasks and developing skills. Physical prompting and support, gestural and physical prompts during learning activities such as hand-over-hand support and hand-under-hand support.

Play activities naturally include touch. - People of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

Mobility- Physical support may also be necessary to include a pupil in activities such as; sensory circuits, swimming and Physical Education or to carry out therapy programmes. Physical support may be used as guidance and/or to help with mobility or as part of an activity where a pupil needs support when moving.

Safety - Some pupils may need moving and handling to protect students from harming themselves or others, including restrictive physical intervention. This must be carried out in line with the relevant policy guidelines and training (Positive Handling Policy.)

Emotional reasons – touch is an effective way to communicate affection and warmth. It gives reassurance and can communicate security and comfort. Touch enables the person to develop understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate them. Touch can offer reassurance and support, comforting distressed or upset pupils, communicating warmth, comfort and reassurance and to develop positive emotions.

Intimate Care- Touch is necessary in order to carry out and support pupils' personal care and intimate care routines (see Intimate Care Policy). In using touch during personal care routines staff should ensure pupils are comfortable and familiar with the staff members delivering the personal care.

Medical care – to provide medical care such as First Aid (See First Aid policy).

Safeguarding (See separate policy)

In these circumstances staff should ensure that there is another member of staff present who the pupil is comfortable and familiar with.

If you are in doubt about any issues concerning appropriate touch, or you observe any practice that causes concern, you should discuss this with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

All staff have a responsibility to ensure safe and appropriate practice at all times.

#### Keeping Staff and Pupils Safe

Staff need to be aware of the developmental age of the students they are supporting, and be clear that the physical contact used is appropriate for the individual student. Developmental levels can often be more relevant to our students than their chronological age.

To protect themselves staff should not work alone when providing touch as part of a therapy program or when supporting a pupil's sensory needs.

Staff should ensure that they understand the reasons that they are using touch and how to use it effectively.

Staff members must feel that they can question the reasons they have been asked to provide physical care and ask for clarification when unsure.

### Emotional Regulation and Touch Plan

Children with additional needs may need physical guidance and support throughout the school day. In these cases, an individual 'Emotional Regulation and Touch' plan will be created to ensure that staff, the parents/carers and the student are protected and in agreement with appropriate contact methods for the child. Parents/carers will be included in generating a sensory profile which suits their child's needs.

The Sensory Profile will include:

- Involving parents/carers so they are clear about actions the school may take.
- Sensory seeking behaviours which calm the child.
- Sensory stressors/triggers to avoid.

Parents will be asked to contribute to a copy of the Letter/Plan. The plan is a working document and any changes will be discussed and agreed upon before they are implemented.

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## Emotional Regulation and Touch Plan



Dear Parent/Carer,

As part of your child's daily routine it may be necessary for staff to use Positive Touch with your child in line with our Emotional Regulation and Touch Policy. Touch will only be used to provide care and comfort or to support them physically with educational tasks.

Your child may take part in the activities which will require a level of physical contact between staff members and your child.

Such activities may include:

- Sensory Integration – physical support
- Sensory Regulation
- Swimming and P.E lessons
- Support with communication programs such as signing, Intensive Interaction and PECs
- Support your child in order to keep themselves and others safe
- Support with mobility and guiding between activities and rooms.
- Classroom activities such as Tac Pac and Yoga.
- For comfort and reward (e.g a hug or a high five)

Where this occurs staff members will only be those who work closely with your child and that your child feels comfortable with.

Useful strategies may include: intensive interaction, weighted blankets, hugs, gentle shoulder compression, squeeze and release, and tickling.

Please indicate below if there are any strategies you do not want your child to have access to in order to cater for their additional needs. You will be able to add or remove strategies from your child's sensory profile at any time after discussions with the school:

Strategies that you wish for the school to avoid:

Child's name ..... Class .....

Parent/Carers details ..... Signature .....

SENCo signature ..... SLT signature .....