

Gladstone Primary Academy

Touch in a Nurturing School

This policy applies to all staff and children from EYFS to Year 6 (including Nurture Provision)



Chair of Governors: Mrs Christine Bartley
Headteacher: Mrs Elaine Preston

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Sept 2016)*

Gladstone Primary School

Touch Policy in a 'Nurturing School' Environment

This policy applies to all pupils at Gladstone Primary School from EYFS to Y6

To ensure safety and well being of staff and pupils within schools operating within a nurturing framework this policy wishes to establish written standards for personnel which address appropriate and inappropriate touch within our school setting.

Members of our staff recognise physical contact as an important part of child development and guidance.

"The evidence for the benefits of touch is strong. At the same time, in schools and institutions, there is (correctly) a strong focus on trying to prohibit sexual and inappropriate touch. But when appropriate touch is not encouraged, as often happens, then all touch has the potential to become sexualised. Children don't learn to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate touch. They miss out on a whole range of valuable touch experiences – friendly, nurturing, reassuring, comforting and healing. We should be instilling a sense of what appropriate touch is. Research shows that touch is critical for human development and well – being. Let us encourage the expression of appropriate touch in society." Jacky Coulter, R.M.T. Coulter Clinic Toronto.

Therapeutic touch is used in situations where children are distressed. In these situations research has shown that it would be unkind or increase the child's distress if touch was not employed. When children are very distressed that they often ignore information provided by their senses for example they no longer see or no longer hear. When a child is distressed touch can be the only mean of maintaining a connection with a child.

Adult to Child Touch

Examples of appropriate touch may include the following:

- Respecting the personal privacy and personal space of children.
- Responses affecting the safety and well being of the child (e.g. holding the hand of the child while crossing the street)
- Hugs, lap sitting for younger children, reassuring touches on the shoulders, back rubs and touch for health and hygiene (see Toileting and Personal Hygiene Policy)

Examples of inappropriate touch include:

- Coercion or other forms of exploitation of the child's lack of knowledge
- Satisfaction of adult needs at the expense of the child.
- Violation of laws against sexual contact between adults and children.
- Any attempt to change child behaviour with physical force, often applied in anger.
- Forced kisses, corporal punishment, slapping, striking or pinching, tickling for prolonged periods, fondling or molestation.

Inappropriate touching will be grounds for immediate investigation by the Designated Safeguarding Lead Mrs E Preston. Mrs C Annese is the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. The procedures set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures Policy will then be followed.

The following information provides detailed information on procedures where abuse is 'peer to peer'.

Child to Child Touch

Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by others in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding allegations may include physical abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation in relation to 'touch'

To be considered a safeguarding allegation against a pupil, it is likely that some of the following features will be found:-

The allegation:-

- is made against a pupil in relation to their behaviour towards a more vulnerable pupil;
- is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence;
- raises risk factors for other pupils in the school;
- indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this pupil and their actions;
- indicates that children/young people outside the school may be affected by this pupil.

Examples of a safeguarding allegation against a pupil could include aspects of 'touch'.

- Emotional Abuse – for example, blackmail or extortion, threats and intimidation;
- Sexual Abuse – for example, indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assault, forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting;
- Sexual Exploitation – for example, encouraging other children to attend inappropriate parties; encouraging, photographing or filming other children performing sexual or indecent acts.

Where pupils are involved in gang activity, older pupils may attempt to recruit younger pupils using any or all of the above methods. Young people suffering from sexual exploitation themselves may be forced to recruit other young people.

Minimising the Risk of Safeguarding Concerns Presented by a Pupil.

On occasion, a pupil may present a safeguarding risk to other pupils.

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another pupil, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern the DSL should be informed.

A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.

The DSL may contact the Locality Social Worker or other relevant agency to discuss the case. It is possible that Children's Social Care are already aware of Safeguarding Concerns around this young person.

The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make any referrals necessary, keeping a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome in the files of both pupils.

If the allegation indicates a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police will be contacted at the earliest opportunity and parents informed (of both the pupil being complained about and the alleged victim).

Where neither Children's Social Care nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation will take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures.

In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be undertaken and an individual risk management plan will be put in place to ensure that other pupils are kept safe and that the pupil concerned does not become a target for malicious allegations.

The plan will be reviewed continuously and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

Please see our Force and Restraint Policy for information on the Management of Actual and Potential Aggression. This policy discusses procedures where children may need to be physically restrained.