

St Michael's Playgroup TOUCH Policy.

In our setting we recognise that forming close relationships with children in their early years is essential to enable children to develop and grow as confident individuals with a real understanding of social responsibility and self-esteem. We acknowledge that touch is a necessary and desirable part of the development, emotional wellbeing, care and education of all young children. We see touch as an everyday act of communication by physical means and this policy demonstrates what that might look like. To facilitate this, all children will have a named Key Person who will develop a genuine bond and offer a settled close relationship.

The positive use of touch is a normal part of human interaction and the developmental age, emotional and communication needs of the individual child are recognised as being far more important than actual age. We understand that our younger children may need more physical contact than the older preschool children and our day to day practice will be reflective of that.

Although we believe that physical contact is central to warm, personal relationships and to the good quality care of young children, we also believe that good quality practice encompasses a full understanding of child protection and this is reflected in our policy and practice.

At St Michael's Playgroup we are aware of the need for clear boundaries for physical contact in order to protect everyone involved.

Instances which would involve physical contact include:

Consoling and reassuring a child who is upset, possibly due to an accident or disagreement, or perhaps a child struggling to separate from a parent or carer.

Occasionally, when separating a child from a parent/carer it is necessary to physically remove/transfer the child to a member of staff, with the parent/carers consent. If a child is upset we may sit them on our knee and give them a cuddle. We do not prolong this, and as soon as the child has calmed down we encourage them to play or transfer them to a chair next to us. We avoid front-on hugs, particularly when the adult is standing; if the child persists in attempting front hugging, rather than side-hugs, the adult must crouch to be on the same level as the child

Changing a nappy. We regularly change children's nappies at playgroup. Our changing area is within the toilet area and all staff are informed if a child is going to be changed. The adult changing the nappy ensures they are in view of the room and the nappy change is recorded in the diary. Appropriate touch is used to clean the nappy area and apply cream if necessary.

Supporting children who are learning to use the toilet. It may be necessary to lift and support a child on the toilet. Younger children may need their bottoms wiped, although older children will be encouraged to do this themselves. The adult will NEVER touch a child's 'private parts'.

Changing clothing. There are occasions when a child may need their clothing changed. This may be due to toileting accidents or spillages. The adult will inform other members of staff that they are changing the child. It may be necessary to wipe the child with a baby wipe but this will always be done in an appropriate manner. The change will be recorded in the diary.

Helping with coats, dressing up clothes, adjusting clothing. We may need to tuck a child's t shirt in, pull up their tights/trousers, help with dressing up clothes etc. This is always done in a quick and appropriate manner.

Holding hands. Sometimes a child may want to hold an adults hand. This may be for reassurance or to lead the adult to an activity. We may hold a child's hand to guide them to the snack table or to take them to change their nappy. Hand holding would never be used as a method of control. We use a flat hand approach to hand-holding with a thumb tucked over the hand; this means that the child is holding us rather than us holding the child. This method, whilst giving the feeling of support and comfort, means that if a child or adult trips, or falls, the hand is immediately freed and thus does not 'pull' or injure on any limbs or joints of either the child or adult.

Physical play. Sometimes it is appropriate to touch a child whilst they playing. This may be to assist them on the climbing frame, to support them on balance beams, helping them to walk on stilts etc. Any contact will be on the child's terms and with their willing participation.

As a setting we acknowledge the close emotional relationship that will develop between the child and the Key Person, however we will ensure that this does not undermine the child's attachment with their parent.

Parents/carers are made aware of this policy when they register their child with us and are given the opportunity to discuss any queries they may have regarding its content.

This policy was adopted by St Michael's Playgroup

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Manager's signature.....

Committee signature.....