

*"We all play our part in achieving excellence in everything"*

### **Touch Policy (inclusive of Positive Handling policy)**

The Pilgrim Federation is committed to the best quality care and highest standards of safeguarding for children. Our Touch policy serves as an appendage to, and should be read in conjunction with, the following policies:

- **Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy**
- **Behaviour Management policy**
- **Special Educational Needs Policy**
- **Exclusion Policy**
- **Health and Safety Policy (inclusive of risk assessment procedure)**
- **Staff Disciplinary Policy (inclusive of Staff Handbook and Staff Grievance procedure)**
- **Complaints Policy**

### **Aims and Objectives**

- To create, maintain and monitor a physically and emotionally secure environment for children and adults.
- **To ensure safeguarding of children is paramount at all times.**
- Maintain close working links with Norfolk Steps, ensuring all physical touch and any related documentation, policies and monitoring complies with the latest agreed best practice.
- Ensure that all physical touch is **reasonable**, **proportionate** and **necessary**.
- Ensure that children in distress receive appropriate comfort including physical touch if appropriate.
- Make decisions on what is deemed 'appropriate' as a staff team and with continued regard for legal frameworks, Norfolk Steps and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Create, maintain and monitor a culture of agreed practice incorporating Norfolk Steps philosophy.
- To ensure that any touch or positive physical intervention is conducted in view of at least one other staff member if possible and that staff are made aware of their own personal risk assessment when working with children.
- To ensure any allegation or complaint is dealt with in line with our complaints policy, child protection policy/procedure and with due regard for the law and its processes.
- Ensure children are aware of their right to refuse the offer of touch as a physical response to distress and ensure staff only use appropriate touch in line with the child's own wishes and feelings of security.

## Definition

The Pilgrim Federation defines 'touch' as a physical response to trauma, distress and human emotional need that would comfort, protect and enhance secure relationships. We believe to deny a child physical reassurance is against the needs of the child and their healthy emotional development in accordance with neurobiological research (SEE A & B in references). Staff also acknowledge that for some children a physical response may be an essential way of communicating if there is little or no spoken language, or a sensory impairment that makes communication difficult. To this end, staff will respond to children in distress/emotional need; including a need to share celebratory emotions, with appropriate touch.

## Appropriate Touch

All staff are aware of the definition of appropriate touch; noted here as touch that is not invasive, humiliating, erotic or causing physical or emotional discomfort. Agreed places for appropriate touch in order to comfort or congratulate a child are: back, arms, shoulders and hands. Staff at The Pilgrim Federation have given consideration to the inclusion of 'hands' in this policy. The holding of a child's hand in accordance with a child's request verbally or nonverbally, is a response to an emotional need. As shaking hands is a widely used friendly greeting, and a common appropriate parental response to emotional need, it has been deemed appropriate for use in our setting ; in particular with younger children seeking comfort and reassurance from the separation of their primary carer.

Staff at The Pilgrim Federation acknowledge the growing culture that believes it is safer to refrain from any touch due to anxieties that allegations of abuse may be made and that indeed instances of abuse do occur in the world. Staff are also aware of, and highly skilled in, the use of other methods of comfort, de-escalation, and the control of undesirable behaviour. However, The Pilgrim Federation as school settings and staff teams, believe in the importance of good quality emotional stability and the needs for developing mechanisms for maintaining that stability when non physical methods are inappropriate or have failed. It is also the belief of the settings and the teams, that all children need to be educated in what constitutes appropriate touch, so that children can recognize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch, thus empowering children to assert their rights.

## Positive Handling

All positive physical interventions are in accordance with '**Guidance on the use of Reasonable Force in School**' (DFES 1998), and the guidance set out in Section 93 of the '**Education and Inspections Act 2006**'. Positive handling techniques are adopted in response to Norfolk Steps training. Our commitment to safe, positive handling includes:

- Monitoring and evaluating our responses to challenging behaviour, with particular regard to monitoring the use and effectiveness of any positive physical interventions.
- Reviewing any positive handling plans that may be in place for individual children at agreed intervals that allow for swift adaptations to be made to meet the child's needs.

- An acknowledgement of our duty of care to all pupils and that sometimes it may be necessary to use a positive handling technique to safeguard a child/dren in crisis; or the children, adults or property at risk from a child/dren in crisis.
- All positive physical interventions are for the **minimum** amount of time, using the **lightest** possible hold and are **reasonable, proportionate** and **necessary**.
- All positive physical interventions are recorded and stored in line with the data protection act and parents/carers are made aware of the use of such interventions if/when they occur.
- All positive handling plans are developed with the collaboration and input of parents/carers, all staff that have contact with the child and any outside professionals that have immediate involvement in the child's access and inclusion in school e.g. educational psychologists, pupil referral unit staff, area SENCO etc.
- Physical intervention is **never** given for non compliance.
- All physical intervention conducted in a crisis situation will be the result of staff risk assessing the potential harm to the child/dren in crisis and the children, adults or property around them.
- Staff always respond in a timely manner to situations of crisis where there is a real danger of harm to the individual in crisis and others around them.
- Any repeated behaviours and incidents are thoroughly investigated to source triggers for challenging behaviour and seek every possible alternative to positive physical handling.
- Children and adults are given the opportunity to get out of challenging situations with dignity using agreed protocols known to all staff. Thereby ensuring no staff member or child feels humiliated during such circumstances.
- Children and staff are given time to reflect before any debrief discussions are undertaken.
- To ensure staff are well trained in safe, positive, physical handling techniques, including interventions for challenging situations and that such training is reviewed at the appropriate intervals.
- To de-escalate conflict and challenging situations to avoid the use of positive physical interventions wherever possible, ensuring that any interventions used in these circumstances are documented within the legal responsibility of the setting.
- To seek immediate, appropriate professional advice in circumstances where our positive physical handling techniques and this policy, fails to encompass the needs of a child.

If a child is exhibiting violence and/or acute levels of distress it may be appropriate and in the best interests of the child and their peers to remove the 'audience' and take the peer group somewhere safe and quiet till the crisis is over.

The wellbeing of all our children is paramount, however The Pilgrim Federation acknowledges that during positive physical interventions that are in the best interests of the child, sometimes a child may be hurt. Minor bruising or marks may occur during the process of positive physical intervention. Whilst this is always avoided wherever possible, and clearly unfortunate, the staff team recognize that this may be an inevitable outcome

where more serious physical harm to the child or others is possible resulting from the incident. The best possible outcome is always strived for.

Staff are expected to make judgement calls based on the situation in hand. They are instructed to consider the following questions:

Can I de-escalate this situation without the use of physical intervention?

Is physical intervention in the child's best interests?

Do I have to take any action; is there a real and imminent danger to be addressed?

Do I need assistance?

Why is the action I'm about to take necessary?

## **Help and Support**

The Pilgrim Federation ensures staff dealing with challenging behaviour are supported in the following ways.

- Regular appraisal/supervision and the use of line management mentoring.
- Access to Norfolk Steps resources and advice.
- Access to appropriate training and refresher training.

This policy should be looked at in accordance with the Federation Safeguarding policy