Le Murier Appropriate Touch Policy

Policy statement

Touch when used in an appropriate context, and with empathy, helps support the development of our natural interactions with the children and young people we support.

This policy was developed to teach those supporting children how to protect themselves from misinterpretations of their physical contact with children.

Staff often have concerns and fears about the use of touch for various reasons. This policy sets out to clarify the reasons and conditions for touch.

Purposes:

Positive and appropriate touch is important and may be used routinely for any of the following reasons:

For communication: to reinforce other communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself. In addition, to respond non-verbally to or, 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 five) with students with more complex learning needs

For educational reasons: as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication for students at early communication levels, and to direct children in educational tasks and essential skills. As support or guidance, for example, during transitions between activities, assisting with heartmath and during swimming or P.E. sessions

To play: play activities naturally include touch. Students of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

For therapy: (e.g. massage, sensory stimulation, physiotherapy, rebound therapy etc.) provided either by the therapist or by another member of staff carrying out a therapy programme or following therapy advice.

For emotional reasons: to give reassurance and to communicate security and comfort. To enable the person to develop understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate them.

For the purposes of care: touch is necessary in order to carry out personal care for many of the people we support

For medical and nursing care: including application of sun cream for some of our students (where parental consent has been given).

To give physical support: for students who have physical difficulties (e.g. transfers in and out of wheelchairs) and in order to guide students between places, rooms, activities and seating positions.

To protect children and young people from danger by physically intervening and managing challenging behaviours including the use of positive handling, while following the recognised guidelines and policies of the school and Team Teach. When protecting a child from danger we should always use the least intrusive and least restrictive touch, hold or intervention for the shortest time. Again this should be documented and reported through the correct channels and protocol.

Guidelines:

Staff need to be clear and open about why they are using touch and be able to explain their practice should it be questioned.

If staff are concerned then they should either speak to the Child Protection Officer or member of the Senior Leadership Team immediately.

Certain touch such as deep pressure (squeezes) should be documented within the student's Support Plan or Learner Profile (rationale and strategy given).

Staff should be sensitive to any changes in the young person's behaviour (e.g. over excitement or negative reactions) that might indicate the need to reduce or withdraw touch; particularly during play or intensive interaction. Significant changes in behaviour should be clearly recorded.

Conclusion:

Appropriate and positive touch is necessary and desirable as part of the development, emotional wellbeing, care, education and quality of life of the students that we support.

This policy outlines when this may be needed and gives staff the direction and security for this to occur positively and productively, while still protecting the students in our care.

Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all staff. All new staff will be made aware of the policy during their induction. The successful implementation of the policy (which has direct impact on teaching and learning, student achievement and enjoyment) depends upon a whole school approach, led by the senior leadership team.

Date written September 2012 Reviewed: Sept 2024

Signed:

Lee Collier (Headteacher)

Kevin Childs (Deputy Head)