



Physical Contact Policy

Approved by the Headteacher: October 2025

Review Date: October 2026

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding Children and Behaviour Management Policies.

Physical Contact Policy

Staff at Wickham Pre-School can form close bonds through the nature of their work with children. Children need contact with familiar, consistent carers to ensure they can grow confidently, feeling self-assured. At times children need to be cuddled, encouraged, held and offered physical reassurance. Intimate care routines throughout the day are essential to children's basic needs.

At Wickham Pre-School, we believe friendly physical contact is central to warm, personal relationships and to the good quality care of young children. Good quality practice in early years encompasses a full understanding of child protection. However, early years practitioners are also responsible for promoting the development of young children, based on secure attachment and emotional security. The behaviour of all practitioners needs to support children as they grow as individuals and learn to value themselves.

Acceptable Comforting

- If a child requires comforting (following an accident or on parents' departure or when noticeably tired), and if in the short term cuddles will help, these will be given.
- Occasionally, when separating a child from a parent /carer it is necessary to physically remove/transfer the child to a member of staff, with adult's consent.
- Sitting a child on an adult's knee is often a way of giving comfort or calming a child, this will be done on the child's request or with their consent.
- Occasionally there is no alternative to picking a child up, but for health and safety reasons this is a 'last resort'. Practitioners will move to a seated position as soon as possible if they need to lift a child (refer to Handling of Children Policy).
- If a child falls to sleep on a practitioner's lap, a practitioner will follow the moving and handling policy to safely transport the sleeping children to a safe sleep area.
- Other activities, often instigated by the children themselves, we will explain is not appropriate. This includes any form of kissing on cheek, forehead or lips.

Physical Contact in Play

Tickling, catching a child as part of an agreed game, or holding a child around upper body, e.g. assisting them on bikes, stilts, helping them to jump, bounce, hop etc. are acceptable physical contacts that staff may from time to time engage in during play. Although such games and activities may be initiated by the child, there will be occasions when it may be adult-led. It is vital any contact must be on the child's terms and with their willing participation. The adult will always be sensitive to the child's feelings and body language as they may not always communicate verbally. All staff are trained and give due consideration to the EYFS, safeguarding, first aid and physical handling when assisting children in their play.

Physical Handling in Relation to Behaviour Management

In line with our Behaviour Policy at Wickham Pre-School, staff aim to help children take responsibility for their own behaviour. This can be done through a combination of approaches which include:

- positive role modelling
- planning a range of interesting and challenging activities
- setting and enforcing appropriate boundaries and expectations
- providing positive feedback.

Physical Contact and Physical Handling

There are very occasional times when a child's behaviour presents particular challenges that may require physical handling. This guidance sets out expectations for the use of physical handling.

Definitions

Positive handling

The positive use of touch is a normal part of human interaction. Touch might be appropriate in a range of situations:

- giving guidance to children (such as how to hold a paintbrush or when climbing) providing emotional support (such as placing an arm around a distressed child), guiding a child to a safe space or turning them towards the right direction (always using two hands, either around the shoulders, under the arms or around their middle with the appropriate pressure).
- physical care (such as first aid or toileting). Staff must exercise appropriate care when using touch (please also refer to our safeguarding policy).

There are some children for whom touch would be inappropriate such as those with a history of physical or sexual abuse, or those from certain cultural groups. The setting's policy is not intended to imply that staff should no longer touch children.

Restrictive Physical Intervention

This is when a member of staff uses physical force intentionally to restrict a child's movement against his or her will. This will be through the use of the adult's body rather than mechanical or environmental methods. This guidance refers to the use of restrictive bodily physical intervention and is based on national guidance.

We only use restrictive physical intervention where the risks involved in using force are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force. It is not our preferred way of managing children's behaviour. Restrictive physical intervention will be used only in the context of a well-established and well implemented positive behaviour management framework with the exception of emergency situations (please also refer to both pre-school physical intervention and behaviour policy).

Some children's needs will require additional physical support. In these cases, there will be a risk assessment written by the SENCO which will be shared and agreed upon with parents/carers. All staff will have read the risk assessment and implement it accordingly.