



**Bridgelea Primary School
Bridgelea Road
Withington
Manchester
M20 3FB**

APPROPRIATE TOUCH POLICY

Implemented	June 2017
Presented by	SLT
Ratified by Governors	TBC – February 2021
Review Date	January 2022

Vision "Understanding People"

Mission Statement

"We work with people to build aspirations, connect, challenge, change and grow. We are an outstanding school and a proud founding member of the City of Manchester Learning Partnership."

- We value **SUCCESS**. Children achieve academic as well as social and emotional growth.
- We value **SAFETY**. We care for each other and keep each other safe.
- We value **CO-OPERATION**. As a school we will endeavour to co-operate with the community to inspire and empower every individual.
- We value **COMMUNICATION**. We believe that all behaviour is communication.
- We value **DEVELOPMENT**. Learning is understood developmentally.
- We value **WELLBEING**. We have a holistic approach to wellbeing across the school.
- We value **DIVERSITY**. We celebrate each other as unique individuals with rights that we respect.

UN Rights of the Child: Bridgelea 10 Articles

Article 12

You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

Article 13

You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 15

You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

Article 24

You have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

Article 27

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

Article 28

You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

Article 29

Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

Article 30

You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion - or any you choose. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

Article 31

You have the right to play and rest.

Article 39

You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

The Six Principles Of Nurture

The nurturing approach offers a range of opportunities for children and young people to engage with missing early nurturing experiences, giving them the social and emotional skills to do well at school and with peers, develop their resilience and their capacity to deal more confidently with the trials and tribulations of life, for life.

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally
2. The classroom offers a safe base
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
4. Language is a vital means of communication
5. All behaviour is communication
6. The importance of transition in children's lives

Appropriate Touch

Bridgelea works with very children who have experienced a challenging start to their lives or education. Often they struggle to communicate their emotions in a safe and regulated way. In these circumstances it is natural for children to seek comfort from the adults they trust.

Many psychological studies have shown that a lack of soothing touch in childhood, particularly during times of distress, can result in physical ill-health and problems with anxiety, aggression or depression in later life. Nurture UK recommend positive and appropriate touch to soothe and regulate children. As a Nurturing school, appropriate and nurturing touch is fundamental to our practice.

We are committed to maintaining the well being and safety of our children and staff by creating a positive and nurturing environment where the children can be understood, valued and included.

Positive and appropriate touch is a necessary and desirable part of the development, emotional well being, care and education of the children we support.

Aims

- To ensure the safeguarding of children and staff is paramount at all times.
- To ensure children learn to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- To show the benefits of a whole range of valuable touch experiences - communicating, educational, nurturing, reassuring, caring and protecting
- To ensure that children in distress receive appropriate comfort including physical touch if necessary
- To maintain close working links with Team Teach, ensuring all restrictive physical intervention and any related documentation, policies and monitoring complies with the latest agreed best practice.
- To ensure that all physical touch is reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

Purposes of touch

Appropriate touch may be used routinely for any of the following reasons:

For **communication**: to reinforce verbal/ visual communication or to function as the main form of communication in itself; responding non-verbally to another person's own use of touch for communication and to make social connections.

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

For **play**: play activities naturally include touch. Children of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be tactile and physical.

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

For **emotional reasons**: to communicate affection and warmth, to give reassurance and to communicate security and comfort. To enable the person to develop an 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 some of the children we support (see Intimate Care Policy).

To **give medical care**.

To **protect** children and young people from danger by physically intervening and managing challenging behaviours including the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention, while following the recognised guidelines and policies of the School (see Relationships, Communication & Behaviour Policy)

Guidelines

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

Staff have a duty of care towards the children at Bridgelea. There may be times when they need comforting or reassuring or in some circumstances, to be removed as a risk to other children or staff. Staff will make a dynamic risk assessment to prevent children from harming themselves or others. All staff who are authorised to use physical interventions are part of the approved school training programme.

There must be clarity and transparency on issues of touch. Physical contact and the details of it should be documented in the child's communication chart. This is shared with parents and relevant professionals when appropriate.

The use of touch should be discussed openly and regularly between staff.

People of any age can want and need physical support / touch. Staff are aware of age-appropriate touch; however, they also consider the developmental age and emotional and communication needs of the child as equally important.

While gender and cultural factors have relevance in issues of touch, the emotional and communication needs of the individual are due equal consideration.

As far as possible, the young person involved should consent to any touch given and staff should be sensitive to any verbal and non-verbal communication they give that might indicate that they don't want to be touched.

Staff should be sensitive to any changes in the child's behaviour (e.g. overexcitement or negative reactions) that might indicate the need to reduce or withdraw touch. Significant changes in behaviour should be clearly recorded on the child's communication chart. Staff are encouraged to discuss with a team and further with the Senior Leadership Team if they have any concerns.

The children we support should be given opportunities to touch each other while interacting and playing as would happen naturally for any child or young person. Attention should always be given to ensure that both parties are happy with this.

Personal Care

Staff must be aware of potential hazards in respect of sexual issues:

- the young people we support may occasionally inadvertently touch intimate parts of a member of staff's body when there is no sexual intent or understanding. The member of staff should withdraw without giving significant negative feedback in this situation and the incident should be recorded

It is never appropriate for staff to touch a young person's intimate body areas except as part of intimate or medical care (see Intimate Care Policy).

Physical Intervention

The Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy & Behaviour, Relationships and Communication Policy further documents physical intervention at Bridgelea.

All pupils and stake holders have access to the Appropriate Touch Policy and to an effective complaints procedure.

All incidents involving the use of physical intervention are clearly, comprehensively and promptly recorded on Iris. Any incidents which give cause for concern are reported to the SLT.

Debrief

The school ensures that all staff have access to relevant support structures. All staff are encouraged to seek a debrief when needed. This may take the form of an informal team discussion or a more formal request for support.

When appropriate, children are reminded and encouraged to share the reasons/ triggers for their behaviour, develop effective strategies to effectively access the world around them and continue to work towards achieving their desired behavioural expectations.

Complaints procedure

Bridgelea takes seriously all complaints made against members of staff. Procedures are in place for pupils, parents and staff to share any concern that they may have about the actions of any member staff or volunteer.

All complaints should be brought immediately to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Person in order that they may follow the appropriate procedures.

Allegations

Staff are directed to the MCSB guidelines in the matter of allegations made by pupils or other staff members. The Headteacher must be informed immediately and all procedures followed and recorded with dates, times and signatures.