

**Baby Unit for 0 – 2 year old children**

**Day Nursery for 2 – 5 year old children**

**Before and after School Holiday Care for 5 – 16 year old children**

**Primary School Holiday Care for 5 – 16 year old children**

# Physical Contact Policy

**RATIONALE**

Because of the nature of the children in our care, their age maturity and backgrounds, we endeavour to support children in a variety of different ways. We wish to help children feel wanted and valued at all times at Twixus. Many of our children either do not understand, or are still learning to understand the appropriateness of physical contact. Children look to us for approval and are testing out responses all the time.

**ADULT PROCEDURES/ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is often appropriate for children to be given some physical contact and comfort, but this must always be offered with the following caution:

1. Always ensure there are other adults around.
2. Never show favour to individual children.
3. Never touch a child in a way that could be mis-interpreted as being anything other than friendly appropriate adult-child support.
4. Where a child tries to get closer than appropriate, the message should always be along the lines of, “I like you and I enjoy being with you, but I would rather you held my arm/hand like this”.
5. Cuddles should be short and side by side.
6. Never kiss a child, and do not encourage children to kiss adults other than their parents.
7. A child should only sit on an adult’s knee for a short time and for a specific reason such as following an injury, and not too close to the body.
8. Tickling is not appropriate.
9. For our departments below pre-school there is a greater need for a more nurturing environment where it may be more appropriate for closer physical contact during some activities (comforting, settling, feeding etc). The above cautions still apply, except that sitting on a knee, or longer cuddles may be more acceptable until the child is more independent.
10. Where children require help with changing or toileting, the dignity of the child must be maintained at all times. Great care must be taken to ensure that all physical contact is specifically and only for the purpose of the operation being carried out.

Appropriate touches include:

* Hand shakes
* Shoulder hugs
* Linked arms
* Holding hands during playtimes or outings
* Guiding children using “Caring Hands”

Child to Child touching

The staff at Twixus understand that children will explore and be tactile. Children require assurance from others and develop understanding through contact and communications (both verbal and physical).

Positive interactions where physical contact is necessary and might encouraged.

Positive interactions might be:-

* Appropriate role play (child lead free play times)
* Games and sports
* Action songs and dancing

At times it may be the judgement of the adult supervising the children to discourage physical contact.

Situations that may require physical contact to be discouraged:-

* When a child is not conforming to ‘personal space’ boundaries.
* When a child is causing harm or being rough.
* Kissing.
* Cuddling.
* At Biting stage – Face/Mouth to be kept at an appropriate distance away from others.
* When touching is in anyway deemed inappropriate.
* As a tool to say ‘sorry’ (i.e say sorry and give a cuddle).
* When touching is being used to distract or create a barrier to learning.

Children will touch each other but staff will attempt to limit inappropriate or negative touching by applying safeguarding strategies, good risk assessment and vigilant supervision of all children at all times.

Children’s Response to Touch

Staff must always be aware that all children interpret and react to touch in different ways. Some children are over-demonstrative and try to demand a great deal of affection and physical contact, whilst others shy away from or have a dislike of physical contact. We must never assume that a child will accept a touch that is meant as a friendly gesture.

There may be children in our care who have backgrounds where there has been inappropriate physical contact, or even emotional, physical or sexual abuse. These children will be confused about adult-child contact and will need very sensitive support and care. Wherever there is physical contact, this must be seriously considered.

Child Protection

Wherever a member of staff feels uncomfortable about the way in which a child is using or abusing physical contact, this must be immediately discussed with the Safeguarding Designated Persons and recorded on a Safeguarding concerns form. This may need to be taken further into the Child Protection arena.

Where children make impulsive emotional approaches such as “I love you”, never reject or let down, but always respond positively by such as, “That must mean that you like me a lot, and I like you as well. I am especially pleased with you when you do your best work…”.
If this type of approach becomes inappropriate, or regular, seek advice from a senior member of staff.

Emergency Procedures for Physical Intervention

The staff at Twixus have a ‘duty of care’ to all children. If a child is becoming a danger to him/herself or others, we cannot do nothing. Obviously our first line of approach will be verbal, using a variety of de-escalation techniques, interventions and instructions.
Where these have not worked, there may be the need to intervene physically to stop someone putting themselves or others in danger. Examples of these could be:

* A child running without considering others
* An angry child about to hurt someone
* A child damaging property

Where this might happen the intervention must be using minimal force, and only enough to stop the incident. Regard must be made to The Education Act 1996 (Circular 10/98).
The child(ren) must be made aware of what is going to happen if the situation does not stop.
In an escalating or dangerous situation, reasonable, calm and considered responses could be:

* Blocking a pupil’s path
* Holding, or taking away from the incident
* Leading by the arm
* Guiding child away with hand in center of the back

AN ADULT WITNESS MUST BE PRESENT DURING SUCH INTERVENTIONS

Such an incident must be reported on an incident form and reported to the department manager and/or Safeguarding Designated Person.

***Acceptance and Application of Terms:*** *The Management and Staff at the Twixus Childcare Centre has agreed (by signature) to uphold the legislative terms and working practices of this policy. This policy will be reviewed annually and/or when legislative terms or practical application requires amendments.*