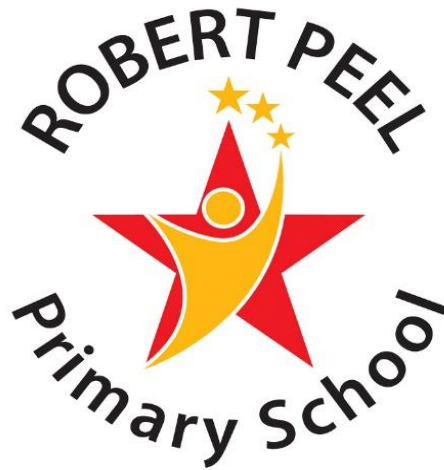


Robert Peel Primary School

Permissible Touch Policy



Date policy last reviewed: April 2025

Signed by:

_____ Headteacher Date: _____

_____ Chair of Governors Date: _____

Purpose

At Robert Peel we understand that there may be occasions when we need to have physical contact with children. As part of our duty of care to your child, there may be times when they need comforting or reassuring or in a minority of circumstances to remove a risk to other children or staff. We may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for either comfort or reward. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt pupils if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc. It is important for staff and parents to have a clear understanding of the schools guidelines for physical contact.

Summary

- We use a sideways hug when children want to hug – this is our ‘school hug’
- Sometimes children do like to hold hands, this is natural. Hand holding would never be used as a method of control or restraint.
- Lap sitting may be used with younger children when comfort or reassurance may be required.
- A member of staff will always respect a child’s choice to not be touched
- Staff have a ‘duty of care’ to pupils. If they believe there is a risk of serious harm, they will take action, and following school procedure, may physically intervene to remove a child.
- Staff have been trained in de-escalation strategies and Team Teach strategies.

Roles and responsibilities

This policy applies to:

- All staff
- Parent volunteers
- Teaching Students
- Work Experience Students
- Governors
- Parents/Carers

Arrangements for Monitoring & Evaluation

The aims of this policy will be monitored alongside the whole school Safeguarding Policy. At our school, we have a Permissible Touch Policy. This means that as a member of staff you are able to physically guide, touch or prompt children in appropriate ways at the appropriate times. It is extremely important that you have read and understood this policy to appreciate the reasons why we may choose to hold/touch children and the appropriate ways in which we do so.

Why Do We Use Touch?

We may choose to hold children for a variety of reasons, but in general terms we would normally do so for either comfort or reward. We may also need to physically touch, guide or prompt pupils if they require personal care, assistance with writing, eating, dressing etc. Staff should take care and use their professional judgement when deciding whether to provide invention/ assistance to a child who does not require such care, even if the child requests help. Staff should ask themselves how others may view their actions. Staff should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their reasons or intentions.

How Do We Use Touch?

Hugging

At Robert Peel, we encourage staff that are using touch for comfort or reward to use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and the adult's hands on the shoulders limit the ability of the child to turn themselves into you. This can be done either standing or sitting.

Hand-Holding

We recognise that children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is compliant. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move children, this can become a restraint.

In summary, it is generally deemed appropriate to touch others on the upper arm which would appear to be regarded as a neutral zone in most cultures.

Lap-Sitting

Lap sitting may be used with younger children when reassurance or comfort is required. Where possible children are taught to seek comfort/attention through other means, for example sitting next to an adult, holding hands or a hug. If a child sits on a member of staff's lap then this should be for a short period until the child is settled and able to rejoin their group or complete their work. It is acknowledged that not all staff are comfortable with a child sitting on their lap and that right is respected.

At times, children may be in such crisis or distress that they hold you in a way which is not described as above (e.g. 'front on' hug/round the neck). If this should happen please ensure that you have informed a senior member of staff to protect yourself. You may be asked to make a note of this, this will be in order to record and monitor the amount of times the pupil is doing this to staff to see whether this is a 'controlling' behaviour, or whether the child is displaying distressed behaviour regularly.

Please note that although we have a Permissible Touch Policy and believe that contingent touch can be a positive experience for the children that we care for, this does not mean that you have to touch children, and it should also be realised that some children will not want to be touched. Please respect this.

We also have within our Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and Positive Handling Policy, a section on restrictive intervention, please ensure that you are familiar with this.

Staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the pupils in their care. Therefore if a pupil is likely to be at risk from harm if you do not physically intervene in an emergency situation, you must take action. The action you take will be dependent on the dynamic risk assessment that you make at that moment in time.

Parents/carers will be made aware of this policy when their child is admitted to this school.

If you have any questions or would like a further discussion regarding this policy, please speak to your line manager at the earliest available opportunity.