

Protocol for the use of Touch

Rationale: Touch is an integral part of providing sensitive and good quality care for the pupils we support in The Special Class and ASD Class. The purpose of this document is to provide practical safeguards and guidelines for the use of physical contact.

We have some students who display emotional, physiological, cognitive and communication behaviours associated with very early levels of development. Touch is likely to be the most fundamental, tangible, foundational form of communication; to some extent establishing a foundation for all further communication development.

Purposes:

- For Communication – to reinforce other communication, gain attention or to function as the main form of communication, ie Tactile signing. Touch can also be used to respond non verbally, ie prompting, using PECs , greetings, Intensive Interaction
- For therapy – ie massage, sensory stimulation, physiotherapy and hydrotherapy.
- For emotional reasons – To communicate affection, give reassurance, communicate security and comfort. To enable a person to develop an understanding of these positive emotions.
- For the purpose of care
- To give medical care
- To give physical support – transferring into & out of wheelchairs etc, to guide to places & activities
- To protect people – to protect people from danger by physically intervening and managing challenging behavior.

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

Some possible reasons for occasionally withholding non-routine physical contact

- May in the short term contribute to sexual arousal
- A history of physical or sexual abuse
- If distress is caused
- If member of staff feels vulnerable to allegations of improper conduct

Touch is necessary and desirable as part of the development, emotional well-being, education and quality of life of the children we support.

Scoil Mhuire Gleann a' Chaisil
