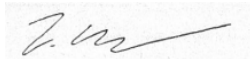




# Ysgol Penmaes

## Safe Touch and Intimate Care Policy

### Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as detailed in the school's policy review cycle. It may also be necessary to review and amend it sooner to reflect both local and national changes.

Ratified by Governing Body	Signature	Date
Acting Headteacher: Luci Clark		09.10.24
Chair of Governors: Clancy Brett		09.10.24
Next review date: Sept. 25		




**Our Vision is:** At Ysgol Penmaes we continually strive to do more than just educate, it is our aim to offer every learner the opportunity to achieve their full potential in a safe, secure and enriching environment. We offer a curriculum that promotes ambitious, capable and informed learners at a developmentally appropriate level. Penmaes places a strong focus on the well-being of all, facilitated through highly effective communication processes. Learning is delivered in a way that facilitates an immersive multi-sensory curriculum that is fun and provides real life authentic experiences which help to build resilience; positively impacting development, whilst ensuring the promotion of collaboration and independence. As a special school, we ensure a common language for learning along with celebrating and embracing Cynefin/place whilst planning, teaching and learning ensures a broad, balanced and creative curriculum promoting the 4 purposes of the Curriculum for Wales and encouraging learners to be the best they can be.

**Our Mission Statement is:** Successful Healthy Individuals Nurturing Excellence

**Our School Values are fundamental:**

- Friendship and kindness
- Resilience and perseverance
- Empathy and trust
- Communication and respect
- Responsibility and teamwork
- Positivity and creativity
- Tolerance and trust



All of our values promote healthy, positive relationships. By modeling the values we aim to raise learners' self-esteem and confidence in learning, whilst creating a positive school community environment for all.

## **Aims**

To ensure that all staff carry out safe, confident and dignified practice when using appropriate, necessary and/or planned touch and intimate care.

**This policy should be read and implemented in line with the following school policies:**


- Safeguarding Policy/Child Protection Policy
- Pupil Discipline, Behaviour and Physical Intervention Policy
- Health & Safety
- ALN Policy
- Positive Handling Policy

**Why use touch?** *(for the use of physical intervention please refer to Pupil Discipline, Behaviour and Physical Intervention Policy)*

Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the children and young people we care for and provide education for. It can also be key to developing fundamental social, behavioural and attention skills, whilst offering physical support to those learners who need it.

The guidelines that follow describe the school's procedures on the use of appropriate physical touch. Touch is important and may be used routinely for any of the following reasons:

**Communication** – touch is beneficial as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication (Nind and Hewett, 1994) for people at early communication levels. Touch is necessary to reinforce other communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself. Touch enables staff and learners to respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social connections. This is particularly likely to occur during intensive interaction or day to day greetings



(hand shakes, high fives etc.) Touch cues, hand over hand signing, hugs, holding hands, hand under hand and physical prompts are aided and developed by the use of supportive touch.

**Educational Tasks-** Touch can also be used to direct learners in educational tasks and developing skills. Physical prompting and support, gestural and physical prompts during learning activities such as hand-over-hand support and hand-under-hand support.

Play activities naturally include touch. Learners of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.


**Physical support-** may also be necessary to include a pupil in activities such as; sensory circuits, swimming and Physical Education or to carry out therapy programmes such as; massage, sensory activities/stimulation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, rebound therapy and Sensory Integration, either by the therapist or by another member of staff carrying out a programme or following therapy advice. There are times with parental consent that school staff carry out massage e.g. feet and hands in order to help regulate a learner and this is without the input of a therapist.

**Mobility-** Physical support may be used as guidance and/or to help with mobility or as part of an activity where a learner needs support when moving. Some learners may need moving and handling to protect learners from harming themselves or others, including restrictive physical intervention. This must be carried out in line with the relevant policy guidelines.

If learners require physiotherapy whilst at school, the programme needs to be agreed with parents. School staff should only undertake physiotherapy techniques/programmes with learners under the advice and guidance of the Physiotherapy service.

Under no circumstances should school staff devise and carry out their own exercises or physiotherapy programmes.

**Emotional reasons** – touch is an effective way to communicate affection and warmth. It gives reassurance and can communicate security and comfort. Touch enables the person to develop understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate them. Touch can offer reassurance and support, comforting distressed or upset learners, communicating warmth, comfort and reassurance and to develop positive emotions.



Cautionary touch should be used with learners who are sensitive to touch, touch defensive or may have a history of receiving negative touch.

### **Intimate Care-**


Intimate care can be defined as any care which involves washing or carrying out a procedure to intimate personal areas which most people usually carry out themselves but some learners are unable to do because of their young age, physical difficulties or other additional needs. Examples include care associated with continence and menstrual management as well as more ordinary tasks such as help with washing, toileting or dressing. It also includes supervision of learners involved in intimate self-care.

We recognise that there is a need to treat all learners, whatever their age, gender, disability, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation with respect and dignity when intimate care is given. The learner's welfare is of paramount importance and his/her experience of intimate and personal care should be a positive one. It is essential that every learner is treated as an individual and that care is given gently and sensitively: no learner should be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain. However it is important to note that for some learners, personal care routines cause distress and this cannot be avoided to them requiring this level of support due to being incontinent.

Where learners may require ongoing support for their intimate care needs such as toileting, parents will be asked to complete and sign a form providing details. This will ensure that school staff have up to date information rather than information passed on from previous classes which may be out of date. Details are to be discussed with parents and this includes input from physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists if necessary regarding correct positioning.

Staff involved with intimate care need to be vigilant to any issues that may require referrals to health or other agencies. In these circumstances accurate records should be kept.

All learners will be supported to achieve the highest level of autonomy that is possible given their age and abilities. Staff will encourage each individual pupil to do as much for himself/herself as possible. The daily routines of personal care can/should be seen as learning opportunities and not as barriers to teaching, for learners with PMLD a significant amount of time over the course of a day may be spent on personal care. For other learners, support and guidance provided during personal care can be an opportunity to develop independent skills.



Staff who provide intimate care should be made aware of best practice regarding infection control, including the requirement to wear disposable gloves and aprons where appropriate - and follow any recommendations in place at the time.

Staff will be supported to adapt their practice in relation to the needs of individual learners taking into account developmental changes such as the onset of puberty and menstruation.

There must be clear communication with each pupil who needs help with intimate care in line with their preferred means of communication (verbal, symbolic, etc) to discuss their needs and preferences. Where the pupil is of an appropriate age and level of understanding, they should be prepared by informing them of what will happen before starting an intimate procedure. Should a pupil refuse to be supported to change then encouragement needs to be given until they are able to cooperate.


Staff who provide intimate care need an empathetic approach and should speak to the learner personally by name, they should explain what they are doing and communicate with all learners in a way that reflects their ages and level of understanding.

Every learner's right to privacy and modesty will be respected - doors closed, staff to knock on doors and check before entering, \*Careful consideration will be given to each learner's situation to determine who and how many staff might need to be present when s/he needs help with intimate care. SEN advice suggests that reducing the numbers of staff involved goes some way to preserving the learner's privacy and dignity. Wherever possible, the learner's wishes and feelings should be sought and taken into account.

An individual member of staff should inform another appropriate adult when they are going alone to assist a learner with intimate care.

The religious views, beliefs and cultural values of learners and their families should be taken into account, particularly as they might affect certain practices or determine the gender of the carer if the staff team is not single sex.

Whilst safe working practices are important, there is no expectation that staff must be of the same gender as learners when providing intimate care as the safeguarding expectations and protocols are in place for all staff and are not gender-specific. However, there might well be occasions when a member of staff has good reason not to work



alone with a learner, for example, if the learner is known to make allegations, however it is important that all processes are transparent so that both staff and learners are supported. In very complex cases, a meeting could be called with all relevant parties if required, to agree what actions will be taken, where and by whom.

Adults who assist learners with intimate care should be employees of the school, not learners or volunteers, and therefore have the expected range of safer recruitment checks, including enhanced DBS checks.

All staff should be aware of the schools safeguarding and child protection policy. Sensitive information will be shared only on a 'need to know' basis, as per the policy. Discussions around learners' intimate and personal care routines need to happen discreetly and away from other learners. Learners will have intimate care and personal routine plans that are listed in the Individual Healthcare Plans (IHCPs) and these should be adhered to at all times. These will be subject to review.

Health & Safety guidelines should be adhered to regarding waste products.

No member of staff will carry a mobile phone, camera or similar device whilst providing intimate care.


Touch is necessary in order to carry out and support learners' personal care and intimate care routines. In using touch during personal care routines staff should ensure where possible and appropriate that learners are comfortable and familiar with the staff members delivering the personal care.

The Governing Body is committed to ensuring that all staff responsible for the intimate care of learners will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. It is acknowledged that these adults are in a position of great trust.

**Medical care** – to provide medical care such as First Aid (Liaise with School Nurse or designated First Aid trained staff).

### **Hand holding**

Staff should use their professional judgement when holding hands with learners. Offering a link of arms is preferential to hand holding. Learners often need support with walking and balance, or may need support for safety and to avoid running off. Younger learners may require hand holding due to them being too small to link arms.



Staff need to be aware of the developmental age of the learners they are supporting, and be clear the physical contact used is appropriate for the individual pupil. Developmental levels can often be more relevant to our learners than their chronological age. This supports the ethos of Team Teach.

### **Types of touch**

Staff need to be aware of the types of touch used. Learners on the Autistic Spectrum or with multi-sensory impairment and / or sensory integration difficulties may become confused and distressed by certain touch. Consideration also needs to be given to those learners who seek out touch and deep pressure in order to support regulation.

Any form of touch used with learners needs to be documented in their personal care support plans which are shared with parents, carers, guardians and external professionals with consent.

### **What does it look like to others?**

Other people may be watching who may misinterpret physical intervention procedures or the use of touch. To protect themselves, staff should, where possible, not lone work when providing touch as part of a therapy program or when supporting a learner's sensory needs such as with massage.

Massage is now commonly used with learners who have complex needs and/or medical needs in order to develop sensory awareness, tolerance to touch and as a means of relaxation.

Any adult undertaking massage for learners should have been given appropriate guidance by experienced and qualified members of staff or have attended an appropriate training course e.g. Story massage. With parental consent some learners participate in hand and foot massages with class staff in order to regulate behaviours and emotions. Some learners also seek out deep pressure and the use of weighted blankets or a Bearhug; the use of these is outlined in individual learners' personal care plans.

Staff should avoid, where possible, lone working when providing intimate care or personal care programmes where the learner will be undressing and/or requiring physical support behind a closed door. It can be useful to pair up with other learners when carrying out personal care routines making use of a screen if required so that two



staff members are present in the same room. Ensure where possible and appropriate that learners are comfortable with this. However, if there is no alternative and a member of staff is lone working with a learner, another member of staff must be informed beforehand.

Staff should ensure that they understand the reasons that they are using touch and how to use it effectively. Staff members must feel that they can question the reasons they have been asked to provide physical care and ask for clarification when unsure. Where physical intervention is necessary staff must ensure they know how to carry out the procedures correctly and adhere to the relevant policies.

### **Inappropriate Touch**

It is not appropriate to touch students in the following areas :

- Genitals
- Chest / breast
- Bottom

#### **Except for:**

- First aid Intimate/ Personal care
- Medical needs

In these circumstances staff should ensure that there is another member of staff present who the pupil is comfortable and familiar with if at all possible. For learners receiving touch of an intimate nature, where possible and if the learner has capacity, consent should be gained from the learner involved.

It is not acceptable to kiss students. If a learner initiates a kiss between themselves and a member of staff, staff need to withdraw themselves from the situation. This may not always be possible with younger learners who can be persistent with wanting to share kisses; however staff still need to withdraw and prompt the learner that it is not appropriate.

If you are in doubt about any issues concerning appropriate touch, or you observe any practice that causes concern, you should discuss this with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher.

All staff have a responsibility to ensure safe and appropriate practice at all times.

