Maesyrhandir

C.P. School

Safe Touch Policy

**“Everybody’s Somebody” “Mae Pawb yn Rhywun”**

Adopted: February 2018

Reviewed: May 2020

Signed……………………………………..Headteacher

Signed………………….………….Chair of Governors

Safe Touch Policy

# Aims

At Maesyrhandir Primary School we believe that children have the right to independence, choice and inclusion, and we seek to provide opportunities for personal growth and emotional health and wellbeing. However, rights also involve responsibilities, such as not harming other people’s rights. Children unable to control their actions or unable to appreciate danger have a right to be protected; as do other children using the centre, and staff have a duty of care to exercise.

# Rationale

Children learn who they are and how the world is, by forming relationships with people and things around them. The quality of a child’s relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing.

Several children at Maesyrhandir Primary School need to access the THRIVE programme, in order to support their emotional development. Such children, who require support from the THRIVE programme, have been subject to trauma or distress or may not have had a positive start in life. It is with this in mind that staff seek to respond to children’s developmental needs by using appropriate safe touch.

Our policy takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills. At Maesyrhandir Primary School, we have adopted an informed, evidence based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning.

Our policy rests on the belief that every member of staff need to know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Hence, staff need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference. Equally, when a child is in deep distress, staff are trained to know when and how sufficient connection and psychological holding can be provided without touching.

Different Types of Touch

There are five different types of touch and physical contact that may be used, these are:

# Casual / Informal / Incidental Touch

Staff use touch with pupils as part of a normal relationship, for example, comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. This might include putting an arm out to bar an exit from a room, taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or putting an arm around the shoulders. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating.

# General Reparative Touch

This is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of claming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child’s emotions triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Reparative touch may include stroking a back, squeezing an arm, rocking gently, cuddling, tickling , sitting on an adult’s lap, or hand or foot massage.

# Contact Play

Contact play is used by staff adopting a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship. This will only take place when the child has developed a trusting relationship with the adult and when they feel completely comfortable and at ease with this type of contact. Contact play may include an adult chasing and catching the child or an adult and child playing a game of building towers with their hands.

# Interactive Play (Rough and Tumble Play)

This structured play follows clear rules and is operated under close supervision by staff. It will only ever take place when all participants are in agreement and completely understand the rules. This sort of play releases the following chemicals in the brain:

* Opiodes - to calm and soothe and give pleasure;
* Dopamine - to focus, be alert and concentrate;
* BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotropic Factor) - a brain ‘fertiliser’ that encourages growth.

Interactive play may include : throwing cushions each other or using soft foam bats to ‘fence’ each other.

# Positive Handling (Calming a Dysregulating Child)

Trained staff will restrain a child when behaviour is :

* Unacceptably threatening, dangerous, aggressive or out of control;
* In order to avoid harm to self or others or damage to property;
* To avoid an offence being committed and / or a breakdown of good order and discipline.

Positive handling is covered by our Use of Reasonable Force and Restraint Policy.