

Physical Contact and Intimate Care Policy

Introduction and Purpose

At Melrose and its Pre-School, we recognise that all children need appropriate physical and intimate contact with trusted adults to feel safe, secure, and supported in their emotional, social, and physical development. Physical contact and intimate care will always be carried out in ways that respect each child's dignity, rights, and individual needs.

This policy sets out clear guidelines to ensure that all physical and intimate care is delivered safely, respectfully, and consistently, while safeguarding the well-being of children and staff.

Aims of the Policy

- To ensure all children receive appropriate and sensitive care to meet their physical and emotional needs.
- To safeguard and protect both children and staff during intimate care routines.
- To work in partnership with parents and carers, respecting their wishes and the needs of their child.
- To promote children's independence, privacy, and dignity wherever possible.

Types of Physical Contact

Physical contact may be necessary for the following reasons:

1. Comfort and Nurturing

Children may need appropriate physical contact daily to meet their emotional needs, such as hugs for reassurance or sitting with a trusted adult when upset (according to the child's preference). Older children will always be asked for consent before any physical comfort is offered.

2. Personal Care and Hygiene

This includes supporting young children with tasks they are not yet able to manage independently, such as:

- Changing nappies and pull-ups.
- Wiping noses, faces, and bottoms.
- Dressing and undressing.
- Washing hands and faces.
- Attending to medical needs, such as applying creams or changing dressings.

- Supporting with replacing hair accessories when needed.

Nappies and pull-ups are checked regularly and changed promptly as required to ensure children's comfort, hygiene and wellbeing.

3. First Aid

If a child sustains an injury, staff may need to administer first aid, including cleaning wounds, applying plasters or bandages, and using ice packs.

4. Physical Intervention

On rare occasions, staff may need to use physical intervention to prevent harm to a child, others, or serious property damage. Any such incidents will be recorded in line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and parents/carers will be informed.

5. Friendships Between Children

Physical contact, such as holding hands and hugging, is a natural part of friendship between children. Staff will encourage all children to ask for permission before physical contact with others and to respect individual boundaries.

Consent and Voice of the Child

Children will be actively encouraged to be involved in their own care and to express preferences. Staff will:

- Explain to the child what they are going to do before starting any care.
- Seek the child's permission wherever possible, even with very young children.
- Respect the child's right to refuse or express discomfort and adapt care accordingly.
- Encourage and support children to develop independence in managing their own personal care, in line with their age and abilities.

Maintaining Privacy, Dignity, and Safe Practice

- Intimate care will be carried out in a way that maintains a child's dignity and privacy, balanced with safeguarding needs.
- Where possible, intimate care will be provided by a trusted adult with whom the child feels secure to maintain trusted relationships.
- Staff will ensure that, where possible, another adult is aware when intimate care is taking place and, where practical, keep doors open or remain in earshot of a colleague, whilst maintaining the child's privacy.
- Staff will wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, during all intimate care routines.

All intimate care will take place using suitable, hygienic changing facilities that meet the statutory requirements of the EYFS 2025. Staff will ensure children's privacy is respected at all times, balanced with the need for safeguarding and appropriate supervision.

Partnership with Parents/Carers

We work closely with parents and carers to:

- Understand and respect each child's individual needs, routines, and preferences.
- Agree on any specific intimate care needs as part of the child's individual care plan (if required), reviewed regularly.
- Keep parents informed of any care provided outside of the usual routines or if any concerns arise.

Individual Care Plans

For children who require ongoing or complex intimate care (e.g. due to medical or additional needs), an individual care plan will be developed in consultation with parents/carers and relevant health professionals. This will ensure:

- Consistent, sensitive care that meets the child's needs.
- Clear guidance for staff on how to support the child.
- Regular reviews to adapt to any changing needs.

Staff Training and Safeguards

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and staff:

- Intimate care will only be carried out by staff who have been fully vetted and deemed suitable to work with children, including enhanced DBS checks. No unchecked adult will ever provide intimate care or be left alone with a child during any intimate care routine.
- Staff receive regular training appropriate to their role, including safeguarding, intimate care, and, where required, Paediatric First Aid or specialist medical training.
- A whistleblowing policy is in place, enabling staff to raise concerns about colleagues or practice, and all staff are trained on how to report low-level concerns.
- Risk assessments are carried out regularly to ensure all areas where intimate care occurs are safe and appropriate.

Recording and Reporting

- Any intimate care provided beyond daily routines (e.g. accidents, medical incidents) will be recorded clearly and shared with parents/carers as appropriate.

- Any concerns about a child's welfare or disclosures made during intimate care will be immediately reported to the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) following the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This policy should be read alongside the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the national Safer Working Practice for Adults Working With Children and Young People, which underpin safe, respectful and professional conduct.