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Appropriate Touch Policy

**1. Purpose**

**1.1** Dainty Little Hands Ltd. is committed to ensuring that all staff will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. It is acknowledged that employees of Dainty Little Hands Ltd. are in a position of great trust.

**1.2** Dainty Little Hands Ltd. understands its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people in their care.

**1.3** Dainty Little Hands Ltd. recognises its duties and responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act 2010. All staff at Dainty Little Hands Ltd. are responsible for ensuring that all children, irrespective of gender, ability, sexuality, disability, ethnicity and social circumstances, have equal access to resources and activities whilst attending the Out of School Club environment, and equal opportunities to make the greatest progress possible in their learning and development. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. recognise the importance of respecting the diverse family circumstances that exist, and seek out resources to reflect these.

**1.4** This Safe Touch policy should be read in conjunction with the Dainty Little Hands policies as listed below:

• Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;

• Code of Conduct Policy;

• Whistle-blowing Policy;

• Allegations of Abuse Policy;

• Health and Safety Policy;

• Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;

• Special Educational Needs Policy.

**1.5** There are many occasions when Staff will have cause to have physical contact with children or young persons for a variety of reasons, for example:

• Communication;

• First Aid;

• To comfort a child or young person in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age);

• To direct a child or young person;

• In an emergency to increase safety to the child or young person and staff.

**1.6** Dainty Little Hands Ltd. have adopted an informed decision approach to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth, understanding and learning. This policy considers the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory and child development, that identify touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health, and the development of social skills.

**2. Aims**

**2.1** Dainty Little Hands Ltd. aims to help children feel wanted and valued whilst attending the setting. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. believe that every member of Staff needs to know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Hence, staff need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference.

**2.2** In all situations where physical contact between Staff and children takes place, Staff must consider the following:

• The child or young person’s age and level of understanding;

• The child or young person’s individual characteristics and history;

• The location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present).

**2.3** If a child or young person requires physical support on a regular basis, this information will be documented via Impero, and noted additionally on IPAL. This information should be obtained by Staff in the Club, and the Support Manager(s) informed as soon as possible. Staff in Club must ensure that all relevant information is documented and uploaded on to Impero.

**3. Safe Touch Practice**

**3.1** ‘Agreed’ appropriate touch

All physical touch between Staff members at Dainty Little Hands Ltd. and children is prohibited. There may be situations that arise in which appropriate touch may be agreed as a need for social development and to accommodate for an individual child’s sensory need. Any agreed appropriate touch should be discussed with the Host School and the child’s parent/carer. All forms of communication must be added on to the child’s individual care plan, and this should then be uploaded on to the child’s profile on Impero.

**3.2** Different Types of Touch

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

• Casual / Informal / Incidental Touch

Staff may use touch with children as part of a normal relationship, for example, when comforting a child, giving reassurance or congratulating them for their work, efforts or behaviour. This might include engaging in a hug or cuddle with a child who has explicitly asked for this without persuasion from the Staff member, holding hands with younger children for guidance and/or reassurance, or praising a child for positive behaviour with the use of a high five. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating. It is important to note that all Staff from Dainty Little Hands Ltd. must not instigate touch or physical contact with the children in their care, but if it is deemed necessary by the child for comfort or reassurance.

• Positive Verbal Communication Channels

Staff at Dainty Little Hands Ltd. Out of School Club have a duty of care to all children in their setting. If a child is becoming a danger to themself or others, the first line of approach by Staff will be through verbal communication channels, using a variety of de-escalation techniques, interventions, and instructions.

**3.3** In an escalating or dangerous situation, reasonable, calm and considered responses could be used. These include:

• Diverting the child’s attention to a new activity away from the escalating situation;

• Providing the child with a safe, nurturing, and quiet area in which they can verbally express their feelings to a member of Staff (although Staff must ensure that they are not left alone with the child at any time);

**3.4** Where de-escalation or other such strategies have not worked, Staff should direct all other children to an area of safety in order to allow the child to de-escalate in their own time. By directing all other children to an area of safety ensures that no other child is put at risk of harm. The heightened child must not be left alone during this time, and Staff at Dainty Little Hands must continue to offer reassuring verbal communication and avoid negative speech or body language as this may cause further dysregulation.

**3.5** If the situation does not resolve itself naturally, then the Staff at Dainty Little Hands Ltd. should seek assistance from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and should also contact the Support Manager(s) at Dainty Little Hands Ltd. who will be able to communicate the appropriate procedure to follow, or attend the setting to offer support.

**3.6** Physical contact is never to be used as a punishment, or to inflict pain. All forms of corporal punishment are prohibited. It will not become a habit between a member of staff and a particular child or young person.

**4. Children’s Response to Touch**

**4.1** Staff at Dainty Little Hands Ltd. must always be aware that all children interpret and react to touch in different ways. Some children are over-demonstrative and try to demand a great deal of affection and physical contact, whilst others shy away from or have a dislike of, physical contact. Staff must never assume that a child will accept a touch that is meant as a friendly gesture.

**4.2** There may be children in our care who have backgrounds where there has been inappropriate physical contact, or even emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. These children will be confused about adult-child contact and will need very sensitive support and care. Wherever there is physical contact, the following points must be seriously considered:

• Always ensure there are other members of Staff around;

• Contact is not within an enclosed, private or hidden location;

• Never show favour to individual children;

• Physical contact will not be made with the child or young person’s neck, breasts, abdomen, genital area, other sensitive body parts, or to put pressure on joints;

• Never touch a child in a way that could be misinterpreted as being anything other than friendly or comforting appropriate adult-child support;

• Where a child tries to get closer than is felt appropriate, an explanation regarding suitable use of personal space should be given and the child should be encouraged to regulate their emotions and feelings in a more appropriate manner, whilst taking in to consideration their needs;

**5. Help with Changing and Toileting**

**5.1** Where children require help with changing or toileting, the dignity of the child must be maintained at all times. Great care must be taken to ensure that all physical contact is only for the purpose of the operation being carried out. Staff at Dainty Little Hands Ltd. must follow the procedures outlined in the **Intimate Care Policy** when supporting a child with changing and/or toileting.

**6. Safeguarding**

**6.1** When a member of Staff observes or feels uncomfortable about the way in which a child or an adult is using or abusing physical contact with them or others, this must be reported to the Support Manager(s) as a matter of urgency, and a detailed concern should be uploaded on to Impero if the behaviour is exhibited by a child in the setting. If the behaviour has been exhibited by a member of Staff, then this must be raised with the Support Manager(s), who will then inform the Managing Director of the arising situation. It may be seen as a necessary and reasonable action for a referral to LADO to be made if the physical contact involves the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for Dainty Little Hands Ltd.. Staff should read this policy in conjunction with the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

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| This policy was adopted by: Dainty Little Hands Ltd | Date: 02/03/2023 |
| To be reviewed: 01/08/2024 | Signed: Jayne Dainty |
| Reviewed 01/08/2024 | Jayne Dainty |