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Nell Gwynn Nursery School

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Massage at Nell Gwynn Nursery School



“...Making sense of the world begins with the sense of touch.”
Martyn Rawson and Michael Rose

Nell Gwynn Nursery believes that massage offers a wide range of benefits to young children and adults. Settings who embed massage as a valued part of their curriculum have found that it lowers stress levels, increases chances for better concentration in school and improves quality of sleep.

Massage techniques will be used on the following areas of the body:

- Back
- Shoulders
- Arms
- Hands
- Head
- Neck

Please note that children will remain clothed and we do not use oils.

Benefits of massage:

- Helps to provide an open, safe and secure environment for children to grow and develop
- Gives positive touch a context
- Develops children's ability to self-regulate
- Enables children to become familiar with appropriate forms of touch and develop their awareness of boundaries
- Empowers children and practitioners, strengthening the bond between them
- Develops fine motor skills, enhancing flexibility and dexterity
- Improves circulation
- Allows children to be fully present in the moment, aiding relaxation

- Supports children in building empathic, trusting and nurturing relationships with others
- Provides a foundation for intimacy where children receive the care, love and attention they deserve
- It offers children time and space to reflect, relax and unwind

Safeguarding:

- Massage will always take place in open areas where children and adults are present (never in seclusion)
- Staff will be sensitive to the needs of children, listening and responding to what they have to say
- Staff and children are encouraged to engage with all aspects of the massage programme, mindful that all participants have an option to 'opt out'
- If a child refuses massage then their wishes will be respected.
- Normal safeguarding procedures will be observed if a child makes a disclosure or displays unusual behaviour

How Massage Promotes the Prime Areas of Learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development:

- Becoming aware of the feelings of others and managing own feelings
- Builds confidence and the ability to ask for help
- Supports turn-taking
- Promotes friendships
- Responding to the wishes of others
- Identifying likes and dislikes
- Adapting behaviour to different situations

Communication and Language:

- Recalling and reliving past experiences
- Supports speaking and listening
- Promotes articulacy
- Builds vocabulary and develops questioning

Physical Development:

- Develops fine motor skills
- Promotes whole body relaxation
- Awareness of breathing and observing effects on body
- Positive sensory experience
- Making connections between movements

Working in Partnership with Parents/Carers:

The benefits of massage will be optimized through working with parents/carers to support understanding of why we use massage and adopt techniques to use within the home environment. Staff will inform parents/carers of massage techniques employed at Nell Gwynn through the massage policy, informative posters, stay and play sessions, home visits, and inductions. They will be able to access Nell Gwynn Nursery website to find out more about massage.

Massage as a regular feature within our setting:

At Nell Gwynn Nursery we have reintroduced massage in the nursery, using soothing music to create a relaxing and tranquil atmosphere. Nursery staff facilitate massage sessions prior to story/group times, with children in pairs (seated on the floor). The child massaging will speak softly to the child who is seated in front of them, asking them if they wish to be massaged before applying the massage techniques. Please see **massage strokes** for more details regarding technique.

Massage will be offered as and when appropriate with staff considering children's stage of development. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may have massage in the Sensory Room with at least two members of staff present.

Makaton signs and visuals may be used to support children's understanding of massage. A 'No' visual will be made available for those who cannot verbalise a refusal. The massage sequence will be followed according to the capabilities of each group. There may be progression built into the sequences as children become more confident and adept at using the massage techniques. Staff will remain responsive to children's needs and those who choose not to participate will be encouraged to choose a book.

Massage Strokes:

Always Ask Permission

Eye Glasses: With flat hands, fingers together, make three* circles around the shoulder blades. Stroke out to the arms and hold – maintain hold.

Cat Grip: Stand at the side of the person receiving massage with one hand behind the neck and the other hand on the forehead. Take a 'cat grip' around the neck and make gentle movements with fingers on one side and the thumb on the other side.

Baker: Place hands on shoulders again and make gentle movements with the palm and thumb – knead gently.

Scooping Ice Cream: Stand behind the left side of the person's back. Place your right arm on the shoulder and make gentle half circles with arm and wrist. Repeat with the left arm on the right shoulder.

NOTE: children may choose to opt out of the following two massage strokes and are able to supplement either with an alternative option(s).

Forehead Stroke: Place fingers on the forehead and stroke out to the sides. Hold the head for a couple of seconds.

Hairdresser: Place fingers on top of hair, and make circles with fingertips.

Sliding Board: Move down with sliding board. Stroke from the head down the neck and over the shoulders. After the final time this stroke is done, keep one hand on the shoulder and continue the next stroke. Always keep contact with the person you are massaging.

Climbing down a rope: Kneel down to one side of the person receiving the massage. Place one hand just under the armpit. Press firmly yet gently and 'climb', hand over hand, down to the hand. Climb back up again.

Bunny hops: Climb down a rope (see above). Press gently with thumbs in the palm of the hands. Climb back up the rope.

Hearts: Begin almost at the base of the spine, moving up with one hand on either side of the spine, move the hands upward making a heart-shaped formation, and coming back down to the base of the spine. Continue making larger and larger heart formations. Note: this stroke is not on the spine.

Bear-walk: Place hands on either side of the spine, almost at the bottom of the spine. Press one hand after another 'walking' up the back. When you get to the neck 'walk' back down again. Do gently to begin with, then harder and harder.

Ice-skating: Place hands side on to either side of the spine at the base of the back. Using a sliding motion hands alternate in short bursts up either side of the spine to the top and back down together in one long stroke.

Butterfly: Hands are placed flat on the back together. The right hand slides up to gently squeeze the shoulder muscle. As this hand slides back to the centre of the back, the other moves cross literally to squeeze the opposite side.

Petting the dog: Stroke with one hand at a time from the neck and down the centre of the back.

Brushing off the snow: Stroke hands rather quickly from the head down the shoulders and from the head down the back.

The child giving the massage should say: "Thank you".

Children then swap places

Monitoring Impact:

Staff will monitor children's behaviour and gather anecdotal evidence to see how massage has impacted on groups of children as well as individuals. Evidence will be sourced from incidental observations. Staff will share practice to support the development of massage within Nell Gwynn Nursery.