



POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

Introduction

“There is no statutory definition of ‘reasonable force’. Whether the force used is reasonable will always depend on the circumstances of individual cases.

Deciding on whether the use of force is justified will depend in part upon the context in which the misbehaviour takes place. The test is whether the force used is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent. The degree of force used should be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result. Use of force could not be justified to prevent trivial misbehaviour. “

(Department for Children, Schools and Families Use of Force Guidance, April 2010)

Expectations – A Positive Approach

We believe that physical contact between staff and pupils may occur under a range of circumstances. Physical prompts that provide support to children are used regularly and are intended to reassure children and guide them in their work. Staff should not feel inhibited in providing such contact when it is professionally appropriate to do so.

We aim to provide a calm, orderly and supportive environment that aims to lessen the risk of physical, harmful behaviours, which requires physical intervention.

However difficult the situations that can occur, when they do it is important to remember that the manner in which a situation is approached may have major implications and might make the use of physical intervention unnecessary.

“Schools should never seek to inhibit the ability of staff to use force by adopting a ‘no contact’ policy. The power to use force helps ensure pupil and school safety and the risk with a no-contact policy is that it might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them taking an action needed to prevent a pupil causing injury to others.”

(Department for Children, Schools and Families Use of Force Guidance, April 2010)

As a school we aim for the outcome of any physical intervention to be in the best interest of the child whose behaviour is of concern or any other affected by the behaviour.

Controlling risk before Physical intervention

It is the expectation of the school that all other behavioural management strategies should be used before physical interventions, in line with the school’s behaviour policy.

Although some challenging behaviours occur without any foreseeable signs, most people show us signs that they are becoming distressed before they move into a crisis level or ‘melt down’. Learning to recognise these early signs is the basis for early intervention, and the earlier staff intervene, the more probable it is that serious behavioural outbursts can be avoided.

Wherever possible we seek to de-escalate behaviours that may lead to physical intervention.

All children with challenging behaviour profiles have individual action plans to inform members of staff of strategies that can be used once challenging behaviours become apparent. This includes steps for reducing or avoiding known triggers for a person's behaviour.

It is all members of staff's responsibility and duty of care to be familiar with children's behaviour plans and strategies used to de-escalate or defuse a situation.

It is supportive and helpful when we:

- ✓ Move calmly and confidently
- ✓ Make simple, clear statements to the child.
- ✓ Keep your voice quiet, firm and assured
- ✓ Lessen the threat of your presence by sitting down or allowing the child space.
- ✓ Talk to the child but don't bombard them.
- ✓ Give them warning about what you are doing or going to do.
- ✓ Offer comfort, reassurance and security.
- ✓ When possible have help at hand
- ✓ Allow the child to 'save face'

Staff is not permitted to physically intervene:

- × Out of anger
- × Out of frustration
- × As a form of punishment.

It is **unhelpful** to:

- × Give complex advice or instructions
- × Speak quickly and loudly
- × Corner a child or stand too close
- × Attempt to reason by asking questions

When is the use of restraint appropriate?

Incidents of restrictive physical intervention will fall into two categories:

Planned

Where particular children may be identified as to benefit from pre-arranged strategies and requires repeat handling.

This will be incorporated into their physical intervention plan or on their individual profile.

Unplanned

Where the use of physical intervention is a response to an unforeseen episode it is seen as an unplanned response. Schools owe a duty of care to their pupils, which require that reasonable measures be taken to prevent harm.

The use of restrictive physical intervention is permitted when a pupil is:

- ✓ Committing a criminal offence.
- ✓ Injuring themselves or others.
- ✓ Damaging property.
- ✓ Behaving in a manner that does not maintain the good order and discipline within the school.

Who can restrain?

Identified members of staff who are trained will be on call to use physical intervention techniques (*Team-Teach trained and accredited*) for children who requires more frequent handling

For children with physical intervention plans, adults working with a particular pupil must be aware of the plan for that pupil.

“All members of school staff are authorised by law to use force. Head teachers can also decide whether to authorise for a limited time volunteers at the school although this should be in exceptional cases only. Such individuals should be given clear instruction on when the power can be used and on the school’s policy and practice.”

(Department for Children, Schools and Families Use of Force Guidance, April 2010)

What types of physical interventions are appropriate to use?

- ✓ Always use the minimum amount of force to stabilise a situation.
- ✓ Ensure that when a child is being handled, it should always be for the shortest amount of time possible. When the child has regained control there should be a planned ‘letting go’.
- ✓ There are a range of personal safety responses and holds that can be implemented, depending on the severity of the situation. Adults should not hold or support children at joints, as these are weak points.
- ✓ Our school adopts the Team-Teach approach to physical intervention and Team-Teach techniques are used for higher risk incidents where the use of force is necessary.
- ✓ Continued practice and re-training will provide a consistent approach. However members of staff are within their rights to use their professional judgement to intervene to ensure safety.

What happens after the incident?

- ✓ Any significant incidents involving physical intervention and physical restraint must be recorded on a positive handling reporting form and handed to a member of SLT.
- ✓ The record must be made as soon as practical after the incident and parents of the child involved where a member of staff had to use force has to be informed. However if it is likely that reporting an incident to a parent will result in significant harm to the pupil, significant incidents should be reported to the local authority
- ✓ If there are any injuries from the incident these must also be recorded. Minor injuries e.g. cuts, grazes should be recorded in the first aid book. More significant injuries e.g. black eyes; bites should be recorded the yellow assault/ incident forms in the office, which are passed on to the local authority.
- ✓ Staff involved in an incident that involves physical intervention is supported in having time out. The concept of swapping during or after stressful incidents is common practice. Adults should always ask for time and if they want debriefing time this is also acceptable and encouraged.

Reviewed: Autumn 2017

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