



Positive Handling Policy **Updated September 2020**

Policy Statement

We have adopted the 'REACT UK' approach to behaviour which centres around de-escalation of situations in the first instance though recognises that in a small number of cases physical intervention may be needed to prevent harm to the individual, others, as well as to property.

At Old Church Primary, staff are trained to look after the pupils in their care. Every member of staff has a duty to intervene in order to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, if a child seriously disrupts good order in the school or causes damage to property. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically they will follow the school's Positive Handling Policy.

The aims of our whole school approach are to:

- To de-escalate conflict at the earliest point.
- Make reasonable adjustments according to the needs of the child.
- Help pupils develop responsible attitudes based on children taking responsibility and ownership of their behaviour.
- Children have the right and responsibility to learn and develop; we give them these rights and responsibilities from a very young age.
- Promote pupils self-esteem, build resilience and develop independence.
- Promote awareness of the needs of others.
- Ensure a safe school environment.
- Protect pupils from injury to themselves, others and property.
- Divert pupils from inappropriate to appropriate behaviour.
- Teach pupils that actions and choices have consequences.
- To foster positive home – school relations.

Introduction

The term '**Positive Handling**' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. Included in this framework are a small number of responses which may involve the use of force to control or restrain a pupil. The

term '**physical restraint**' is used when force is used to overcome active resistance. These are referred to as 'Restrictive Physical Interventions' in national Guidance (DfES/DoH 2002). (See React UK Training Booklet for examples of appropriate positive handling provided by 'REACT UK training <http://www.reactuktraining.co.uk/>).

A clear and consistent positive handling policy supports pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within an ethos of **mutual respect, care and safety**.

Pupils with severe behavioural difficulties sometimes present a risk to themselves and others.

Education & Inspections Act 2006, C.40 Part 7 Ch 1 Pt93 states:

Power of members of staff to use force

(1) A person to whom this section applies may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing a pupil from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following, namely—

(a) committing any offence,

(b) causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself), or

(c) prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

(2) This applies to a person who is, in relation to a pupil, a member of the staff of any school at which education is provided for the pupil.

This policy details how we implement the legislation into this school. It should be considered alongside the most recent LA policy statements and recent local and national guidance. It is designed to help staff to ensure that any actions they take are **reasonable, strictly proportionate and absolutely necessary**.

School Expectations

Old Church Primary School takes seriously its duty of care towards pupils, employees and visitors to the school. Staff protection is an important part of child protection; both depend on confident and competent staff who feel supported by the management. This policy has a clear focus. The first and paramount consideration is the welfare of the children in our care. The second is the welfare and protection of the adults who look after them.

Positive Behaviour Management

Old Church Primary School implements a behaviour policy which is intended to reward effort and application, and encourage pupils to take responsibility for improving their own behaviour. We also implement a preventative approach which looks at reducing risk; this involves looking for early warning signs. The approach also includes learning, understanding and communicating any factors which may influence negative behaviour. Steps are then taken to divert behaviours which may be leading towards foreseeable risk. All physical interventions at this school are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the development of their own **Positive Behaviour Plans** by focusing on positive alternatives and choices. Parents are also encouraged to contribute. However, if problems arise, staff have an additional responsibility to support all pupils when they are under pressure and safely manage crises if, and when, they occur.

Positive Behaviour Plans

Risk management is regarded as an integral part of behaviour management planning. All pupils who have been identified as presenting a risk should have a Positive Behaviour Plan. The plan details any strategies which have been found to be effective for that individual, along with any particular responses which are not recommended. If particular physical techniques have been found to be effective they should be named, along with alerts to any which have proved ineffective or which caused problems in the past. Positive Behaviour Plans should be considered alongside any other planning documents which relate to the pupil. They should take account of age, sex, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special need and social context.

De-escalation Techniques

Prior to physical interventions, staff will have tried different strategies to **actively reduce risk**. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Implement a child's Positive Behaviour Plans focusing on positive alternatives and choices.
- Use of school's behaviour policy and strategies.
- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason.
- Awareness of positive non-threatening body language to help provide psychological safety and support social engagement from the child.

- Give clear directions for pupil(s) to stop.
- Remind them about the school's rainbow rules and likely consequences.
- Remove an audience or take vulnerable pupils to a safer place.
- Make the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons, e.g. scissors.
- Use positive touch to guide or escort pupils to somewhere less pressured.
- Ensure that colleagues know what is happening and get help.
- Distract a pupil onto another activity.
- Give them the opportunity to move away from the situation to give them time to calm e.g. sending a child to take a message.
- Use of appropriate humour for some children.

Well Chosen Words

A well-chosen word can sometimes avert an escalating crisis. When pupils are becoming angry there is no point in getting into an argument. Telling people to calm down can actually wind them up. Pointing out what they have done wrong can make things worse. The only purpose in communicating with an angry person is to prevent further escalation. It is better to say nothing and take time to choose your words carefully than to say the wrong thing and provoke a further escalation. This point is not the time for addressing the reasons behind the incident as this may further inflame the situation.

Modifications to Environment

Ideally, staff will not be waiting until a crisis is underway before conducting a **risk assessment**, (this does not always need to be in a written format) of the environment. In general it is a good rule to keep the environment clutter free. This may mean giving consideration to secure storage for a range of everyday objects when they are not being used. For example:

- Are the design arrangements or furniture safe and appropriate for pupils who exhibit extreme behaviour?
- Is there a comfortable place to sit with an agitated pupil?
- Are protocols in place to encourage angry pupils to take themselves to a safer place?

Help Protocols

The expectation at Old Church School is that all staff should support one another. This means that staff always offer help and always accept it. Help does not always mean taking over. A **change of face** can be an effective tool to help **de-escalate**

the situation for the child or staff member. It may mean just staying around in case you are needed, getting somebody else or looking after somebody else's group. Supporting a colleague does not only mean agreeing with their suggestions and offering sympathy when things go wrong. Real support sometimes means acting as a critical friend to help colleagues become aware of possible alternative strategies. Good communication is necessary so that colleagues avoid confusion when help is offered and accepted.

The Last Resort Principal

At Old Church Primary School we only use **physical restraint when there is no realistic alternative**. This does not mean that we always expect people to methodically work their way through a series of failing strategies, before attempting an intervention in which they have some confidence. Nor does it mean always waiting until the danger is imminent, by which time the prospect of safely managing it may be significantly reduced. National guidance is clear on this point.

“If necessary, staff have the authority to take immediate action to prevent harm occurring even if the harm is expected to happen sometime in the predictable future.”

Para 10 Page 4 Department of Health – 1997 – “The Control of Children in the Public Care: Interpretation of the Children Act 1989” – London: H M S O

It does mean that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment (which is not always recorded in a written format) and choose the safest alternative. It also means that we expect staff to experiment and think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective.

Proactive Physical Interventions

It is sometimes reasonable to use physical controls to prevent extreme behaviour from becoming dangerous provided that it is an agreed part of the child's **Positive Behaviour Plan**. Examples of this are where a pupil has shown ritual patterns of behaviour, which in the past have led to the child becoming more distressed and violent. In such circumstances it may be reasonable to withdraw the child to a safer place when the pattern of behaviour begins, rather than wait until the child is distressed and out of control. It may also be necessary to act to protect a child from harming themselves or others. Staff members may conduct a 'team lift' with the child using either the double hand restraint or the secure cup. This move is only used to keep a child safe from harm or move them from

danger. Health and safety of staff needs to be fully considered before this move is implemented. The paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the child and that it reduces, rather than increases, risk.

Reasonable and Proportionate

Any response to extreme behaviour should be **reasonable and proportionate**. People should not react in anger. If they feel they are becoming angry they should withdraw to allow someone else to deal with the situation – a change of face. This should not be considered a weakness but an act to help deescalate the situation. Where staff act in good faith, and their actions are **reasonable and proportionate**, they will be supported.

When physical controls are considered staff should think about the answers to the following questions: ☐

- How is this in the best interest of the pupil?
- Why is a less intrusive intervention not preferable?
- Why do we have to act now?
- Why am I the best person to be doing this?
- Why is this absolutely necessary?

If staff can answer these questions it is more likely that a physical intervention will be judged to be **reasonable and proportionate**.

Unreasonable use of Force

It is not reasonable to use force simply to enforce compliance in circumstances where there is no risk. Nor is it reasonable to use any more force than is necessary to achieve a reduction in risk. Under no circumstances should pain be deliberately inflicted or should pupils be deliberately subjected to undignified or humiliating treatment (this should not be confused with the unavoidable discomfort associated with some approved techniques for disengaging from assaults such as bites and grabs). Other than as a one-off emergency measure to protect health and safety, force should never be used to keep a pupil secluded. Seclusion is only lawful by specific court order and cannot become part of a planned strategy at this school.

React Training

It is the policy of Old Church Primary that there are a significant number of staff, who work closely with pupils, that are trained in the pre-emotive and responsive

positive handling strategies and techniques of React UK Training, To complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the School Behaviour Policy. Further details of the React Training approach can be found on the React Website. (www.reactuktraining.co.uk).

Health and Safety

If dangerous behaviour presents a significant risk of injury to people, there is a legal Health and Safety issue to be addressed. Dangerous behaviour should be regarded just as seriously as dangerous equipment. Dangerous occurrences should be reported to the person responsible for Health and Safety in the school. We all have shared responsibility to identify risk, communicate potential risks and take active steps to reduce risk wherever possible. We recognise that it is not possible to entirely remove risk. Sometimes things go wrong even when we make our best efforts to do the right thing. Sometimes we are faced with unpalatable choices. In these circumstances we have to try and think through the outcomes of the options available, balance the risks and choose whatever course of action seems to involve the least risk.

As a minimum requirement, in order to comply with health and safety legislation, each employee has a responsibility to ensure that they are conversant with school policy and guidance, and to cooperate to make the school safer. It is also a requirement that they participate in training if they are directed to do so. This does not necessarily mean that all staff can be involved in all the physical activities. The non-physical aspects of positive handling training are crucially important too.

When considering a pupil's behaviour staff should think about the following questions:

- Can we anticipate a Health and Safety risk related to this pupil's behaviour?
- Have we got all the information we need to conduct a risk assessment?
- Have we provided a written plan as a result?
- What further steps can we take to prevent dangerous behaviour from developing?

Risk Assessment

Informal risk assessments should be a routine part of life for staff working with pupils who may exhibit extreme behaviour. Responsible staff should think ahead

to anticipate what might go wrong. If a proposed activity or course of action involves unacceptable risk the correct decision is to do something else.

Factors which might influence a more immediate risk assessment, and therefore a decision about how to intervene, might include the state of health and fitness of the staff member, their physical stature, competence, confidence and relationships with the pupils concerned. Confidence and competence are often related to the level of staff training. Other than in an emergency, staff should only attempt physical controls when they are confident that such action will result in a reduction of risk. When faced by extreme behaviour, or even in a fight situation, the judgement may be that by becoming involved, the member of staff will increase the chance of somebody getting hurt. In this the correct decision is to hold back from the physical controls.

Getting Help

At this school the following support structures are in place:

- Individual Educational Plan (IEP's), Positive Behaviour Plans (PBP's)
- Use of help protocols and language to remind all staff of availability of colleagues to offer help including change-overs of staff during a crisis situation with a pupil.
- Debrief sessions after a crisis with the pupil(s) involved, reflecting on how crisis was managed by all involved and identifying any points for review or learning.
- Termly progress meetings which consider the whole child.

Responding to Unforeseen Emergencies

Even the best planning systems cannot cover every eventuality and the school recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet. It is not enough to thoughtlessly apply rules without thinking through the likely consequences. The key principals are that any physical intervention should be:

- **In the best interest of the child;**
- **Reasonable and proportionate according to the needs of the child;**
- **Intended to reduce risk;**
- **The least intrusive and restrictive of those options available which are likely to be effective.**

Where possible, staff should always attempt to use diversion or diffusion in preference to physical interventions. They should only use the techniques and methods approved for use in this school. In general, if staff act in good faith and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, **they will be supported.**

The Post Incident Support Structure for Pupils and Staff

Following a serious incident, it is the policy of this school to offer **support for all involved.** People take time to recover from a serious incident. Until the incident has subsided the only priority is to reduce risk and calm the situation down. Staff should avoid saying or doing anything which could inflame the situation during the recovery phase. Immediate action should be taken to ensure medical help is sought if there are any injuries which require more than basic first aid. All injuries should be reported and recorded using the school's systems. It is important to note that injury in itself is not evidence of malpractice. Even when staff attempt to do everything right, things can go wrong. Part of the post incident support for staff may involve a reminder of this, as people tend to blame themselves when things go wrong.

Time needs to be found to repair relationships. When careful steps are taken to repair relationships a serious incident does not necessarily result in long term damage. This is an opportunity for learning for all concerned. Time needs to be given to following up incidents so that pupils have an opportunity to express their feelings, suggest alternative courses of action for the future and appreciate other people's perspective. When time and effort are put into a post incident support structure the outcome of a serious incident can be learning, growth and strengthened relationships. **De-briefs with children do not necessarily need to be on the same session/day, sufficient time needs to be given for the individual to be receptive and calm before discussing the incident.** These will be delivered in an age appropriate way which is tailored for individual children. Every child is different.

Complaints

It is not uncommon for pupils to make allegations of inappropriate or excessive use of force following an incident. The school has a formal **Complaints Procedure**, found on our school website. Pupils and parents should be reminded of the procedure and encouraged to use the appropriate channels. The complaints policy applies equally to staff. We are an open school and promote transparent policy and practice in order to protect the interests of staff and pupils alike. Any staff concerns regarding the welfare of children should be taken

to the designated person for child protection (Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteachers.). Any safety concerns should be reported to the designated person for Health and Safety (Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher). Any concerns about a member of staff should be referred to the Headteacher. Any concerns about the Headteacher should be referred to our Chair of Governors. LADO will also be contacted as appropriate, following LA procedures.

Training

Teachers and anyone authorised by the Headteacher who are expected to use planned physical techniques should be trained. This school has adopted the React UK Method of training. Positive behaviour training is always provided by qualified instructors with rigorous guidelines. The level of training recommended is related to the level of risk faced by the member of staff. The level of training required is kept under review and may change in response to the needs of the children.

Recording

Whenever a physical intervention is used the incident must be recorded in the Incident Book, numbered and bound, which is kept in phase areas. All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record, which should be completed before the end of the school day.

Staff should:

- Read through the school recording form carefully
- Take time to think about what actually happened and try to explain it clearly.
- Complete all names in full.
- Sign and date all forms. These will also be signed by a member of the SLT.

Bear in mind these records will be retained and cannot be altered. They will be kept for many years and could form part of an investigation at some time in the future. The **Incident Book** should not be completed until the individuals concerned have recovered from the immediate effects of the incident. They should not be rushed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that each incident is reviewed and instigate further action as required.

Follow Up

Following an incident, consideration may be given to conducting a further risk assessment, reviewing the Positive Behaviour Plan, Behaviour Policy or this Positive Handling Policy. Any further action in relation to a member of staff, or an individual pupil, will follow the appropriate procedures. (See staff and pupil disciplinary policy)