



# Positive Handling Policy

## Rationale

*"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,  
just as in Christ God forgave you."  
Ephesians 4:32*

In harmony with the Christian ethos of the school, we offer all pupils an unconditional welcome, valuing and celebrating their uniqueness as created beings. This unconditional welcome is especially the case for children who are the most in need, including during moments of severe emotional dysregulation and/or when children are a risk to themselves or others. We, first and foremost, approach the idea of positive handling from a place of love and remember this no matter how challenging the situation may become.

## General Aims

All staff at Archbishop Runcie CE First School recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the strategies available in order to secure pupil safety/well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. Our policy on the use of reasonable force is part of our overall pastoral care procedures and closely related to our policies on managing pupil behaviour in the Behaviour Policy and also the Safeguarding Policy. This policy outlines the following aims:

- To protect all members of the school community from harm.
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.
- To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations.
- To use the minimum degree of force necessary to accomplish positive handling.
- To give full support to staff who have been assaulted or have suffered verbal abuse from pupils or others.
- To maintain accurate records of incidents where Positive Handling has been employed.

## Legal Framework

Positive handling is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming themselves or others or from seriously damaging property.

Positive handling should be limited to emergency situations and used only in the last resort. Under the Children Order 1995, it is only permissible as described under the heading "Physical Control". Article 4 of the Education Order 1998 clarifies powers that already exist in common law. It enables trained staff in the school, authorised by the Headteacher, to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances, to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing an offence
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil themselves)

- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.  
(Examples of possible situations are given in Appendix 1)

The DfE Use of Reasonable Force Guidance allows all staff at a school to use reasonable force to keep children safe. It also allows other adults in the school to use physical interventions where reasonable, proportionate and necessary to ensure the safety of children. Those might include support staff, midday supervisors, specialist support assistants, caretakers or voluntary helpers, including people accompanying pupils on visits organised by the school.

Positive Handling should only be used when all other strategies which do not employ force have been tried and found unsuccessful or in an emergency situation,

### **What is reasonable force?**

There is no legal definition of reasonable force. The Criminal Law Act (1967) allows any person to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent an offence (e.g. physical assault) being committed. Reasonable minimal force must be a matter of personal judgement. All teachers have a professional 'duty of care' within their job description which is underwritten by paragraph 58.7 of School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2002. Together with the legislative framework, this enables teachers and other members of staff in the school, authorised by the Headteacher (see Appendix 6), to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstance.

The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most staff at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed. As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.

Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.

School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.

### **Who can use reasonable force?**

- All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force.
- This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the headteacher, and delegated individuals who are managing others, have temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying children on a school organised visit.

### **When can reasonable force be used?**

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

Reasonable force may also be used if a pupil is:

- Committing an offence
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil themselves); or
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

In addition, staff may search children without the consent of the child. This is detailed in the Behaviour Policy under 'Confiscation of prohibited items'.

Schools cannot use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

### **Use of Positive Handling**

Positive handling should be **applied as an act of care** and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. **It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment.**

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which positive handling would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

As a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below. There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil and another pupil or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary. In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate or effective positive handling should be a last resort.

When positive handling becomes necessary:

#### **DO**

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow

- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

## **DO NOT**

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Attempt to reason with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

## **What does it mean to restrain a child?**

Positive Handling is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming himself or others or seriously damaging property. The proper use of Positive Handling requires skill and judgement, as well as knowledge of non-harmful methods of restraining. The last set of whole-school staff training for Positive Handling was in October 2021.

The decision to use Positive Handling as restrictive physical intervention must take account of the circumstances and be based on an assessment of the risks associated with the intervention compared with the risks of not employing a restrictive intervention. The physical intervention must also only employ a reasonable amount of force – that is the minimum force needed to avert injury or damage to property, or to prevent a breakdown in discipline – applied for the shortest period of time.

## **Why use restraint?**

Positive Handling should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him/herself or others. Positive Handling skilfully applied may be eased by degrees as the child calms down in response to the physical contact. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Although most young people will never require any form of Positive Handling, staff may have to deal with some young people who exhibit disturbed, distressed and distressing behaviour. It is therefore necessary to carry out risk assessment. We will attempt to reduce risk by managing:

- The environment
- Body language
- The way we talk
- The way we act

### **Environmental Risk Assessment**

We will complete a risk analysis within the school and put in place strategies to minimise these risks in identified locations.

### **Individual Risk Assessments**

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, it is our intention to plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning needs to address:

- Managing the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary);
- Involving the parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take;
- Briefing staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance);
- Ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate.
- If Positive Handling is likely to be necessary, this should be included in the pupil's Individual Education Plan and/or Positive Handling Plan together with information on: de-escalation strategies; the manner in which the pupil will be held; how support can be summoned if needed; any medical factors to be considered.

More detailed examples of risk assessment and preventative steps can be found in Appendix 2.

## PROCEDURES

In the event of Positive Handling having been used, it is important to consider the strategies which are deemed acceptable and the recording procedures that should be in place.

### Action Steps:

1. Tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop and state possible consequences of failure to do so;
2. If possible, summon another adult;
3. Continue to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident;
4. Make it clear that restraint will be removed as soon as it ceases to be necessary;
5. Appropriate follow-up action should be taken, which may include:
  - Providing medical support
  - Providing respite for those involved \* A calm and measured approach to a situation is needed and staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting out of anger or frustration when handling a problem. \*

### Recording

- Passive restrictive physical intervention (e.g. standing in a doorway where a child does not use physical force to attempt to get past) does not require recording each and every time. However, it is likely that the reasons for why the staff member had to use passive restrictive physical intervention would need to be recorded (e.g. child non-compliant).
- Mid-level physical intervention (e.g. guiding a pupil with minimal force, for instance with a hand on their back) may need recording, depending on the age of the child. This level of intervention is normal practice for very young children and, as such, will be unlikely to be necessary to record in Early Years Foundation Stage. If a child is requiring mid-level physical intervention outside of EYFS **and** is in emotional dysregulation, recording will be necessary.
- In the event that a staff member is uncertain whether to record or not record restrictive physical intervention, they must seek advice from the Headteacher and, in most circumstances, should record it as best practice.
- Staff **must** record all incidents of physical restraint in accordance with School Policy and report these to the Headteacher.

See Appendix 3 for the details this should include.

Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This action should also be recorded. This will usually be recorded via CPOMS using the Positive Handling category.

## COMPLAINTS

We all have a duty of care to the young people in our school and cannot escape our legal responsibilities by avoiding taking appropriate and necessary action. Involving parents when an incident occurs with their child, together with a clear policy adhered to by the staff, and should help to avoid complaints from parents. It will not prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under disciplinary procedures or by the police and social services under child protection procedures.

Staff, subjected to physical violence or assault, have the right to be supported in making a formal complaint to the police and, if necessary, taking private action against an assailant.

It is our intention to inform all staff, pupils, parents and governors about these procedures and the context in which they apply.

We will review this policy on a yearly basis.

Remember that adhering to the principles and procedures referred to in this policy statement is part of effective practice and should minimise risk to young people in our care and enhance our own self-protection.

### **Communicating the school's approach to the use of force**

- Every school is required to have a behaviour policy and to make this policy known to staff, parents and pupils. The governing body should notify the headteacher that it expects the school behaviour policy to include the power to use reasonable force.
- There is no requirement to have a policy on the use of force but it is good practice to set out, in the behaviour policy, the circumstances in which force might be used. For example, it could say that teachers will physically separate pupils found fighting or that if a pupil refuses to leave a room when instructed to do so, they will be physically removed.
- Any policy on the use of reasonable force should acknowledge their legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN).
- Schools do not require parental consent to use force on a student.
- Schools should not have a 'no contact' policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a pupil causing harm.
- By taking steps to ensure that staff, pupils and parents are clear about when force might be used, the school will reduce the likelihood of complaints being made when force has been used properly.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reviewed/Updated</b>	<b>Staff involved</b>
September 2020	Updated from 2018-19 – reformatting and clarification.	JB and teaching staff.
October 2021	Reviewed and updated with staff following training	KM/JB
September 2022	Updated	TLA cttee
November 2022	Shared with staff	KM
Nov 2023	Reviewed and re-circulated to all staff	KM

**Be courageous; be strong.  
Do everything in love.**

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

## Appendix 1

When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

If a child is...

1. Committing an offence
2. Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself); or
3. Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or amongst its pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Examples of situations that fall into one of the first two categories are

- A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil;
- Pupils fighting;
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects;
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure her/himself or others;
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school.

Examples of situations that fall into the third category are:

- A pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom.
- A pupil is behaving in such a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.



## Appendix 2 Strategies

All staff need to be aware of strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult pupils and steps, which they can take to defuse and calm a situation.

- Move calmly and confidently.
- Make simple, clear statements.
- Intervene early.
- Try to maintain eye contact.
- If necessary summon help before the problem escalates.
- Remove audience from the immediate location.

Assistance should be sought when dealing with:

- A physically large pupil,
- More than one pupil, or
- When the member of staff believes that s/he may be at risk of injury.

In those circumstances where the member of staff has decided that it is not appropriate to restrain the pupil without help they should:

- Remove other pupils who might be at risk,
- Summon assistance from colleagues,
- Where necessary, telephone the police,
- Inform the pupil(s) that help will be arriving,
- Until assistance arrives, the member of staff should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

The method of restraint employed must use the minimum force for the minimum time and must observe the following requirements:

### Restraint must NOT:

- Involve hitting the pupil;
- Involve deliberately inflicting pain on the pupil;
- Restrict the pupil's breathing;
- Involve contact with sexually sensitive areas.

During any incident the restrainer should:

- Offer verbal reassurance to the pupil;
- Cause the minimum level of restriction of movement;
- Reduce the danger of any accidental injury.

Physical intervention can take several forms. It might involve staff:

- Physically interposing between pupils;
- Blocking a pupil's path;
- Holding;
- Pushing;
- Pulling;
- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm;
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; or
- (In extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

**Appendix 3: Reporting and Recording Proforma**



Archbishop Runcie CE First School– Record of physical intervention for those without access to CPOMS

**Date of incident:**

**Time of incident:**

**Pupil Name:**

**DoB:**

**Member(s) of staff involved:**

**Adult witnesses to restraint:**

**Pupil witnesses to restraint:**

**Outline of event leading to restraint – including other strategies tried and reasons for using Positive Handling rather than another strategy:**

**Outline of incident of physical intervention (including physical intervention method used):**

**Outcome of restraint:**

**Description of any injury(ies) sustained by injured pupil and any subsequent treatment:**

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<b>Date parent/carer informed of incident:</b>	<b>Time:</b>
<b>By whom informed:</b>	
<b>Outline of parent/carer response:</b>	

<b>Signature of staff completing report:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Signature of Teacher-in-charge:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Signature of Senior Leader</b>	<b>Date:</b>

<b>Brief description of any subsequent inquiry/complaint or action:</b>
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