

WISBOROUGH GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL



POSITIVE TOUCH POLICY

Approved by SLT: September 2021
Review due: September 2024

Aim

At Wisborough Green Primary, we believe that in order to learn, children need to feel safe, secure and valued. We aim to create a safe, calm, orderly and supportive school environment that minimises the risk of violence of any kind.

In our school, there are occasions, for a variety of reasons, when staff will have cause to make 'physical' contact with a child. With this in mind, this school does not operate a 'no touch' policy, as it would not enable us to effectively support the safety and emotional well-being of the children.

Reasons for 'physical' contact include:

- To comfort a pupil in distress (as long as this is appropriate to their age).
- To congratulate a child for something (e.g. use of 'hi five' or a handshake).
- To gently direct a pupil.
- For curricular reasons (e.g. in PE, drama etc).
- In an emergency, in order to avert danger to the pupil or pupils.
- In rare circumstances where the use of reasonable force is required to ensure the safety and well-being of the child in question, to stop significant damage to property or injury to others.

In all situations where physical contact takes place between staff and children, staff will always consider:

- The pupil's age and level of understanding
- The pupil's individual characteristics and history
- The location where the contact takes place

Physical contact is never undertaken as a punishment or to inflict pain. Furthermore, physical contact will not become common practice between a member of staff and a particular child or be made with any sensitive part of the body.

Definition of reasonable force / restrictive physical intervention

Reasonable force / restrictive physical intervention are terms used to describe interventions where bodily contact, using force, is made. It refers to any instance in which a teacher or other authorised adult has to, in specific circumstances, use "reasonable force" to control or restrain pupils. Whilst there is no legal definition of "reasonable force", staff use the following four considerations as guiding principles:

- The use of force can only be regarded as 'reasonable' if the circumstances of an incident warrant it and where the chances of achieving the desired result by other means, is low or have failed.
- The degree of force must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent.
- The degree of force should be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result. It is important that staff effectively manage incidents by communicating calmly with non-threatening verbal and body language.
- The use of force will not be justified if used to prevent or manage 'trivial' misbehaviour.

Steps to Take Before Positive Handling

Prevention strategies and calming measures will be employed and the following actions should be taken before any restraint is used:

- Conversation, distraction, coaxing skills, gentle persuasion or redirection to other activities (e.g. touching the child's arm and leading him/her away from danger, gently stroking the child's shoulder)
- Encourage the child to help him/herself feel more secure by wrapping a blanket tightly around him/herself or holding on tightly to a large cushion or stuffed toy
- Put distance between the child and others - move others to a safer place
- Calmly remove anything that could be used as a weapon, including hot drinks, objects, furniture
- To prevent a child continuing to pose harm in a dangerous situation, advise others to leave, but remain with the child yourself
- Use seclusion only if necessary for a short period while waiting for help, where another member of staff can observe the child
- Keep talking calmly to the child, explain what is happening and why, how it can stop, and what will happen next
- Use first aid procedures in the event of injury or physical distress when safe to do so.

Deciding whether to use force

As already outlined, there are situations when physical management may be necessary. When members of staff use restraint they will physically prevent a pupil from continuing what they were doing after they have been told to stop and the above actions have been applied where applicable. At these times, potential consequences of not intervening should be sufficiently serious to justify the use of force and should only be used where the chances of achieving the desired result by other means, is low. For example:

- To prevent a pupil from attacking another pupil or a member of staff.
- To prevent a pupil causing injury or serious damage either on purpose, by accident, through rough play or by misuse of dangerous materials.
- To prevent a pupil causing deliberate damage to property.
- To prevent a pupil leaving school where this would entail serious risks to the pupil (or other pupils) safety.
- To prevent a pupil putting themselves in a situation that places them or others in immediate danger.

The judgement on whether to use reasonable force should depend on the circumstances of each case and, crucially in the case of pupils with SEN or disabilities, information about the individual concerned. Furthermore, if there are pupils who have positive handling plans, staff should be aware of the techniques that should be used.

The use of reasonable force

Before using reasonable force, staff should try to engage the pupil in a calm tone, making clear that their behaviour is unacceptable and explain that physical intervention will only be used to ensure their safety or the safety of others. Sometimes guiding a pupil by the hand or arm or by placing a hand in the centre of their back might calm a situation. Staff might prevent a pupil from running into a busy road or prevent a pupil from hitting another child or adult with a dangerous object.

As the safety and wellbeing of all staff and pupils is paramount, when deciding how to use reasonable force, staff should always first give consideration for both their own safety and that of others as well as remember that we only ever use the minimum level of force needed to restore safety and appropriate behaviour.

The guiding principles relating to the use of reasonable force are as follows: -

- It is an act of care and control, not punishment. It is never used to force compliance with staff instructions.
- Staff will only use it when there are good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary and in the pupil's and/or other pupil's best interests.
- Staff will take steps in advance to avoid the need for the use of reasonable force through dialogue and diversion and at the level of understanding of the child or young person.
- To prevent severe distress, injury, or damage, only the minimum force necessary will be used.
- After an incident, staff will be able to show that the intervention used was in keeping with any 'risk assessment' and the school's policy.
- Every effort will have been made to secure the presence of other staff, and these staff may act as assistants and/or witnesses.
- As soon as it is safe to do so, the 'physical' intervention will be relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control.
- A distinction will be maintained between the use of a one-off intervention, which is appropriate to a particular circumstance, and the use of repeated intervention.
- Intervention and escalation will be avoided at all costs, especially if it would make the overall situation more destructive and unmanageable.
- The age, understanding and competence of the individual pupil will always be taken into account.
- Procedures are in place for supporting and debriefing pupils and staff after every incident as it is essential to safeguard the emotional well-being of all parties involved.
- If a member of staff thinks a pupil might be carrying a weapon, alcohol, drugs or stolen property, they should report this immediately to the Deputy Headteacher / Headteacher.

Recording and reporting incidents

Each significant incident, where a member of staff uses force on a pupil, must be recorded and written up in detail, by both the staff involved and by any members of staff who witnessed the incident.

Except in cases where reporting the incident will or is highly likely to result in significant harm to the pupil, parents should be informed, by the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher, as soon as possible after the incident has occurred. (N.B – where parents are not notified for safeguarding reasons, the local authority will be informed instead.) When contacted, parents should be told when and where the incident took place, what strategies were used to avoid the use of force, what force was used, whether any injuries occurred and what follow-up actions were taken.

Post-incident support (for staff and pupils)

Supporting staff and children after an incident has occurred will take place in the following ways:

- All parties involved will be de-briefed to identify what happened and why.
- Children will be supported with their understanding of what happened, why they had to be stopped/restrained, what will happen next and what the school will do to support them in the future.
- Help will be available to help re-build relationships and, where possible, avoid the incident or crisis point reoccurring.
- Any member of staff involved in an incident, who would like support to cope with the physical and emotional consequences, should speak to the Headteacher or Deputy.
- In addition to support from the school, staff may wish to seek the advice of the police and their union representative.
- If the pupil is already known to other services, all relevant multi agency partners will be informed of the incident and kept updated of subsequent actions.

Developing a positive handling plan

Where it is felt that a child is likely to require the use of reasonable force, a Positive Handling Plan will be completed. To ensure everyone is clear about what specific action the school may take, when and why, the Positive Handling Plan will be developed in consolidation with parents/carers, the pupil, staff working with the child, the SENDCo and often a specialist teacher from the Behaviour Support Team. The aim of the plan is to help the pupil and staff to avoid difficult situations through understanding the factors that influence challenging behaviour and by identifying the early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours may be developing.

Staff Training

Some staff members will complete the Team Teach training programme, which is delivered by trained staff from West Sussex County Council. (This training is revisited where a specific pupil or group of pupils increase the likelihood of this form of intervention being required.)

Mrs Bennett, Miss Greenway and Mrs Butcher-Collier have completed the Team Teach de-escalation and restraint holds training.

Complaints and allegations

It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping parents and governors informed, parents will understand when and why contact/use of reasonable force is used; however, parents and pupils have a right to complain about any action taken by school staff, as outlined in the school's complaints procedure.

Monitoring and review

This policy and its procedures will be monitored and reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and shared with the governing body. It will continue to be updated in line with any revised government best practice guidelines.

The impact of this policy will also be monitored through analysis of incident data, and will be reviewed alongside the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.