



# Positive Handling Policy

## Introduction

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils who may need to be positively handled. The application of any form of positive handling places staff and children in a vulnerable situation. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow this policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for positive handling. Positive handling will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed or when pupils, staff or property are at risk.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and pupils specifically the school Behaviour Policy, Code of Conduct, Child Protection Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

This policy has been written under the guidance of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) and Use of Reasonable Force (2013).

This policy will be reviewed annually.

## Purpose of the policy

Good professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in school respond positively to strategies outlined in the behaviour policy and the school's Teaching and Learning document. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff. It is also acknowledged that in **exceptional** circumstances staff may need to take action in situations where the use of positive handling may be required.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff at Duston Eldean Primary School:

- clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where positive handling is necessary
- are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur

## Principles

Good behaviour is an essential condition for effective learning and teaching to take place. At Duston Eldean, we believe that pupils and staff have the right to work in an environment that is safe, friendly, peaceful and fair.

Good behaviour needs to be carefully developed and supported. High self-esteem promotes good behaviour, effective learning and positive relationships. The best results in terms of promoting good behaviour arise from emphasising potential, rewarding success and giving praise for effort and hard work, rather than focusing on shortcomings and failure.

Through the example of the adults who care for them at school, through well planned and stimulating learning opportunities, we believe that children will accept learning challenges and develop self-discipline. We wish to work closely with parents and carers with regards to behaviour.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. At Duston Eldean, we are committed to ensuring that all staff and adults with responsibility for children's safety and welfare will deal professionally with all incidents involving aggressive or reckless behaviour, and use physical intervention only as a last resort in line with DfE and Local Authority advice. If used at all, it will be in the context of a respectful, supportive relationship with the pupil, and be reasonable and proportional to the circumstances of the incident. The aim will be to ensure minimal risk of injury to pupils and staff.

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

Positive handling uses the minimum degree of force necessary with the maximum care for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming himself, herself, others or property. The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause.

The DfE guidance (Use of Reasonable Force in Schools, 2013) stipulates information about reasonable force.

1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
2. 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.
3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

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.
- In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, Headteachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following 'prohibited items': knives and weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images, any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property. Force cannot be used to search for other items banned under the school rules.

### **Definitions**

In school, there can be regular physical interaction between adults and children, for example in intimate care arrangements, when comforting pupils or supporting with learning. We acknowledge the need to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEN.

The following two definitions are used to give clarity on the different reasons for other types of physical interaction with pupils.

- **Physical contact and intervention**

This may be used to divert a pupil from a disruptive or destructive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force.

- **Positive handling**

This will involve the use of reasonable force where there is a risk to pupils, staff or property or if good order is being seriously prejudiced. These incidents will be recorded.

## **Training**

All staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to ensure the safety of all pupils. Some staff have been trained in specific physical interventions and de-escalation strategies through the 'Team Teach' approach. Where possible, these staff will be called to carry out any positive physical interventions. A positive handling plan would be created for children who have demonstrated they may require a positive physical intervention to keep themselves or others safe. Team Teach techniques seek to avoid injury to the child, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally, and these are not to be seen necessarily as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent side effect of ensuring that the pupil remains safe.

## **Strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour**

Staff consistently use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively so that reasonable force will not be needed- please see our behaviour policy.

Wherever possible, assistance will be sought from another member of staff before any physical intervention. Sometimes a 'change of face' is enough for the child to calm and/or comply with expectations.

Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and discipline and provokes intervention, a member of staff trained in Team Teach should be called if possible. Some or all, of the following approaches will be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

- Verbal acknowledgement of unacceptable behaviour with a request for the pupil to refrain; this includes negotiation and articulating our care and concern for the pupil and others and/or property
- Further verbal reprimand stating
  - This is the second request for ...
  - An explanation of why observed behaviour is unacceptable
  - An explanation of what will happen if the unacceptable behaviour continues
- Warning of potential need to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies. Summon assistance.
- Physical intervention. Reasonable physical intervention using the minimum degree of contact to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property.

Whenever positive handling is used, staff will keep talking to the pupil. As soon as they are ready to comply, staff will cease positive handling. Our choices for positive handling would be usually be:

- 2 members of staff guiding a child onto a bean bag which is being held in place by a third adult.
- 2 members of staff using 'Caring Cs' on each arm of the child to take them away from danger or disruption.

It may be necessary for the Team Teach trained members of staff to use other practised holds.

The support room is a safe place for children to go or be taken to regulate their emotions. The Headteacher's office has comfortable chairs on which children can regulate.

We acknowledge that positive handling can be tiring and/or distressing for the staff concerned and it may be necessary for another member of staff to take over. They will introduce themselves and state that they are there to help and change places. We also acknowledge it is important for the staff

members involved in positive handling to have an opportunity as soon as possible to repair the relationship with the child concerned.

### **Responding to unforeseen emergencies (Dynamic Risk Assessment)**

Even the best planning system cannot cover every eventuality and the school recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet. An unforeseen event may require an emergency response with a dynamic risk assessment. After that event, staff have a duty to plan ahead and prepare a risk assessment in the form of a Positive Handling Plan.

### **Positive Handling Plan**

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 handling plan. The plan details strategies which have been found to be effective for that individual, along with any particular responses which are to be avoided. Any particular physical techniques which have been found to be effective should be named, along with any alerts to any which have proved to be ineffective, or which have caused problems in the past. The positive handling plan should take account of the age, sex, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special needs and social context. Parents will be involved in the writing of each positive handling plan and review.

### **Recording**

Where positive handling has been used, a record of the incident needs to be kept in the Bound and Numbered book. This is kept in the main office in the filing cabinet. All recordings need to be completed on the day of incident and parents informed. If a pupil is injured, this should be recorded in the Bound and Numbered book and parents/carers informed.

If a member of staff is injured, this should be recorded using the online accident/injury form in addition to recording in the Bound and Numbered book.

### **Action after the incident**

The Headteacher should be informed of the incident. The parent/carer of the pupil who has had positive handling will be informed by the headteacher or another senior leader. The Headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further if required.

Following a positive handling incident, the Headteacher and other involved members of staff will reflect on the incident which may lead to alterations in the plan. Members of staff will be kept informed of any action taken as a result of the positive handling.

Governors will be kept informed of the numbers of incidents requiring positive handling.

### **Complaints**

The availability of a clear policy regarding positive handling and early involvement of parents and carers should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them. Any complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's complaints procedure.

### **Monitoring of incidents**

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use positive handling, this will always be recorded and documented. Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Headteacher to the needs of any pupil(s) whose behaviour can only be contained using positive handling.

This procedure will address patterns of incidents and evaluate trends which may be emerging.