



Positive Handling Policy

This Policy, along with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy forms
part of the Positive Behaviour Policy

At Sharlston Community School we have high expectations of good behaviour in the school.
We believe all children are entitled to learn in a caring and safe environment where they
are treated fairly and equally.

We want our children to develop as confident individuals with a positive self-image and an
understanding of their role and responsibilities within the school, local community and
wider world.

POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

At Charlston Community School we have due regard for our duties under the Equality Act 2010. Through the delivery of the Behaviour Policy we will ensure that we: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

An effective behaviour and discipline policy should secure an orderly and purposeful atmosphere in which activities and learning can take place. It is the aim of the school to use de-escalation strategies as a first response where at all possible. There may, however, be rare occasions when staff will need to use 'reasonable force' in order to control or restrain children or young people for safety reasons. This policy outlines how positive handling and physical interventions are used in our school.

This policy does not authorise the use of corporal punishment, or use of force of any kind as a punishment. This is unlawful.

1. Policy statement

At Sharlston Community School staff are trained to look after the pupils in their care. Staff have a duty to intervene in order to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others. There may also be situations in which a child seriously disrupts good order in the school or causes damage to property. If a member of staff needs to intervene physically they will follow this Positive Handling Policy. This Policy can be read on the school website.

2. 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 that may involve the use of reasonable force to control or restrain a pupil. The terms 'physical intervention' or 'restraint' are used when reasonable force is used to overcome active resistance. 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, and where positive relationships are pro-actively fostered.

Pupils with severe behavioural difficulties sometimes present a risk to themselves and others. Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 describes the circumstances in which teachers and others authorised by the Headteacher may use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils. Such action may be reasonable in order to prevent injury to people.

This policy details how we implement the guidance at our school. It should be considered alongside the most recent national guidance. It is designed to help staff to ensure that any actions they take are reasonable, proportionate and absolutely necessary.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance (updated in 2015) states that 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 duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a pupil causing, or coming to, harm.

3. School Expectations

The Governors and staff of this school take seriously their duty of care towards pupils, employees and visitors to the school. Staff protection is an important part of child protection and safeguarding; 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.

The expectation at Sharlston Community School is that all staff should support one another. This means that staff always offer help and always consider it. Help does not always mean taking over. It may mean being available in case you are needed, seeking help from a colleague or looking after somebody else's group or class. 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. All staff need to understand what manner of assistance may be required and what is available.

4. Positive Behaviour Management

All physical interventions at our school are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. The school 'Positive' Behaviour policy is intended to reward and encourage pupils to take responsibility for improving their own behaviour. Part of our preventative approach to reducing risk involves looking for early warning signs, recognising and communicating any factors that may influence bad behaviour and taking steps to divert behaviours leading towards foreseeable risk. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the development of their own Positive Handling 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.

5. Alternatives to Physical Controls

A member of staff who chooses not to make a physical intervention can still take effective action to reduce risk. They will:

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason.
- Give clear directions for pupils to stop.
- Remind them about rules and likely outcomes.
- 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.
- Guide or escort pupils to somewhere less pressured.
- Ensure that colleagues know what is happening and get help.

A well-chosen word can sometimes avert an escalating crisis. When pupils are becoming angry there is no benefit in arguing. Telling people to calm down can actually escalate feelings. 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.

The Last Resort Principle

At Sharlston Community School we pro-actively foster positive relationships and only use reasonable force 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. It does mean that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative. It also means that we expect staff to think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention, which may be effective.

6. Personal 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 Personal 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. Plans should be considered alongside any other planning documents which relate to the pupil. They should take account of age, gender, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special need and social context. Positive Handling Plans should result from multi-professional collaboration and be included in a Provision Map.

7. Staff training

It is the policy of our school that all staff working closely with pupils are trained in the proactive and responsive positive handling strategies and, to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the School Behaviour Policy. The level of training recommended is related to the level of risk faced by the member of staff. Our preferred approach is for key members of staff to access training on preventative and positive approaches. Some staff may not require the same level of training in physical techniques as those working directly with the most challenging pupils. In cases where a Plan is in operation, all staff will be trained in any de-escalation interventions to be used.

General advice for staff

- Be sure that you are aware of and complying with the school policy for behaviour and discipline. • It is better to defuse situations wherever possible, as this prevents them from escalating to a level where force is necessary.
- Send for the assistance of another member of staff as soon as possible, using the agreed call-out protocol.
- All those involved should be de-briefed after incidents to explore more positive / effective responses to future difficult situations.

8. 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 challenging 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 which seems to involve the least risk.

9. 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 principles are that any physical intervention should be:

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

Whenever a physical intervention has to be made there should be a verbal warning. 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 our school.

10. Recording

Whenever overpowering force is used the incident must be recorded using the approved forms. Serious Incident Record Forms are kept in the main office. All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record, which should be completed within 12 hours. The details recorded on the forms are then transferred to our main folder.

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.

The report should contain the following:

- The name(s) and personal details (gender, ethnicity, age etc) of young person(s) involved.
- The time and location.
- Names of witnesses.
- Details of how the incident was triggered and progressed, with details of observed behaviour.
- Details and outcomes of the steps taken to diffuse the situation.
- A description of the degree of force used, how applied and for how long.
- Suggested strategies for assessing risk for the future.

11. Physical intervention ('reasonable force')

The use of force is illegal if the physical circumstances do not warrant it. The force used should always be the minimum needed to regain and ensure safety and control for everyone involved or present.

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force (section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2003). However, as previously stated, in most instances only those trained to do so should use physical interventions. 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.

Restrictive physical interventions may include:

Bodily Contact – where the physical presence of one or people is used to control a pupil e.g. physically interposing between pupils; blocking a pupil's path; holding or 'shepherding' a pupil; using agreed, approved restricted holds

Environmental – where a change is applied within the environment for example shutting a door or the use of locks or key pads to prevent access to a particular area. Other than as a one - off emergency measure to protect health and safety, force should not be used to keep a pupil secluded. Seclusion is only lawful by specific court order and will not be part of a planned strategy at this school.

In what circumstances can physical intervention be used:

- To prevent a pupil causing, or being at risk of causing, injury or damage to themselves or others, whether by accident, rough behaviour or by misuse of materials or objects.
- To prevent a pupil committing a criminal offence.
- To prevent a pupil committing deliberate serious damage or vandalism
- To prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil.
- To prevent behaviour which is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline.
- To prevent a pupil leaving a classroom where to do so would risk their safety.

The decision to use physical intervention will be taken in the context of the level of risk presented by the behaviour, the seriousness of the incident and the relative risks of the use of physical intervention compared with any available alternative. The use of physical intervention will take into account the characteristics of the pupil, including their age, gender, SEN, physical needs or disability, developmental level or cultural issues.

Physical intervention may be used in response to:

- The need to break up a fight.
- Misuse of equipment or dangerous materials.
- Carrying and / or using weapons or items used as weapons.
- The need to prevent young people absconding.
- Behaviour which causes significant concern for the health and safety of a group or class.

Any response to extreme behaviour should be **reasonable and proportionate**. Staff should not react in anger. If they feel they are becoming angry they should consider withdrawing to allow someone else to deal with the situation. Where staff act in good faith, and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported.

Reasonable force DOES NOT include the following actions, or any others that may reasonably be expected to cause injury or be considered indecent:

For example:

- Holding around the neck or collar
- Restricting a young person's ability to breathe
- Holding face down
- Slapping or hitting
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Holding or pulling by hair or ear
- Locking a young person in a room
- Using certain holds that have been identified as presenting an unacceptable risk when used on children and young people

12. Power to search pupils without consent In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described in this policy, the Headteacher and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to search for the following 'prohibited items' (section 5550ZB (5) Education Act 1996):

- 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 items banned under the school rules.

13. 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.

14. Communicating with parents

We will ensure that all parents are made aware of the Behaviour and Positive Handling policies. All staff, pupils and parents are therefore clear about the expectations about behaviour in the school and the consequences if these are not adhered to, including when physical interventions may be used.

It is good practice for parents to be notified if a physical intervention has been used with their child.

15. Complaints and allegations

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. Pupils 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 and Safeguarding. Any safety concerns should be reported to the designated person for Health and Safety.

If there is concern about a staff member using restraint unnecessarily and there is an allegation against the member of staff, the Management of Allegations against Professionals procedures will be followed. The designated officer within the Local Authority will be notified of any allegation against a member of staff and s/he will decide if a Strategy Meeting needs to be held.

16. Monitoring, Evaluation and Follow Up

The school Serious Behaviour Incident file is open to external monitoring and evaluation.

The Headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and will instigate further action as required. The records of incidents are scrutinised on a regular basis, at least half-termly. The monitoring process will consider:

- The level of incidents across the school.
- Patterns of incidents: are they occurring disproportionately with particular pupils, particular teachers, in particular year groups.
- The accuracy of recording.
- The extent to which approved interventions are being used.
- The extent to which all aspects of this policy have been followed.

Following an incident, consideration may be given to conducting a further risk assessment, reviewing the Personal Positive Handling Plan, behaviour management 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.

The Headteacher or another senior leader will liaise with the relevant governor responsible for safeguarding, provide him/her with results of the regular monitoring and make a report to the governing body on the success of this Positive Handling policy.

17. Other Relevant Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Positive Behaviour Policy Anti Bullying Policy

Health & Safety Policy

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Positive Handling Policy

Reviewed November 2022 Next Review November 2024