



**Westminster**

**Primary**

**School**

Nurturing Minds...  
Inspiring Excellence

# Positive Handling Policy

**Ratified by trustees: July 2023**

**To Be Reviewed: July 2025**

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## Statement of intent

We believe that it is important to establish a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. In order to achieve this, the school recognises that, in certain circumstances, managing violence through control and restraint may be necessary.

This policy acknowledges that situations will arise in which staff members will be required to use positive handling, and in some cases reasonable force, in order to manage conflict when other measures have failed to do so.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that actions such as positive handling and reasonable force are used in a correct and safe manner, which is in accordance with the relevant legislation and national guidance.

Signed by:

_____	Headteacher	Date: _____
_____	Chair of trustees	Date: _____

## **1. Legal framework**

- 1.1. This policy complies with the following legislation, including, but not limited to:
  - The Education Act 2011
  - The Children Act 1989
  - The Equality Act 2010
- 1.2. This policy will also have due regard to the following guidance:
  - DfE 'Use of reasonable force in schools' 2013
  - DfE 'Working together to safeguard children' 2015
- 1.3. The school will implement this policy in conjunction with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy and Equality Policy.

## **2. What is positive handling?**

- 2.1. For the purpose of this policy, 'positive handling' is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting pupils and limiting damage to property.
- 2.2. The legal framework and national guidance often refers to the 'use of force'. For the purpose of this policy, we use the term 'positive handling' whenever possible.
- 2.3. Positive handling is used in the school in order to:
  - Restrain a pupil who has lost emotional self-control until the situation is diffused.
  - Limit the amount of harm that the pupil involved can do to their self or others.
  - Demonstrate to pupils that they are within a safe environment in which adults can contain pupils' anger and other erratic emotions.
  - Protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.
- 2.4. Positive handling will be limited to emergency situations and used only as a measure of last resort.
- 2.5. Where positive handling is required, the school will abide to the following guidance:
  - Initial intervention will always be without force.
  - Any physical intervention will follow other appropriate actions.
  - Staff will take a calm and measured approach in all situations.
- 2.6. Failure to positively handle a pupil who subsequently gets injured, or injures another pupil, could lead to an accusation of negligence.

- 2.7. Positive handling will never be invasive, humiliating, flirtatious in nature or take a form which could be seen as punishment.
- 2.8. Positive handling will 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.

### **3. What is reasonable force?**

- 3.1. There is no statutory definition of reasonable force; it will always depend on the circumstance of the case.
- 3.2. Reasonable force is only acceptable to use in order to control pupils or restrain them.
- 3.3. 'Control' is in regards to either passive physical contacts, such as blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm.
- 3.4. Restraint refers to physically bringing a pupil under control, such as holding them back. This is typically used in more extreme circumstances, such as to separate two pupils fighting.
- 3.5. The degree of force which is used will depend on the age, gender and understanding of the pupil.
- 3.6. Staff members will always use actions which are appropriate and in proportion to the circumstances of the incidents.
- 3.7. All incidents which involve the use of reasonable force will be reported to the headteacher, recorded in writing and communicated to the pupil's parents/carers.
- 3.8. The school is able to use reasonable force in situations when:
  - Disruptive children must be removed from the classroom, and have previously refused to leave.
  - Members of staff need to control disruptive pupils on school trips, or similar.
  - Members of staff must prevent a pupil from leaving a classroom when doing so would lead to a risk to their safety.
  - A pupil is attacking a member of staff or another pupil.
  - A pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves and a member of staff must intervene to prevent this.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force in schools', p.5

- 3.9. Physical intervention will never be used as a substitute for good behavioural management in accordance with the school's Behavioural Policy.

#### **4. Use of positive handling and reasonable force**

- 4.1. Members of staff are allowed to use positive handling where they believe it to be appropriate, as long as all necessary precautions are taken.
- 4.2. The power to positively handle pupils also applies to any individual whom the headteacher has identified as temporarily in charge, such as volunteers.
- 4.3. The decision to physically intervene during a situation is down to the professional judgement of the member of staff and always depends on the circumstances.
- 4.4. Staff will always calmly communicate the reasons for their actions to the pupil and explain why it was necessary in a non-threatening manner.
- 4.5. Staff will never give the impression that they are acting out of anger or are punishing the child.
- 4.6. All teachers will develop strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult pupils and situations, which they will use to diffuse and calm a situation.
- 4.7. In non-urgent situations, staff will always try and deal with a situation through other strategies before using force.
- 4.8. Staff members will always avoid acting in a way that could cause injury; however, dependant on the circumstances, this may not always be possible.
- 4.9. Where a member of staff believes that they are at risk, such as where an injury is likely to occur, they will not intervene in an incident without help and assistance of another staff member.
- Emergency intervention is necessary when there is a high risk of pupils being injured or property being damaged.
  - If emergency intervention is required, a member of staff will use other methods of defusing the situation, without physically intervening, until assistance arrives.
- 4.10. Following the event, the pupil involved may be subject to separate disciplinary procedures, in which strategies should be formed to help avoid reoccurrence of such incidents.
- 4.11. Where necessary, external agencies, such as the LA or the police if a crime has been committed, will be informed of the incident.
- 4.12. Positive handling techniques which present an unacceptable risk and are therefore in question include:

- The 'seated double embrace' where two staff members force a pupil into a sitting position and lean them forward whilst a third staff member monitors their breathing.
- The 'double basket-hold' in which a pupil's arms are held across their chest.
- The 'nose distraction technique' which involves a sharp upward jab under the pupil's nose.

## **5. Reporting incidents**

- 5.1. A detailed written report will be kept of any incidents where force is used.
- 5.2. Immediately following an incident, the member(s) of staff involved will verbally report the incident to the headteacher and provide a comprehensive written record of the situation as soon as possible.
- 5.3. The written report of the incident must be thorough, including as much detail as possible as to what had happened before, during and after the incident, and describing any injuries incurred due to the event.
- 5.4. The headteacher will inform the pupil's parents/carers of the details of an incident.
- 5.5. If a member of staff witnesses or suspects the use of positive handling or reasonable force, where another member of staff is actively involved in physical intervention, they will report this to the headteacher immediately.
- 5.6. Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency.
- 5.7. The headteacher will be responsible for conducting a thorough investigation to find out the correct details of what occurred; this may include talking to other pupils about the incident, for instance those who witnessed the event.

## **6. Complaints**

- 6.1. All members of staff will be made fully aware of the consequences and legal retributions that can occur following the use of positive handling and force.
- 6.2. All complaints regarding the use of positive handling or force will be investigated in a thorough and speedy manner.
- 6.3. The person making the complaint is responsible to prove that their allegations are true, and therefore, it is not for the member of staff to prove that their actions were made reasonably.
- 6.4. In the case where a member of staff has acted within the law, this will provide a defence to any civil or criminal prosecution.
- 6.5. Members of staff accused of using excessive force will not be automatically suspended as a response to the allegations.

- Careful consideration will be given to whether the case warrants a person being suspended until the allegation is resolved.
- The Trust Board will always take into account whether a staff member has acted within the law when considering whether or not to take disciplinary action against a staff member involved in an incident.
- Where a member of staff is suspended, the school will ensure that the staff member has access to a named contact that can provide support and guidance.
- The school will provide pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation.

## **7. Staff training**

- 7.1. Authorised staff in school will receive appropriate training which focusses on the most effective positive handling strategies and use of reasonable force techniques.
- 7.2. Only techniques and strategies which have been previously discussed with the headteacher and safely demonstrated will be used.
- 7.3. Staff will be made aware of subsequent risks of their actions and fully understand when it is appropriate and necessary to use such actions.

## **8. Monitoring and review**

- 8.1. This policy will be reviewed on a two-year basis by the headteacher and Trust Board, who will consider any necessary changes and communicate the findings of the review to all members of staff.
- 8.2. The headteacher will review records of the use of positive handling and reasonable force on an annual basis, in order to analyse the frequency of occurrence and determine what further measures could be taken to prevent these situations from reoccurring.



## POSITIVE HANDLING RECORDING FORM

Child's Name:

Child's Age:

Date:

Time:

Report by:

Location of incident:

Positive handling witnessed by:

1. De-escalation techniques used:

2. Why was the decision made to use positive handling?

Was it:

a) To prevent child from causing injury to him/herself? [Y/N]

b) To prevent child from causing injury to others? [Y/N]

c) To prevent child from causing damage to property? [Y/N]

d) To prevent child from causing serious disruption? [Y/N]

e) To prevent child from running away? [Y/N]

f) Other? (Please specify)

3. Description of positive handling used:

(Please include the approximate time span of any holds)

4. Did the child person suffer any injuries as a result of this incident?

6. Injury location and description

7. Did staff or others suffer any injuries as a result of this incident?

POST INCIDENT INFORMATION (To be completed by member of SLT after the form has been submitted.)

8. Was any post-incident support offered and given to the child?

a) De-brief with Teacher / TA / Pastoral mentor [Y/N]

b) De-brief with member of Leadership Team [Y/N]

9. Was any post-incident support requested by and given to member of staff / other adult?

10. Pupil Engagement

Report read and discussed with child [Y/N]

Child agrees with content [Y/N]

If no, what is the child's view?

11. Parent/Carer informed of incident (by member of SLT) [Y/N]

## Positive handling log

We believe that positive handling and force must only be used when absolutely necessary. Positive handling will always be used in accordance with the Positive Handling Policy. All incidents of this nature must be recorded in this log. Details of the individual incident will be recorded using the Positive Handling Report Form.

[illegible]

