



WHITEHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY



Positive Handling Policy

Policy Statement and purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the use of positive handling strategies in situations where a pupil's behaviour poses a risk of harm to themselves or others.

Staff at Whitehall 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 ever needs to intervene physically they will follow the school's Positive Handling Policy.

Positive handling is a last resort and should only be used when all other de-escalation techniques have been exhausted. Whitehall Primary School is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for all pupils and staff.

Any parents wishing to view this policy may do so on request.

Guiding principles

This policy is underpinned by the principles of:

- Respect for the dignity and rights of the pupil.
- Minimising harm and distress.
- Using the least restrictive intervention necessary.
- Promoting positive behaviour management strategies.
- Transparency and accountability.

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 which may involve the use of force to control or restrain a pupil. The term 'physical restraint' is used when force is used to overcome active resistance. These are referred to as 'Restrictive Physical Interventions' in national Guidance (DfES/DoH 2002). 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.

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. Examples of when such action may be reasonable are to prevent injury to people, damage to property or the breakdown of discipline.

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

Legal framework

This policy considers all relevant legislation including:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- The Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025-26
- Department for Education guidance on the use of reasonable force
- Criminal Law Act 1967 (Section 3)
- Human Rights Act 1998

School context

The school is proud to have a diverse and multicultural community. Staff acknowledge the importance of culturally sensitive approaches and individualised support.

School expectations

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) takes seriously its duty of care towards pupils, employees and visitors to the school. Staff protection is an important part of child protection; both depend on confident and competent staff who feel supported by the management.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Governing Body:**
 - Responsibility for approving and monitoring the policy.
 - Ensuring adequate resources are available for training and support.
- **Headteacher:**
 - Overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy.
 - Ensuring that all staff are appropriately trained.
 - Overseeing the investigation of any incidents involving positive handling.
- **Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL):**
 - Providing advice and support to staff on safeguarding issues related to positive handling.

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- Liaising with external agencies as necessary.
- **SENCO:**
 - Providing advice and support to staff on the needs of pupils with SEND who may require positive handling.
 - Ensuring that individual behaviour plans and strategies are in place for pupils with complex needs.
 - Updating Positive Handling Plans alongside staff and parents.
- **All Staff:**
 - Understanding and adhering to the policy.
 - Using positive behaviour management strategies to prevent the need for positive handling.
 - Being trained in positive handling techniques (where appropriate).
 - Reporting any incidents of positive handling to the appropriate person.
- **Parents/Carers:**
 - Being informed about the policy and their child's individual behaviour plan (if applicable).
 - Working in partnership with the school to support their child's behaviour.

Definition of Positive Handling

Positive Behaviour Management

All physical interventions at Whitehall Primary School are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. The school behaviour policy is intended to reward effort and application and encourage pupils to take responsibility for improving their own behaviour.

However, some children present with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties or they have significant Communication and Interaction needs, which fall outside of the remit of the behaviour policy. For these individuals a range of positive behavioural support strategies are used. These include:

- Using person – centred, values-based approaches
- Using a 'connect before you correct' approach
- De-escalation techniques, which take priority over positive handling
- Use of behaviour support strategies, which are individual to the child (such as an individual reward chart or reduced timetable).
- Positive handling

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Positive handling 'Restrictive interventions' are defined in the guidance as 'deliberate acts on the part of other person(s) that restrict an individual's movement, liberty and/or freedom to act independently in order to:

- Take immediate control of a dangerous situation where there is a real possibility of harm to the person or others if no action is undertaken; and
- End or reduce significantly the danger to the person or others; (or seriously damaging property)
- Contain or limit the person's freedom for no longer than is necessary.'

Should these exceptional circumstances arise, key staff at Whitehall Primary School are Team Teach trained and are authorised to use restrictive interventions (Positive Handling) by the Headteacher.

Pupils who are at risk or have been positively handled before, should have a Positive Handling Plan.

Positive handling should only be used when all other de-escalation strategies have been tried unsuccessfully or in an emergency situation. In this event, staff will:

- Assess the immediate risk of harm.
- Attempt de-escalation techniques.
- Consider the pupil's individual needs and circumstances.
- Seek assistance from other staff members if possible.

Examples of situations where positive handling may be necessary:

- A pupil is attempting to leave the school premises without permission and is at risk of harm.
- A pupil is engaging in self-harming behaviour.
- A pupil is physically aggressive towards another pupil or staff member.
- A pupil is causing significant damage to property that poses a safety risk.

Unacceptable forms of physical intervention:

- Any form of physical punishment.
- Using physical force as a means of coercion or discipline.
- Using holds that restrict breathing or circulation.
- Using holds that are likely to cause pain or injury.
- Imitating any form of physical punishment to threaten or scare a child.

Alternatives to physical intervention

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

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason.

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- Use scripted language, provided by the Social, Emotional Mental Health Team.
- Remind children about rules and likely outcomes.
- Remove an audience or take vulnerable pupils to a safer place.
- Remove other children from the vicinity if they are at risk of harm and withdraw them to a safe space with a supervising adult.
- Make the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons.
- Use positive touch to guide or escort pupils to somewhere less pressured.
- Encourage the child to follow them to a designated safe space or calm area.

Emphasis on proactive strategies:

All staff should ensure that they are contributing to a positive and supportive environment where pupils feel safe, valued and respected. Such strategies can prevent behavioural difficulties from escalating.

Examples of prevention strategies:

- Clear and consistent behaviour expectations.
- Positive reinforcement and praise.
- Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Early intervention for pupils with behavioural difficulties.
- Effective communication with parents/carers.
- Promoting Oracy across the curriculum.
- Allowing pupils to withdraw from an activity or situation before they become dysregulated
- Staff to recognise trigger points and offer opportunities to withdraw

De-escalation Techniques:

- Active listening.
- Using a calm and reassuring tone of voice.
- Giving the pupil space.
- Offering choices.
- Redirecting the pupil's attention.
- Removing triggers.

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 principals are that any physical intervention should be:

- in the best interest of the child

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- reasonable and proportionate
- intended to reduce risk
- applied for the shortest possible duration
- the least intrusive and restrictive of the Team Teach options available

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 this school. In general, if staff act in good faith and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported.

Modifications to the environment

It is recognised that some pupils at the school may exhibit extreme and possibly dangerous behaviour. In general, the classroom and general school environment should remain free of clutter. This may mean giving consideration to secure storage for a range of everyday objects when they are not being used. For example:

- How is the availability of pointed implements (including pens, pencils, compasses) controlled?
- What small items are available to an angry pupil who may be tempted to use them as missiles?
- What objects are available to be used as blunt instruments?
- Are there sharp edges or corners which present a risk?
- Is the design arrangements or furniture safe and appropriate for pupils who exhibit extreme behaviour?
- Is there a comfortable place to sit with an agitated pupil?
- Are protocols in place to encourage angry pupils to take themselves to a safer place?

All classroom risk assessments contain information about individuals who have significant needs, including those who may exhibit behaviours that challenge or pose risks to others. These risk assessments are checked by the Headteacher and include information about environmental modifications.

Further risk assessments (as part of the vulnerable pupils document) are shared across with all staff members, so that they know what to do in case of emergency.

Help protocols

The expectation at Whitehall Primary School is that all staff should support one another. This means that staff always offer help. Help does not always mean taking over. It may mean staying around in case support is needed, getting somebody else or looking after somebody else's group. Clear communication is necessary so that colleagues avoid confusion when help is offered and accepted. Scripts are agreed in advance so that all parties understand what to say.

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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.

Procedures that staff follow when physically restraining

- It is important to talk through actions in a calm way
- If necessary ask other children to move away and other staff to make the area safe e.g. removing potential hazards
- Release the child when they are calm
- Remove to a quiet area if possible to discuss/diffuse/ resolve incident
- Allow time to calm down and assess the incident (other staff to step in if needed)
- Incidents resulting in injury – however minor- will be logged as soon as possible using the Local Authority SO2 form
- Other incidents will be logged using CPOMS

Team Teach

All teaching staff at Whitehall working closely with pupils are trained in the pre-emptive and responsive positive handling strategies and techniques of Team Teach, to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the School Behaviour Policy. Further details of the Team Teach approach can be found on the Team Teach website (www.team-teach.co.uk).

The level of training for Team Teach required is kept under review and may change in response to the needs of our pupils and staff renew Team teach certificates every three years.

Team Teach training includes legal considerations, appropriate holds or redirection and covers de—escalation techniques.

All staff members have a responsibility to ensure that they are familiar with school policies and guidance, and to cooperate to make the school safer. It is also a requirement that they participate in training if they are directed to do so.

Risk assessment of a situation

Informal risk assessments are a routine part of life for staff working with pupils who may exhibit extreme behaviour. Responsible staff should think ahead to anticipate what might go wrong. If a proposed activity or course of action involves unacceptable risk the correct decision is to do something else.

Factors which might influence a more immediate risk assessment, and therefore a decision about how to intervene, might include the state of health and fitness of the staff member, their physical stature, competence, confidence and relationships with the pupils concerned. Confidence and competence are often related to the level of staff training. Other than in an emergency, staff should only attempt physical controls when they are confident that such action will result in a reduction of risk.

Positive Handling Plans

Risk management is regarded as an integral part of behaviour management planning. All pupils who have been identified as presenting a risk or who have experienced Positive Handling in previous situations should have a Positive Handling Plan. This will be drawn up with the SENCo, class teachers, key teaching staff and parents. It will then be shared with the pupil.

The plan will detail 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.

Positive Handling Plans should be considered alongside a child's Individual Education Plan and any other planning documents which relate to the pupil. They should take account of age, sex, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special need and social context.

Positive Handling plans will be reviewed at least termly.

Documentation and reporting:

- Staff should document all incidents of positive handling as soon as possible after the event according to the most recent Team Teach and Local Authority guidelines. Information can be found from the Headteacher or Schools Extranet.
- Staff must also record incidents on the school's internal recording system, CPOMS.
- The report should include:
 - The date, time, and location of the incident.
 - The names of the staff members involved.
 - The name of the pupil involved.
 - A description of the events leading up to the incident.
 - The positive handling techniques used.
 - The duration of the intervention.
 - Any injuries sustained by the pupil or staff member.
 - Any follow-up actions taken.
- Reports should be submitted to the Headteacher or designated person.

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Informing Parents/Carers:

Parents/carers should be informed as soon as possible after an incident of positive handling, unless there are safeguarding concerns that prevent this.

Complaints

The school has a formal Complaints Procedure, which applies to all staff, and pupils. We are an open and inclusive 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. Any safety concerns should be reported to the designated person for Health and Safety.

Other Relevant Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Behaviour Policy

SEND Policy

Dyslexia Friendly Policy

Health & Safety Policy

Child Protection Policy