

**THAKEHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

'Small School, Big Opportunities, Great Achievements'



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# Positive Handling Policy

## Thakeham Primary School

Date approved by the Resources & Strategic Organisation  
Committee: 19.10.20

Review Date: October 2022

Signed

Headteacher: *S. Norton*

Chair of RSO: *Stokwell*

## **Positive Handling and the Law**

The term 'Positive Handling' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. Included in this policy are a small number of responses which may involve the use of force to control or restrain a pupil. This is permissible as described under Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 which clarifies powers that already exist in common law. It enables trained staff in the school, authorised by the Headteacher, to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances, to prevent a pupil from:

- committing an offence
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself)
- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the latest DfE non-statutory guidance 'Use of Reasonable Force' (July 2013) which describes reasonable force as "using no more force than is needed and is either used to control or restrain and to prevent a pupil."

## **General Policy Aims**

At Thakeham Primary School we aim to provide a caring, welcoming ethos which establishes a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. The majority of children do not behave in an aggressive or violent way. They attend school in an environment which is conducive to learning. For children who present challenging behaviours, redirection, diffusion, prevention and avoidance are the first tools in managing violence and will tend to make control and restraint unnecessary in many situations.

However, there may be occasions when the use of force or positive handling is appropriate and necessary. Staff at Thakeham Primary School recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the last in a range of strategies available to secure pupil safety / well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. Our policy on positive handling should therefore be read in conjunction with our Behaviour and Child Protection policies.

It is essential that the physical management of pupils:

- is seen as a rare occurrence and as a last resort
- seeks to ensure the safety of other children and staff
- is part of a whole school behaviour policy
- is not used to discipline or punish children

The foundation of good practice in this area is based on:

- good relationships between staff and pupils
- the positive promotion of good behaviour
- clear procedures and processes, which are reinforced inside and outside the classroom
- clear recording of all incidents
- effective links with parents
- effective links with other appropriate agencies

## Specific Aims of the Positive Handling Policy

- To protect every person in the school community from harm.
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.
- To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations.
- To use the minimum degree of force necessary to accomplish positive handling
- To give full support to staff who have been assaulted or have suffered verbal abuse from pupils or others.
- To maintain accurate records of incidents where positive handling (including restraint) has been employed.

## Why Use Positive Handling?

Positive handling should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him / herself or others. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which positive handling would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own professional judgement in situations which arise. Staff should always act within our school Behaviour Policy, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour. Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in *loco parentis* and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

Failure to positively handle a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

Examples of situations that may require restraint are when:

- a pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil
- pupils fighting
- a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- a pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure her/himself or others
- a pupil absconding from a class or trying to leave school (NB this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school)
- a pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave an area
- a pupil behaves in such a way that seriously disrupts a lesson.

## **Use of Positive Handling**

Positive handling should 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. It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment.

All staff receive behavior training and there are a number of staff who have received specific positive handling training (Team-Teach). Currently these are the Headteacher, Miss Brown, Mrs Mullineux and Mrs Younger. Further details of the Team Teach approach can be found on the Team Teach website [www.team-teach.co.uk](http://www.team-teach.co.uk).

There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil and another pupil or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

According to DfE guidelines 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. Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control.

In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate or effective positive handling should be a last resort. When positive handling becomes necessary:

### **DO**

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff wherever possible
- Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

### **DON'T**

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Attempt to reason with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

At Thakeham Primary School we only use physical restraint 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. National guidance is clear on this point.

“If necessary staff have the authority to take immediate action to prevent harm occurring even if the harm is expected to happen some time in the predictable future.”

(Para 10 Page 4 Department of Health – 1997 – “The Control of Children in the Public Care: Interpretation of the Children Act 1989” – London: H M S O)

### **Actions After An Incident**

Positive handling often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil. The Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher should be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a behavioural ILP, which may include an anger management programme, or other strategies agreed by the InCo. It is also helpful to consider the circumstances preceding the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

All incidents should be recorded immediately (see Appendix 1). All sections of this report should be completed so that in the event of any future complaint a full record is available. The Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher will contact parents as soon as possible after an incident, normally on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it. It is important that parents/carers respond promptly to any incident.

### **Risk Assessments**

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- Management of the pupil ( e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary)
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate

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

### **Complaints**

A clear positive handling policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either in line with our Complaints Policy, under disciplinary procedures or by the Police and social services department under child protection procedures. It is our intention to inform all staff, pupils, parents and governors about these procedures and the context in which they apply.



Date of Incident:	Time of Incident:
Pupil Name:	DOB:
Member(s) of staff involved:	
Adult witnesses to restraint:	
Pupil witnesses to restraint:	
Outline of event leading to restraint:	
Outline of incident of restraint (including restraint method used);	

Outcome of restraint:

Description of any injury sustained and any subsequent treatment:

Date/time parent/carer informed of incident:

By whom informed:

Outline of parent/carer response:

Signatures of staff completing report:

Name:..... Signed:.....  
.....

Name:..... Signed:.....  
.....

Name:..... Signed:.....  
.....

Brief description of any subsequent inquiry/complaint or action: