

## **POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY**

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**Policy written by:** Lisa Wood

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**Next review:** February 2026

### **Introduction**

This policy should be read in conjunction with our School Behaviour Policy. At Hylton Castle Primary School we constantly strive to create a calm environment that minimises the risk of incidents arising that might require the use of force. However, the following points should be noted.

As part of the admissions/induction visit to Hylton Castle Primary School parents/carers and pupils are made aware of the occasions where physical intervention may be necessary, so everyone is aware of their responsibilities and Hylton Castle Primary School retains the right to use force without parental consent. All staff use a range of de-escalation strategies as a preventative measure to physical intervention. Physical intervention will be used as a **last resort**. For the full range of de-escalation/rewards/consequences see School Behaviour Policy.

### **Key points around care and safety of all learners and staff:**

- Learners attending our school will always be managed with care and support, to enable them to access learning safely and to keep others safe too.
- During any time that a learners behaviour interrupts their own learning or that of others then staff will make a professional judgement as to how to manage the situation.
- A clear and effective behaviour management system is in place which clearly explains the process (see Behaviour Policy)
- All learners are taught and are expected to adhere to the rules, boundaries and rewards and consequences.
- When a learners behaviour escalates staff will follow procedures from the policy and the guidance for positive handling, for which all staff access training.
- De-escalation techniques will be put into action prior to handling, unless there is a danger to themselves and others then a quicker response will be implemented to keep everyone safe.
- At times, a learner may require moving to a safer area until they can calm and start to regulate their disruptive/dangerous actions. The learner will be monitored at all times and incidents recorded appropriately.

The Headteacher authorises all school staff to use reasonable force provided staff have made the judgement that they are acting in the pupil's best interests, and it is reasonable and proportionate. Staff should be aware that the use of force cannot be used as a punishment.

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.

These risks need to be balanced against the risks of taking other courses of action, including taking no action. Risks associated with applying restraint, or deciding not to so include causing physical injury, causing a flight response, psychological trauma, distress and emotional disturbance to the child and staff.

**Reasonable force can be used in the following circumstances:**

- Self-harming
- Prevent injury to other learners, staff, visitors
- Damage to property
- An offence being committed
- the maintenance of good order and discipline within the school that may compromise safety eg absconding.

Any response to extreme behaviour should always be reasonable, proportionate and absolutely necessary.

When deciding what amounts to a serious incident, staff should use their professional judgement

and also consider the following:

- the learner's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident
- the degree of force used
- the effect on the learner or member of staff
- the learner's age

**Key Definitions**

Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI): "the use of force to control a person's behaviour" DOH / DFES R.P.I July 2002). It involves the use of force to:

- Restrict movement
- Restrict mobility
- Disengage from dangerous or harmful physical contact

**Reasonable Force:** Outlines that the degree of force should be in proportion to the circumstances and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent. The level and duration of the force used should be the minimum necessary to achieve the desired result, such as to restore safety. Key words that staff should be mindful of when using force are reasonable, proportionate and necessary. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.

**Risk Assessment:** The holistic approach of agreed risk reduction strategies (non-verbal, verbal and physical) that aim to support the individual, addressing aspects of the environment which they find challenging, and support to help them develop strategies to better meet their needs. They will detail the responses used by staff when a learner starts to become anxious, aroused or distressed, aimed at preventing an escalation and providing reasonable adjustments up to and including restraint and follow up procedures on an individual basis.

**Prompt:** any form of touch that re-directs or prompts them into an action

**Guide:** moving someone in a direction but they have the ability to leave and there is a level of Compliance

**Escort:** the learner is unable to leave because they are being physically held but there is some level of compliance

**Restraint:** physical control with positive application of force with the intent of overpowering the client

**Withdrawal:** removed from the situation but observed and supported until they are ready to Resume

**Time out:** Restricting positive reinforcement as part of a planned behavioural programme (requires a written agreed plan)

**Seclusion:** Forced to spend time alone against will (will require statutory powers other than in an emergency)

**Force** is used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a learner to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a learner needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

**Control** means either passive physical contact, such as standing between learners or blocking a learners path, or active physical contact such as leading a learner by the arm out of a classroom.

Whilst some physical injury potential can be reduced, there always remains some risk that injury may occur when two or more people engage, and force is used to protect, release or restrain. It is possible that injury 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 learner remains safe.

**Planned and Unplanned interventions:**

Planned interventions are when staff employ, where necessary, planned and agreed approaches to challenging behaviour set out in the learners individual Risk Assessment. Action to restrain a learner as a last resort will be based on risk assessment, including an understanding of their needs and evidence about the risks faced.

Unplanned interventions require professional judgement to be exercised in difficult situations, often requiring split second decisions in response to unforeseen events or incidents.

Such decisions, known as dynamic risk assessments, will include a judgement about the capacity of the learner at that moment to make a safe choice. An unplanned intervention will prompt a risk assessment to be formed to reduce foreseeable risk in future.

**Other forms of appropriate physical contact:**

It is not illegal to touch a learner. There are occasions when physical contact other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. For example:

- Holding the hand of a learner where appropriate.
- Comforting a distressed learner;
- When a learner is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate a technique e.g. how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- To administer first aid.

In addition, reasonable force can be used to conduct searches 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.

These circumstances are likely to cause resistance and a more appropriate action may be to contact the police.

#### **Logging Incidents:**

All incidents during which restraint is used must be recorded within the school day on the school online recording system, CPOMS. The information recorded should include antecedents, staffs' responses and outcomes of the intervention.

All staff involved in an incident should be part of the recording process. If a learner or staff member has been injured this should be recorded along with the appropriate accident form IR1. Following completion of the record it is forwarded for SLT attention and review. A letter will be sent home that day and a risk assessment will be either formed or updated if any changes are necessary. Training is provided to all staff in relation to logging incidents as part of team teach training.

#### **Debrief and Follow up:**

Learners should be given the opportunity to debrief after each and every incident at an appropriate time when things are calm. This time consideration will vary from individual to individual. The aim of this over time will be to increase the learner's emotional awareness and lead to them being more able to identify causes of anxiety before there is an incident, therefore enabling them to choose a calming strategy or enabling staff to remove the anxiety for them.

Staff involved in the main part of the incident should be given time to reflect on the incident in a calm atmosphere. They may also like to discuss the incident with a senior member of staff or team teach colleague/tutor.

All staff have the opportunity to suggest alternative strategies that may be considered in future incidents.

All incidents of physical intervention will be reported to parents/carer via letter and/or telephone call home. After any risk assessment updates parents will be informed of adaptations. In the event that the school feel that passing the information onto parents might lead to more harm to the learner concerned the school will follow local/school safeguarding procedures.

**Management Response Checklist:**

- Repair
- Medical checks
- Learner has opportunity to talk
- Staff given opportunity to talk through
- Record and carry out any agreed actions
- Review incident with staff

**Allegations against staff**

Allegations will always be taken seriously, and we will ensure that allegations are dealt with quickly in a fair and consistent way, that provides effective protection for the learner and supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. However, sanctions may be taken against learners who are found to have made malicious accusations against school staff. When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably. Suspension must not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force.

If a decision is taken to suspend a member of staff, the school should ensure that the member of staff has access to a named contact who can provide support.

**Complaints procedures**

After an incident in a school, there is always the possibility of formal complaint. A number of persons might feel aggrieved by the incident, whether they be the learner, parents/carers, teachers, other employees, or even visitors to the school and members of the public. Any of these persons can lodge a complaint and expect it to be investigated diligently and fairly. Please refer to the school complaints policy for further information details.

**Points all staff should know from this Policy:**

- We acknowledge that there are times when appropriate physical contact is required.
- The best way of managing learners' behaviour is through skilled de-escalation interventions.
- In managing learner behaviour, physical intervention should be a last resort.
- Reasonable force may be used if acting in the learners best interest.
- The use of restraint, reasons for it and consequences of its use, are subject to termly audit of monitoring with information provided to the HT and Management Committee to inform risk reduction procedures.

**Training:**

Hylton Castle Primary School staff have access to training in de-escalation and Team Teach techniques which have been risk assessed and are subject to ongoing review. A log is kept of all staff trained, date of training and full training summaries which contribute to the whole school risk reduction process.

Staff also access routine behaviour management training as part of wider whole school CPD to maintain high standards of behaviour management practice.

### **References**

Education Act 1996

Guidance for Restrictive Physical Interventions: How to provide safe services for people

with Learning Disabilities and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (2002, DfES and DH)

Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Use of Reasonable Force - Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies July 2013

Positive environments where children can flourish - October 2021

Behaviour and Discipline in Schools – July 2022

Restraint Reduction network website <https://www.bild.org.uk/restraint-reduction-network-rn/>