



# Positive Handling Policy

The staff member responsible for Positive Handling is:

Mrs S. Bradford

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## **Policy Statement**

Staff at this school 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 (s)he will follow the school's Positive Handling Policy. Any parents wishing to view this policy may do so on request.

## **Introduction**

The term 'Positive Handling' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. Included in this framework is a small number of responses that 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. 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.

This policy details how we implement the guidance in this school. It is designed to help staff to ensure that any actions they take are reasonable, proportionate and absolutely necessary.

## **School Expectations**

We take seriously our 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. 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.

## **Positive Behaviour Management**

All physical interventions at this 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. Part of our preventative approach to risk reduction involves looking for early warning signs, learning and communicating any factors that may influence bad behaviour and taking steps to divert behaviours leading towards foreseeable risk. Where necessary, pupils are encouraged to participate in the development of their Risk Management Plan 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.

### **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 can:

- 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.
- use positive touch to guide or escort pupils to somewhere less pressured.
- ensure that colleagues know what is happening and get help.

### **Modifications to Environment**

Ideally, staff will not be waiting until a crisis is underway before conducting a risk assessment of the environment. We know that certain pupils on occasions may exhibit extreme and possibly dangerous behaviour. In general, it is a good rule to keep the environment clutter free. 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 and darts) 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?
- do they all need to be left out all the time?
- are there sharp edges or corners that present a risk?

- 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?

### **Help Protocols**

The expectation at this school is that all staff should support one another. This means that staff always offer help and always accept it. Help does not always mean taking over. It may mean just staying around in case you are needed, getting somebody else or looking after somebody else's group. 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. They need to agree scripts so that all parties understand what sort of assistance is required and what is available.

### **Well-Chosen Words**

A well-chosen word can sometimes avert an escalating crisis. When pupils are becoming angry there is no point in getting into an argument. Telling people to calm down can actually wind them up. 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 this 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 sometime 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: HMSO*

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 experiment and think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention that may be effective.

### **Proactive Physical Interventions**

It is sometimes reasonable to use physical controls to prevent extreme behaviour from becoming dangerous provided that it is an agreed part of the individual child's Risk Management Plan. Examples of this are where a pupil has shown ritual patterns of behaviour that in the past have led to the child becoming more distressed and violent. In such circumstances it may be reasonable to withdraw the child to a safer place when the pattern of behaviour begins, rather than wait until the child is distressed and out of control. The paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the child and that it reduces, rather than increases, risk.

### **Reasonable and Proportionate**

Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate. People 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.

When physical controls are considered staff should think about the answers to the following questions:

- How is this in the best interest of the pupil?
- Why is a less intrusive intervention not preferable?
- Why do we have to act now?
- Why am I the best person to be doing this?
- Why is this absolutely necessary?

If staff can answer these questions it is more likely that a physical intervention will be judged to be reasonable and proportionate.

### **Unreasonable Use of Force**

It is not reasonable to use force simply to enforce compliance in circumstances where there is no risk. Nor is it reasonable to use any more force than is necessary to achieve a reduction in risk.

### **Norfolk Steps**

It is the policy of Roydon Primary that all staff working closely with pupils are trained in the pre-emptive and responsive positive handling strategies and techniques of

Norfolk Steps, to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the School Behaviour Policy.

### **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 unpalatable 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.

### **Risk Assessment**

Informal risk assessments should be 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 that 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. When faced by extreme behaviour, or even in a fight situation, the judgement may be that by becoming involved, the member of staff will increase the chance of somebody getting hurt. In this the correct decision is to hold back from the physical controls.

### **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 this school.

### **The 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 that could inflame the situation during the recovery phase.

Immediate action should be taken to ensure medical help is sought if there are any injuries that 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.

### **Complaints**

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 and

their parents 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. Any safety concerns should be reported to the designated person for Health and Safety.

### **Recording**

Whenever overpowering force is used the incident must be recorded using the approved forms. All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record which should be completed within 24 hours. The details recorded of the incident are kept confidentially on electronic files.

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.

Bear in mind these records will be retained and cannot be altered. They will be kept for many years and could form part of an investigation at some time in the future.

Serious Incident Reports should not be completed until the individuals concerned have recovered from the immediate effects of the incident. They should not be rushed. A record is written into the Incident Book. This refers to supporting sheets and other relevant information.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and instigate further action as required. The school incident log is open to external monitoring and evaluation.

### **Follow Up**

Following an incident, consideration may be given to conducting a further risk assessment, reviewing the child's Risk Management 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.