



## BARNFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

### **The Legal Framework**

Positive handling should be limited to emergency situations and used only in the last resort. "All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force." This is stated in the government 'Use of reasonable force' document July 2013. The decision on whether or not to physically intervene in a situation is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances at the time. This policy outlines the framework for how to intervene and situations in which this may be necessary

Article 4 of the Education Order 1998 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.

(Examples of possible situations are given in Appendix 1)

### **Definition of Positive Handling at Barnfield Primary School**

Positive handling is the positive application of reasonable force\* by an adult in school with the intention of protecting the child from harming themselves or others or seriously damaging property. It is also sometimes known as a 'restraint'. We would always seek to employ positive behavior management techniques and to de-escalate a situation prior to using any physical intervention. Only approved strategies to redirect force and prevent injury will be used with pupils. And only in situations where there is a foreseeable risk / where a member of staff's dynamic risk assessment of a situation instructs them to physically intervene.

Staff at Barnfield Primary School recognise that the use of reasonable force is usually the last resort in a toolbox of behavior management strategies available to secure pupil safety and also to maintain good order and discipline. Our policy on positive handling must therefore be read in conjunction with our Behaviour and Child Protection & Safeguarding policies.

### **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 ensure regular training of senior leaders and pastoral staff in 'Team Teach' positive handling techniques and to keep a record of trained staff in the 'Safeguarding Audit Folder'.

## Why Use Positive Handling?

Positive handling should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action to limit harm to themselves / 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 judgement in situations which arise within the above categories (at Barnfield, we call this the making of a 'dynamic risk assessment'). 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 in line with both the school's behavior policy and the positive handling policy.

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 however, staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

## Alternative Strategies

There are some situations in which the need for positive handling is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. if a pupil is about to run across a road into traffic). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives e.g. use of assertiveness skills such as:

- using de-escalation techniques
- stating an instruction repeatedly until the pupil complies
- use of a distracter, such as a loud whistle, to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective
- withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened
- other techniques designed to defuse the situation - in these cases, the poor behavior and sanction can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high
- the employment of other sanctions consistent with the School's policy on behaviour

## 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.

As mentioned in the 'legal framework' at the start of this policy, all members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. There is no absolute definition of 'reasonable force', and we recognise that this depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied. However, as a general rule, **only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used**, in accordance with the guidelines below.

There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as a staff member physically blocking a pupil's path or redirecting away from conflict. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

In all circumstances positive handling should be a last resort. When a dynamic risk assessment tells staff that positive handling has become necessary and that there is a foreseeable risk:

## DO

- Stay calm
- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary (reasonable and proportionate at all times)
- Ensure you are always within sight and sound of other staff members whenever possible
- Involve another member of staff if 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 immediately 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 anywhere near sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair - or use more force than is necessary and proportionate
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck

## 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. **A member of the leadership team 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. 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 IEP, which may include an anger management programme, or other strategies agreed by the SENCO/ Pastoral Team / External Agencies.

It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

All incidents should be recorded immediately in the school's bound 'Restraint Log' which is kept in the Head Teacher's office. A senior member of staff must also be informed that the incident has taken place. All details of the incident should be completed so that in the event of any future complaint a full record is available. A member of the leadership team 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.

## 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, specific handling 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. Consulting with parents about the best strategies to adopt
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for further training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate

## **Complaints**

A clear Positive Handling Policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to ensure that our school community is safe and free from conflict. The main aim is always to ensure that students can learn in a happy, settled and safe environment and that we are transparent in our dealings with all pupils. Keeping staff, parents and external agencies informed of the actions of school staff is part of our aim to be completely transparent and to avoid future complications or complaints. A dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under disciplinary procedures or by external agencies such as the police or social services. It is our intention to inform all staff, pupils, parents and governors about these procedures and the context in which they apply.

Reviewed and Updated: July 2021

## **Appendix 1**

### **When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?**

Examples of situations that may require restraint are when:

- a pupil is harming themselves or putting themselves at danger
- a pupil is posing a risk to another pupil
- a pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil
- two pupils are 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 they might cause an accident likely to injure themselves 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.
- there is risk of serious damage to the property
- a criminal offence is being committed
- there is a need to maintain order of the environment

### **When is it NOT appropriate to use reasonable force?**

Use force can never be used as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment