



**The RJ Mitchell  
Primary School**

# **Positive Handling Policy**

**Review due September 2017**

At this school there is equality in access to the curriculum for every child. No child will be prejudiced against for this subject regardless of nationality, race, gender, religion or sexual orientation. We have reviewed this policy and can confirm that we believe that no individual or group is disadvantaged by the processes outlined. We do acknowledge that our policy is in English and should a family whose main language is other than English, become part of safeguarding processes we will make sure their language needs are conveyed to social care and hold social care to account in providing translation and support services as needed.

This policy has been reviewed and no individual or group in the school community is disadvantaged by the policy and processes. We do acknowledge that this policy is in English and we have families that are speakers of other languages. Should these families be part of child protection processes we will, supported by other multi-agency partners involved, ensure that language is not a barrier to clear access to this policy and the processes that may ensue.

## The RJ Mitchell Primary School

### Positive Handling Policy

#### 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 they 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 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 on the use of control and restraint, DfE 2011. 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. The 2006 Education and Inspections Act describes the circumstances in which teachers and others authorised by the Headteacher to supervise children may need to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils. Examples of when such action may be reasonable are to prevent injury to people or damage to property, to discourage criminal activity or to maintain good order and discipline in the school.

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** in the best interests of the children to whom we owe a duty of care.

#### School Expectations

The management 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. This policy has a clear focus.

- The welfare of the children in our care.
- 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 social 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 which may trigger or otherwise influence unacceptable behaviour and taking steps to divert behaviours leading towards foreseeable risk. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the development of their own Positive Handling Plans by focusing on positive alternatives and choices. Parents are also encouraged to contribute. \* See **Home School Agreement**. It is now an obligation for parents to sign this Agreement when their child joins the school. 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 immediately can take any or a series of effective actions to reduce risk. They can:

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason.
- Attempt diversion to alternative activity.
- Give clear directions for pupils to stop.
- Remind them of their Plan and encourage using success so far that day.
- 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. These represent a hierarchical sequence and can be used to meet an escalation of behaviours as described in our 6-stage Model of a Crisis (TeamTeach). The order in which they are used can be dependent on staff judgement of the situation at the time.

### **Modifications to Environment**

Staff should not be waiting until a crisis is underway before conducting a risk assessment of the environment. We know that some pupils at this school 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 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?

### **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 some time in the predictable future.”**

It does mean that we expect staff to conduct a dynamic 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 which 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 Positive Handling Plan. Examples of this are where a pupil has shown ritual patterns of behaviour, which 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 withdraw 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. The school undertakes to provide regular training to keep staff certification up to date as '**reasonable, proportionate and safe**' practice has been known to change over a number of years.

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

- What would make this child safe (or SAFER)
- 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. Under no circumstances should pain be deliberately inflicted or should pupils be deliberately subjected to undignified or humiliating treatment (this should not be confused with the unavoidable discomfort associated with some approved techniques for disengaging from assaults such as bites and grabs). Force may not be used to keep a pupil secluded. Seclusion is only lawful by specific court order and cannot become part of a planned strategy at this school.

### **Team Teach**

It is the policy of The RJ Mitchell Primary School that all staff 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 Social Policy. 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) ).

### **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.

As a minimum requirement, in order to comply with health and safety legislation, each employee has a responsibility to ensure that they are conversant with school and policy 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. This does not necessarily mean that all staff can be involved in all the physical activities. The non physical aspects of positive handling training are crucially important too.

When considering a pupil's behaviour staff should think about the following questions:

- Can we anticipate a Health and Safety risk related to this pupil's behaviour?
- Have we got all the information we need to conduct a risk assessment?
- Have we provided a written plan as a result?
- What further steps can we take to prevent dangerous behaviour from developing?

### **Risk Assessment**

Informal 'dynamic' 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 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. 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.

### **Getting Help**

At this school the following support structures are in place:

- Behaviour Support plans kept on file in each classroom to ensure all relevant information about each pupil is available to all members of staff working with them.
- Debrief session with a member of the SLT to reflect on how the situation was managed by all involved and identifying any points for review or learning.
- Refresher meetings in the Team Teach strategies and techniques for all staff, and continuous review by SLT to inform these.
- The school purchases the Validium Support System which staff can access.

### **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 should have a **Positive Handling Plan**. The plan details 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 the Statement

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 should result from multi-professional collaboration and be included in a Pastoral Support Plan or Provision Map.

### **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;
- 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 defusion 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.

### **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 which could inflame the situation during the recovery phase. Immediate action should be taken to ensure medical help is sought if there are any injuries which 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. 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.

## **Training**

Teachers and anyone authorised by the Headteacher who are expected to use planned physical techniques should be trained. This school has adopted the Team Teach Model of training. All training courses have been fully accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) in accordance with DfES and Department of Health guidance. Positive handling training is always provided by qualified instructors with rigorous guidelines.

The level of training recommended is related to the level of risk faced by the member of staff. Our preferred approach is for whole staff team training. Office staff may not require the same level of training in physical techniques as those working directly with the most challenging pupils, however all staff benefit from the whole school training. The level of training required is kept under review and may change in response to the needs of our clients. Once trained, staff should practice regularly guidance of our in-house instructors and bring any problems or concerns to them.

## **Recording**

Whenever a significant physical intervention is used the incident must be reported to parents and to governors before the end of the day, in terms solely that it has happened. Full recording and subsequent information can be supplied within the following 48 hours. If CP issues preclude the parents being told, the incident must be reported to the LA.

The incident must be recorded using the approved forms. The Incident/Concerns books are kept in the office. All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record which should be completed within 24 hours. The details recorded on the forms are then copied/scanned into an electronic incidents file and kept confidentially in the office.

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/Concerns 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 social 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. (See staff and pupil disciplinary policy)

### **Other Relevant Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Social Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Child Protection Policy

This policy was implemented in September 2016

This policy will be reviewed in September 2017