



**Shaw
Education
Trust**

Positive Handling Policy

Date Agreed: 10th March 2025

Chair of Committee: Peter Cade

Next Review Date: 10th March 2027

1) Introduction and aims

1.1 Physical prompts are essential in providing sensitive and good quality care for the children and young people that we educate. Used in context and with empathy, appropriate touch supports the development of our natural interactions with children and young people.

This policy clarifies the reasons and conditions for physical prompt used at Ivy House School.

Some students at Ivy House School present more 'challenging behaviours' that can necessitate the use of restrictive physical intervention to prevent injury to themselves, staff, their peers, damage to property, or the breakdown of a safe and enjoyable learning environment. The aim of positive handling is not a punishment or control but to support safe learning for everyone.

1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Anti-Bullying and Behaviour policies.

2) Principles and procedures

2.1 Purpose of physical prompt:

Touch and physical contact is important and may be used routinely for any of the following reasons:

For communication:

- To reinforce other communications (e.g. placing a hand on someone's shoulder when speaking to them) or to function as the main form of communication in itself.
- To respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical prompt for communication and to make social connections. This is particularly likely to occur during Intensive Interaction or day to day greetings, such as handshakes.

For educational reasons:

- As part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of good communication for people at early communication levels.
- To sensitively direct children in educational tasks and essential life skills.

As support or guidance:

- For example, during transitions between activities and during swimming or P.E. sessions.

To play:

- Play activities naturally include physical prompts. People of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

For therapy:

- Therapeutic activities in school, including massage and physiotherapy require physical prompts. This is led either by a therapist or by another member of staff carrying out a therapy programme or following therapy advice.

For emotional reasons:

- To give reassurance and to communicate security and comfort at different times during the day.

- To enable children to develop an understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate them appropriately.

For the purposes of care:

- Touch is necessary in order to carry out personal care for many of the people we support (see *Intimate Care policy*).

To give medical and nursing care:

- This is often carried out with the support of class staff and the nursing team and may include medical interventions, such as suctioning and cough assist therapy.

To give physical support

- For example, supporting those who have physical difficulties (e.g. transfers in and out of wheelchairs) and in order to guide people between places, rooms or activities.

To protect children and young people from danger:

- This includes physically intervening and managing challenging behaviours, including any sanctioned use of physical intervention following the recognised guidelines and policies of the school (PROACT-SCIPr-UK®).

2.2 Guidelines

Staff need to be clear and open about why they are using physical prompts and touch and should be able to explain their practices. Staff working with students need to use their professional judgement about how best to respond to a situation and each circumstance can only be viewed on a case-by-case basis. The school must offer clarity and transparency in the wider context of this and demonstrate that staff are competent in undertaking this in line with school policies. To this end, the use of physical prompts and touch will be discussed openly and regularly between staff.

People of any age can want and need physical prompts and touch. Staff should be aware of the developmental age, emotional and communication needs of the individuals that they are working with in order to gain a greater understanding of what may be appropriate. While gender and cultural factors have relevance in issues of touch; the emotional and communication needs of the individual are due equal consideration. It should always be considered by staff that touch is a positive experience and as far as possible, the young person involved should **consent** to any touch given. Staff should be sensitive to any verbal and non-verbal communication the child may give that might indicate that they don't want to be touched; this may be particularly prevalent during play or Intensive Interaction sessions.

Significant changes in behaviour should be clearly recorded on each students Individual Risk Assessment and Individual Behaviour Plan. Behavioural incidents must be recorded in the correct manner, see the Behaviour Policy for more details. Depending on the behaviour shown, it would be expected staff record this on My Concern or report it to the Senior Leadership Team or DSL.

The students we support should be given opportunities to use appropriate touch amongst each other while interacting and playing, as would happen naturally for any child or young person. Attention should always be given to ensure that both parties are safe and happy with this and staff **must be aware** of potential hazards in respect of sexual issues:

- Staff must be sensitive to the danger of touch being misunderstood and triggering sexual arousal and so must be alert to all feedback signals from the person they are working with.
- The young people we support may occasionally inadvertently touch intimate parts of a member of staff's body when there is no sexual understanding or intent. The member of staff should withdraw without giving significant negative feedback in this situation and the incident should be reported using the behaviour log.

It is **never** appropriate for staff to touch a young person's intimate body areas except as part of intimate or medical care.

If staff are in any doubt about issues concerning appropriate touch, or observe any practice that causes them any concern, they should discuss this with the Headteacher in the first instance and follow the school's Whistleblowing Policy and procedure.

Staff should be aware that there have been many instances of abuse perpetrated in both schools and residential care establishments. The best method of prevention is transparency, openness and teamwork, and staff should always try to monitor and assist each other in carrying out their work. This should be regarded as good practice at Ivy House School and staff can speak with a member of the Leadership Team should they have any specific questions in relation to this.

3) Relevant legislation

The use of all forms of physical intervention and physical contact are governed by the criminal and civil law. The unwarranted or inappropriate use of force may constitute an assault. In addition, it may infringe the human rights of a child or young person.

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- a. committing a criminal offence
- b. causing personal injury or damage to a property
- c. prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among the pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

As included in the DFE 2010 guidance on 'The use of force to control or restrain pupils' seclusion should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and it is an offence to lock a person in a room without a court order. Therefore, at no time should the door be locked as to do so is unlawful and can amount to the false imprisonment of a pupil.

4) Physical Intervention and Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPIs)

There may be rare occasions when it is necessary to use a restrictive physical intervention (RPI) with a student

Staff have a duty of care to keep people safe and must act in the best interests of the all students they are supporting. The school has a duty to ensure the safety of everyone within it. 'Reasonable Force' can be used in circumstances where an individual, other peers or staff are in immediate danger. More information about Reasonable Force can be found here:

- Restrictive physical interventions (RPI) will only be used to support challenging behaviour where there is clear and imminent danger and there is no alternative.
- Non consensual touch may be considered assault at any other time.
- The use of RPI must be reasonable and proportionate to the behaviour and potential harm the behaviour might cause. The use of RPI must be for the least time necessary and apply the minimum necessary force.
- The rights and dignity of students must always be considered.
- Where it has been agreed that RPI is a necessary reactive strategy this will be included on the student's Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP). A Restrictive Physical Intervention section will also be written into the IBP and signed by all parties, including, where appropriate and possible, the parent and/or pupil.
- Any planned RPI strategies used must be carried out according to the principles and guidance of the Ivy House School PROACT SCIPr-UK® trainers.
- The use of all RPI will be regularly reviewed, and monitored for consistency and effectiveness.
- A Restraint Reduction Plan must form part of a young person's behaviour support plan when a RPI is planned in.
- In the exercise of their duty of care staff may, on occasion, need to use unplanned, emergency restrictive physical interventions in response to unforeseen events. A proactive RPI plan will then be written into a young person's IRSP from that day.
- The school will regularly report on incident data for each student and share this information with Academy Councilors and the Shaw Education Trust.
- Every use of a restrictive physical intervention (RPI) arising from a behavioural incident must be recorded immediately in the Behaviour Log book, completed with a member of the Behaviour Team.
- A debrief will be given to all parties involved in the incident.
- The Headteacher and parents/carers must be informed of incident where RPI was used, on the day of the incident.
- Injuries or accidents arising from behavioural incidents must be recorded.
- All serious behavioural incidents should be reported to Senior Leadership Team immediately.
- The Headteacher must be notified of any significant increases in incidents and where appropriate this should be investigated.

Physical interventions are used only as a last resort, when all other strategies have failed:

- when a pupil is endangering themselves
- when a pupil is endangering others
- when a pupil is posing a serious threat to property

Any time a physical intervention is required it should always entail the least amount of force for the least amount of time. The physical interventions to be used with any of our young people are all taken from the Pro-Active Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention (revised) (PROACT-SCIPr-UK®) technique. These interventions are the last resort and are designed to be safe and non-threatening to the pupil and to maintain the pupil's dignity whilst ensuring safety.

Recording: all interventions will be recorded in the Behaviour Log Book, on the day of intervention. This will be recorded with a member of the Behaviour Team and signed off

by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. If an RPI has taken place, parent/carers will be informed.

5) Staff Training

- There are PROACT-SCIPr-UK® instructor trainers in school, they provide an Annual Refresher for all staff and deliver Introductory and Foundation courses for new staff.
- All student facing staff are trained in PROACT-SCIPr-UK® so that their use of physical restraint /positive handling falls within safe and statutory guidelines.
- Staff are provided in-depth training to ensure that all staff understand that behaviour is communication.
- Staff receive high quality training from the Sensory Occupational Therapists who provide whole school training and 1:1 training to support staff to deliver personalised sensory programs to students.
- Staff are trained in the law and legal requirements and general advice on managing behaviour as part of the PROACT-SCIPr-UK® training.
- Staff have a duty to inform the Senior Leadership Team of any injuries which affect their ability to handle children.
- Training for all staff will be made available and will be the responsibility of the Deputy Headteacher.
- No member of staff will be expected to undertake the use of reasonable force without appropriate training.
- Ivy House School acknowledges that physical techniques are only a part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management.
- Training is given to staff to support intimate and personal care for students and new staff are given time to become comfortable with each individual student.
- Staff receive ongoing Continuing Professional Development and Learning (CPDL) sessions to improve their knowledge on curriculum based positive handling. These can form a whole school, small group or 1:1 training that are listed in section 2.1.

6) Conclusion

3.1 Physical prompt and touch is necessary and desirable as part of the development, emotional wellbeing, care, education and quality of life of the people that we support and care for.

This policy outlines when this may be needed and provides staff with the necessary direction and security for this to occur positively and productively, whilst offering a level of protection to both staff and children.

Ivy House School encourages staff to find the least intrusive way possible to support, empower and keep children safe, which includes the use of least physical prompts. "We expect adults to be skilled and confident in finding the best ways to keep children safe; ways that promote their rights, respect their dignity and help equip them for the future."

3.2 The school does not require staff to record physical prompts that are used in supporting children, as outlined in section 2.1 above. However, if the use of physical prompts increases or there is a need for a physical intervention, then this is required to be noted on the relevant paperwork (see *Behaviour policy*).

Ivy House School knows that emergencies and unforeseen circumstances can happen. There may be instances of unplanned response to prevent harm in an emergency. If this has happened, the member of staff will meet with a Behaviour Lead and update relevant risk assessments and a plan that consider the use of proactive strategies and less restrictive options.