



Learning through Faith

Reasonable Force and Positive Handling Policy

Newchurch St Mary's C of E Primary Academy

Objectives

At St. Mary's C of E Primary Academy we are committed to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. This policy has close links with the Behaviour Policy. It is written to explain our procedures in line with:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/93>
- Department for Education – Use of Reasonable Force policy July 2013 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>
- Local authority policies - <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/strategies-policies-plans/children-education-and-families/>
- School Behaviour Policy and Practice.

School Expectations

In our school we create a calm environment to minimise incidents that may require any physical intervention. We de-escalate incidents when they do arise. We only use physical interventions when the risks involved of doing so are outweighed by the risks of not doing so.

Positive Behaviour Management

All staff and volunteers adopt a positive approach to improving behaviour in order to reward effort and application, and to build self-esteem, and promote a safe environment for students and staff. All staff work in partnership with those who know the child to help those concerned:

- Find out why this child behaves as he or she does
- Understand the factors that influence this child's behaviour

- Identify early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours are developing This approach helps to ensure that early and preventative intervention is the norm. It reduces the incidence of extreme behaviours and makes sure that the use of physical intervention is rare.

What is physical Intervention/Reasonable force?

'Reasonable force' covers a broad range of actions, used by most teachers at some point in their career, which involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

Force is considered **reasonable** when:

- It is in proportion to the consequences it's intended to prevent
- The level and duration are the minimum necessary to achieve the desired result

Force is usually used either to **control** or **restrain** pupils.

Using force to control pupils includes:

- Passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path
- Active physical contact, such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom

Restraint is typically used in more extreme circumstances, such as when 2 pupils are fighting and refuse to separate. This might include:

- Holding a pupil back physically
- Bringing a pupil under control

Staff should try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases this may not always be possible.

Who can use reasonable force?

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force.

It can also be used by anyone who's been put in charge of pupils temporarily by your Headteacher, such as:

- Unpaid volunteers
- Parents accompanying students on a school trip

When can reasonable force be used?

Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from:

- Hurting themselves or someone else
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder

It can **never** be used as a form of punishment.

It's up to your staff's professional judgement to decide whether to physically intervene. This decision

should always depend on the individual circumstances.

The last Resort Principle

At St. Mary's C of E Primary Academy we pro-actively foster positive relationships and only use reasonable force when there is no realistic alternative. This means that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative. We expect staff to think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective. There might be some situations in which the need for positive handling is immediate and where there are no equal effective alternatives (a child is about to run in the road). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives such as the use of assertiveness skills:

- Withdrawal of attention (audience)
- Other techniques designed to defuse a situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour, in which case the incident could be dealt with later when emotions are running less high
- The employment of other sanctions consistent with St Mary's policy on behaviour, where physical interventions are needed to prevent injury to the student, other students or staff, or to prevent serious damage, these should be for the minimum length of time possible and using the least possible force. All staff must consider whether they are using reasonable force. In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate and effective positive handling should be a last resort.

When positive handling becomes necessary:

DO

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- 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 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 in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint

- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck, lying face down or pulling arms across the child's chest (Appendix – B)
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

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 any other planning documents which relate to the pupil. They should take account of age, gender, 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 SEND support form.

Staff Training

It is the policy of this school that all staff working closely with pupils are trained in the pro-active and responsive positive handling strategies and, to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the School Behaviour Policy and Practice. In cases where a Positive Handling Plan is in operation, selected staff will be trained in any physical interventions to be used. These staff will be trained by the accredited provider and will be the only staff authorised to use the intervention.

General Advice for Staff

- Be sure that you are aware of and complying with the school policy for behaviour and discipline and positive handling procedures.
- It is better to defuse situations wherever possible, as this prevents them from escalating to a level where force is necessary
- Send for the assistance of another member of staff as soon as possible.
- All those involved should be de-briefed after incidents to explore more positive/effective responses to future difficult situations

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.

Recording Incidents

Whenever overpowering force is used the incident must be recorded using the approved forms and the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding lead MUST be informed to ensure that proper channels have been followed.

Reviewed April 2026

To next be reviewed April 2028