

# St. Peter's Catholic Primary School

## POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY



Policy	Positive Handling Policy
Date	September 2020
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Signed Chair of Governors	<i>Eugene McCarthy</i>
Signed Headteacher	<i>Clare Scott</i>

***We, the family of St Peter's, united in faith by God strive to learn and grow together to be the best we possibly can every day.***

## **INTRODUCTION**

At St. Peter's RC Primary School, we strive to create an environment in which both children and adults feel happy, safe, secure and valued. We aim to ensure a whole school approach to behaviour known and understood by all staff, children, parents and outside agencies. 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. The use of force upon any pupil by a member of staff is a serious matter and should only be considered as a last resort. However, the law is clear and the Governing Body has a responsibility to all concerned, to support any member of staff who as a last resort uses reasonable force in accordance with the law and this policy. 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.

This policy is designed to serve the best interests of children and to reduce risk of harm to school staff. It is based on, and should be read alongside DfE Use of Reasonable Force Guidance 2013 and other school policies on Behaviour, Staff/Pupil Disciplinary, Health & Safety, Child Protection and SEN.

At St. Peter's RC Primary School we aim:

- To develop in children a sense of acceptance of responsibility for their own actions in order to promote positive behaviour choices.
- To create conditions for a learning community in which effective engagement can take place, in which there is mutual respect between all members, and where there is proper concern and ownership for the environment.

However, we also acknowledge that there are times when poor behaviour choices may require staff intervention to ensure the safety of the child, other children and staff and that this may require the use of physical interventions.

This policy details how we implement the guidance in this school. It should be considered alongside the most recent LEA 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.

## **THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- injuring themselves or others;
- committing a criminal offence;
- causing damage to property
- Engaging in behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom or elsewhere.

The DfE Use of Reasonable Force Guidance allows all staff at a school to use reasonable force to keep children safe. It also allows other adults in the school to use physical interventions where reasonable, proportionate and necessary to ensure the safety of children. Those might include classroom assistants, care workers, midday supervisors, specialist support assistants, escorts, caretakers or voluntary helpers, including people accompanying pupils on visits, exchanges or holidays organised by the school.

At St. Peter's RC Primary School only staff who have received appropriate Team Teach training are authorised to use positive handling techniques where a plan has been agreed for any children. All staff have a duty of care to keep children safe but a few individuals will have planned interventions.

Staff will always consider carefully whether physical intervention is necessary or if other options could be used to de-escalate the situation. Where possible staff will always try to deal with a situation through other strategies before using physical techniques. Trained staff need to develop strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult pupils and situations, which they should use to de-escalate and calm a situation. Advice and support will be sought from outside agencies when necessary. Refer to DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2016.

### **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 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 which may influence bad 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. 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 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 is advised that wherever possible, another member of staff is present if staff need to use reasonable force in order to assist and/or act as support. Supporting a colleague means helping colleagues become aware of possible alternative strategies or offering support when necessary. 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, they may not want to have a conversation or want to listen to what an adult has to say. Telling people to calm down can actually make a child worse. Pointing out what they have done wrong can also 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 PRINCIPAL**

At St. Peter's RC Primary 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.

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 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 consider withdrawing 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.

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. 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). Other than as a one-off emergency measure to protect health and safety, force should never 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 St Peter's 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 Behaviour Policy. Further details of the Team Teach approach can be found in the St Peter's Team Teach documents and 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 to.

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 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:

- IEP's and 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.
- Daily briefing sessions in the morning to update relevant staff on current issues and share information.
- Use of help protocols and language to remind all staff of availability of colleagues to offer help including change-overs of staff during a crisis situation with a pupil.
- Debrief sessions after a crisis with the pupil(s) involved, reflecting on how crisis was managed by all involved and identifying any points for review or learning.
- Daily debrief sessions for all staff to share experiences, concerns and access support from each other, led by a member of the SLT.
- Termly refresher meetings in the Team Teach strategies and techniques for all staff, and continuous review by SLT to inform these.

## **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 Education, health and care plan (EHCP) 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 their IEP.

## **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. 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. Pupils 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.

### **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. 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 trained SLT and bring any problems or concerns to them.

### **Recording**

Whenever overpowering force is used the incident must be recorded using the approved forms. The Incident/Concerns book (bound book) is kept in the Headteacher's Office, and the incident sheets are kept in folders in the staff room. 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 typed into the school software for recording incidents and kept confidentially on electronic files, as well as written into the bound book.

Staff should:

- Read through the school recording forms 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 (bound 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 Positive Handling 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. (See staff and pupil disciplinary policy)