



Positive Handling and Physical Intervention policy 2026 - 2027

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Approved by: Full Governing Body
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At Holsworthy Primary School our vision is working together, growing together, all to flourish. Based on the bible verse from John 15:5, we believe that God is the vine; God is love. Our Christian vision and values help us foster positive relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils. This is the key to developing good behaviour. These relationships, built on mutual respect and trust, combined with high expectations and simple, clear rules are the foundations for high standards of behaviour.

Our Values: Respect, Love, Responsibility, Wisdom, Integrity, Grit

Our rules: Ready, Respectful & Safe

Introduction

At Holsworthy CofE Primary School, the safety and welfare of our pupils is of the utmost importance. This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils who may need to be positively handled. The application of any form of positive handling places staff and children in a vulnerable situation. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for positive handling. Positive Handling will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed or when pupils, staff or property are at risk. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically they will follow the school's Positive Handling Policy. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school SEND policy, Health & Safety policy, Child Protection policy, Behaviour policy and Complaints policy. The policy will inform and guide all teaching and support staff, who come into contact with pupils and for volunteers working within the school to explain the school's arrangements for care and control. Its contents are available to parents and pupils.

Aim

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 reasonable force to control or restrain a pupil. The term 'physical restraint' is used when force is used to overcome active resistance. The policy aims to give all members of the school community clear guidance so that any physical contact that they undertake is carried out in a way that supports the school's values. In particular, it aims to describe the circumstances in which restrictive physical intervention is an appropriate response and how staff at the school will fulfill their responsibilities in those circumstances. This policy has been drawn up to take account of current guidance issued by the Department for Education to headteachers, staff and governing bodies in relation to the use of reasonable force. The school will ensure that pupils understand the need for and respond to clearly defined limits which govern behaviour in school.

Objectives

Good personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in our school respond positively to the discipline and control practised by staff. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff in school. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable, proportionate and necessary force may be required. Holsworthy CofE Primary School acknowledges that physical techniques are only a small part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management. Every effort will be made to ensure that staff in this school:

- i. Clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where use of force is necessary and
- ii. Are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations.

Underpinning Values

Everyone attending or working in this school has a right to:

- recognition of their unique identity;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- learn and work in a safe environment;
- be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse.

Pupils attending this school and their parents have a right to:

- individual consideration of pupil needs by the staff who have responsibility for their care and protection;
- expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies;
- be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in school;
- expect a relational support plan and/or a My Plan to be in place and to be designed to achieve outcomes that reflect the best interests of the child whose behaviour is of immediate concern and others affected by the behaviour requiring intervention.

Use of Positive Handling

No legal definition of reasonable force exists, however for the purpose of this policy and the implementation of it in Holsworthy CofE Primary School:

- Positive Handling uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time.
- The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause.
- Staff would be expected to follow the pupil's Relational Support Plan and/or My Plan in the first instance to manage an incident of challenging behaviour.
- If this was unsuccessful and the situation continues to escalate, staff would then be expected to employ other passive intervention techniques that they have been trained in.
- Only if all of the above have been tried and are unsuccessful should staff even consider any other form of restraint. The overriding consideration should still be the reasonableness and proportionality of the force used.
- Staff should never use force as a threat or as a punishment and will only ever deploy positive handling in a positive and supportive manner.

Definitions of Positive Handling.

Positive handling describes a broad spectrum of risk reduction strategies. Positive handling is a holistic approach involving policy, guidance, management of the environment, and deployment of staff. It also involves personal behaviour, diversion, diffusion, and de-escalation. Risk assessment through the writing of a Relational Support Plan and/or My Plan identifies positive prevention strategies and how a pupil may need to be supported in a crisis.

1. Physical Contact

Situations in which proper physical contact occur between staff and pupils, e.g., in the care of pupils and in order to support their access to a broad and balanced curriculum. It would

seem reasonable that young children do require opportunities for close contact, as long as this is within public view, sensitively carried out, age/person-appropriate and with consent.

2. Physical Intervention

This may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the arm or shoulder where the pupil is compliant. This technique cannot be emphasised enough and in the hands of a skilful practitioner, many pupils can be deflected from a potentially volatile situation into a less confrontational situation i.e. it may be possible to “defuse” a situation by a timely intervention.

3. Restrictive Physical Intervention

This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or property. All such incidents must be recorded. If anyone is injured, an accident/incident report must also be completed. Records of incidents must be given to the Headteacher as soon as possible, and by the end of the school day at the latest. The level of compliance from the pupil determines whether or not the interaction is an intervention or a restrictive physical intervention. Restraint is defined as the positive application of force by staff, in order to overcome rigorous resistance, completely directing, deciding and controlling a person's free movement.

Types of Incident

The incidents described in The Education and Inspections Act 2006 “The Use of Reasonable Force to Control and Restrain Pupils” fall into these broad categories:

- Where action is necessary in self-defence
- There is an imminent risk of injury
- Where there is risk of significant damage to property

Examples of situations which fall within one of the first two categories are:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil.
- Pupils are fighting.
- A pupil is engaged in, or is on the verge of committing, deliberate damage or vandalism to property.
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects.

Strategies:

At Holsworthy CofE Primary School we use a wide range of techniques to support children. These are detailed further within our SEND policy and Behaviour policy. One school-wide approach is the Zones of Regulation Framework (ZOR).

ZOR: The Zones of Regulation framework supports pupils in developing emotional awareness and self-regulation. It categorises emotions and levels of alertness into four colour-coded zones—Blue (low states such as sadness or tiredness), Green (calm and ready to learn), Yellow (heightened states like frustration or excitement), and Red (intense emotions such as anger or panic). By helping children to identify and understand their feelings, the Zones encourage emotional literacy and equip them with strategies to manage their behaviour constructively. Within a positive handling context, this proactive approach enables staff to intervene early and support pupils before behaviours escalate, promoting a safe, inclusive, and emotionally intelligent school environment. It complements trauma-informed and restorative practices by prioritising empathy, understanding, and positive relationships.

Positive Handling: At Holsworthy CofE Primary we use a full range of strategies to manage behaviour including where necessary physical intervention such as a back rub, a side hug, a guiding hand. These strategies are seen as a proactive response to meet individual pupil needs and any such measures will be most effective in the context of the overall ethos of the school, the way that staff exercise their responsibilities and the range of behaviour management strategies used.

Emergency Restrictive Physical Intervention: May be necessary if a situation arises that was not foreseen or is uncharacteristic of the pupil. Members of staff retain their duty of care to pupils and any response, even in an emergency, must be proportionate to the circumstances. Staff should use the minimum force necessary to prevent injury and maintain safety, consistent with the training that they have received. Following any such incident, a risk assessment will be devised (or the existing one updated) to support effective responses to any such situations which may arise in the future.

Recovery: Pupils who may be distressed by events can be offered the following support:

- Quiet time taking part in a regulating activity;
- Quiet time away from the incident/trigger;
- Time with a member of staff to debrief the incident;
- Resuming their usual routine/previous activity as soon as they are ready, especially for pupils with special needs.

Injury to the Child

Whilst the physical techniques are intended to reduce risk, there is always risk when two or more people engage to use force to protect, release or restrain. We will always seek to avoid injury to the child, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally, and these are not to be seen necessarily as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent side effect of ensuring that the child remains safe. Any such injury will be reported to the Headteacher and parents/carers. If there are any concerns regarding the injury, a full investigation will be conducted and in serious cases LADO will be informed and consulted. Staff may be called upon to implement First Aid or seek further guidance in the event of an injury or physical distress arising as a result of physical intervention.

Who can use Positive Handling

It is the policy of Holsworthy CofE Primary School that as many staff as possible are trained in positive handling de-escalation procedures in order to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the school's Behaviour Policy. Only members of staff in receipt of this training are authorised by the Headteacher to use reasonable force, as a last resort, to control or restrain pupils. No member of staff will undertake positive handling without appropriate training.

Authorisation is not given to volunteers, students on placement, agency teachers and visitors unless they have been given express permission by the Headteacher and have previously undertaken the relevant training. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure that staff are fully informed of the school's policy and understand what authorisation entails. The Headteacher will arrange training and guidance to staff as appropriate. Where staff act in line with school policy they will be supported.

It is not reasonable to use force simply to enforce compliance in circumstances where there is no risk. Techniques used must take into account a child's age, gender, level of physical/emotional and intellectual development, additional or special educational or

disabilities needs and social context. Where behavioural records and/or risk management strategies identify a need for a planned approach, a risk assessment and Relational Support Plan will be written for individual children and where possible, this will be designed through multi-agency collaboration and, with parental consent, shared with other agencies/services supporting the child to facilitate consistency of approach so far as is possible.

Positive Behaviour Management

All physical interventions at this school are conducted within a framework of Positive Behaviour Management. Staff can minimise the likelihood of any incidents by:

- Creating a calm, orderly and supportive school climate that minimises the risk of violence of any kind;
- Providing an active approach to teaching children how to manage strong emotions;
- Effective management of individual incidents.

The School's 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 unsafe behaviour and taking steps to divert behaviours leading towards foreseeable risk.

Risk management is regarded as an integral part of behaviour management planning. All pupils who have been identified as presenting a high risk will have a risk assessment and Relational Support Plan and advice may have been taken from outside specialist agencies such as the 'Behaviour Support Team' and Educational Psychologists. The plan details any strategies which have been found to be effective for that individual, along with any particular responses which are not recommended. 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. The school recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet.

Minimising the need to use Positive Handling

Before physical intervention becomes necessary staff will take effective action to reduce risk. They can:

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation, reason and distraction;
- Give clear directions for pupils to stop;
- Remind them about rules/expectations and likely outcomes;
- Use well chosen language to de-escalate situations;
- 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.

What to do after the use of a physical intervention

After the use of an unplanned restrictive physical intervention, the following steps will be taken.

- Details of the incident will be recorded on the schools Child Protection and Online Management System (CPOMS).

- Recording will be completed on the same day whenever possible.
- Staff will be offered the opportunity to seek advice from a senior colleague when compiling their report.
- Any injuries suffered by those involved will be recorded following normal school procedures;
- The Headteacher will check that there is no cause for concern regarding the actions of adults involved. If it is felt that an action has 'caused or put a child at risk of significant harm' the Headteacher will follow the school's child protection procedures and also inform parents/carers.
- Support/debriefing will be available for adults and pupils who have been involved in any incident involving restrictive physical interventions.

After the use of a planned restrictive physical intervention, the following steps will be taken: Arrangements for recording and informing parents in the case of a planned restrictive intervention will be followed as agreed, but broadly will follow the same pattern as above. It may be necessary to amend a behaviour risk assessment and relational support plan following a review of the incident. The Senior Leadership Team will use the records kept to analyse patterns of behaviour and decide whether responses are being effective.

Complaints procedure

Any complaint will first be considered in light of the school's child protection procedures. If child protection procedures are not appropriate, the school's complaint procedures will be followed.