Positive Handling Policy

September 2025

Version 2.1

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1 Introduction

1.1 These pages set out information about how Sonning Common Primary School aims to provide a supportive educational environment for all pupils, inclusive of those who present with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

1.2 There is a whole-school approach to actively promote improvement in educational attainment, achievement and behaviour along with the development of positive social skills. These are detailed in the school's Behaviour Policy.

1.3 The school recognises the need to incorporate models of acceptable behaviour; to clearly define expectations of positive behaviour amongst its pupils and where measures are taken to address unacceptable behaviours. These measures are Reasonable, Proportionate and Necessary as well as being understood by all concerned.

2 Policy Aims

2.1 Staff at Sonning Common Primary School recognise that the use of reasonable force is only used as a last resort to secure pupil safety and/or well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. Our policy on restraint should therefore be read in conjunction with our Behaviour and Safeguarding policies.

2.2 Specific aims of the Positive Handling Policy

- *To protect every person in the school community from harm*
- *To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful*
- *To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations.*

3 The Legal Framework

3.1 Physical Restraint should be limited to emergency situations and is always guided by the principle of 'Reasonable, proportionate, necessary' as per Team Teach guidelines and is used only in the last resort.

3.2 Under the 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools guidance' (DfE, 2016, Pg. 12), members of staff in the school are authorised to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances, to prevent a pupil from:

- *Committing an offence*
- *Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil themselves)*
- *Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.*

3.3 Examples of possible situations where physical intervention may become necessary are (but not limited to):

- *attacking a member of staff, or another pupil*
- *starting to fight*
- *causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects*
- *running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure her/himself or others*
- *absconding from a class or trying to leave school (unless leaving the classroom is part of that pupil's plan)*
- *persistently refuses to obey an order to leave an area*
- *behaving in such a way that seriously disrupts a lesson.*

4 Definition of Restraint

4.1 Physical restraint is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming himself or others or seriously damaging property.

5 Why use restraint?

5.1 Physical restraint should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him/herself or others. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to self-regulate their own emotions and behaviour.

5.2 It is not possible to define every circumstance in which physical restraint would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the school's policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

5.3 Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Failure to physically restrain a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an

accusation of negligence. At the same time staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

5.4 It is recognised that some students find difficulty in managing their anger. The reason(s) for this could include that they have:

- *Been victims of abuse or neglect.*
- *Felt or feel a sense of rejection.*
- *Low self-esteem.*
- *Not experienced consistent levels of care and attention.*
- *Difficulty trusting adults.*
- *Medical conditions, i.e., ADHD which contribute to their behaviour.*
- *Frequently experienced periods of failure throughout their educational career.*

6 Alternative strategies

6.1 There are some situations in which the need for physical restraint is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. is a pupil is about to run across a road). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives such as:

- *A change of face – it may be that the adult involved is causing further dysregulation. In which case help can be offered using Team Teach 'Help protocols'.*
- *Use of a distracter – sometimes favoured activities or alternative tasks can interrupt the behaviour long enough for other methods of verbal control to become effective.*
- *Withdrawal of attention – it may be appropriate to remove an audience if a child is becoming dysregulated. The child can feel embarrassed or 'backed into a corner' with peers watching.*
- *Other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour (in these cases the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high)*
- *The employment of other sanctions consistent with the school's policy on behaviour and discipline.*

6.2 This list is not exhaustive and staff working with children struggling to self-regulate and manage their emotions and/or behaviour will have spent considerable planning time creating a bespoke list of effective strategies that can be employed with specific pupils.

7 Use of physical restraint

7.1 Physical restraint should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention or reestablishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment.

7.2 Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying physical restraint, although there is no absolute definition of this, as what constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied. However, as a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below.

7.3 There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil and another pupil or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

7.4 In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate or effective physical restraint should be a last resort.

8 When physical restraint becomes necessary:

8.1 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*

8.2 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*
- *Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil*

9 Actions after an incident

9.1 Physical restraint often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil. The Headteacher should be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

9.2 If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a pupil passport, which may include information regarding potential 'triggers' to behaviour, effective calming strategies, likes and dislikes and a detailed risk-assessment as well as other strategies agreed by the SENCo.

9.3 It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided. All incidents involving pupils should be recorded immediately in the 'Bound and Numbered' Report book held in the Headteacher's office. All sections of this report should be completed so that in the event of any future complaint a full record is available. Full details of the incident should be recorded on the child's record using the school software.

9.4 A member of staff will contact parents as soon as possible after an incident to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it.

9.5 Any incident where an adult needs to be restrained will be reported on a Violent Incident Report Form held in the school office.

10 Risk Assessments

10.1 If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- *Potential triggers for difficult or challenging behaviour.*
- *Effective de-escalation and calming strategies.*
- *Signs or clues to predict a 'behavioural event'.*
- *Management of the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary).*

- *Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take.*
- *Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance).*
- *Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate*
- *Any known medical conditions, e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy etc.*

11 Complaints

11.1 A clear positive handling policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under disciplinary procedures or by the Police and social services department under child protection procedures. All complaints will be dealt with following our Complaints Policy.

12 Staff Training

12.1 In the document 'Children's Views on Restraint' (Roger Morgan -the first Children's Rights Director, 2004) it states that; "Children and young people did not say that people who had got dangerously out of control should not be restrained. Their concern was much clearer than that. It was that staff who restrain children should know how to do it properly."

12.2 To this end, staff will be trained regularly using the Team Teach approach. As a school, Sonning Common aims to train all staff in basic de-escalation techniques which equates to a Team Teach level 1 certificate. It is our intention that those staff who are more likely to encounter challenging behaviour, work 1:1 with a child with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties or senior leaders hold an in-date Team Teach level 2 certificate, providing them with skills in more advanced Team Teach techniques.

12.3 Sonning Common Primary School employs two in-house Team Teach trainers for the purposes of ongoing staff training, updating staff with regular 'refresher training' and helping and supporting staff experiencing challenging behaviours. The Team Teach trainers are Mr Tim Coates and Mrs Valentina Bray.

13 Dissemination

13.1 The Policy is available on the school web site and a paper copy is available from the school admin office on request.

14 Reviewing the Policy

14.1 This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Head teacher and monitored by the Safeguarding Link Governor to ensure changes are made to keep the policy relevant and up to date.