

Positive Handling Policy

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Introduction

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies including the school's Safeguarding (Child Protection) policy, the school's Behaviour Policy for children and adults and the Intimate Care Policy.

The policy will be reviewed every two years or as often as required by the Senior Leadership Team in partnership with the Governing Body.

Purpose of the Policy

Good professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in school. The majority of pupils in school respond positively to positive behaviour management strategies embedded in the school ethos. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances staff may need to take action in situations where the use of positive handling and/or restrictive physical intervention(s) (RPI) may be required.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff at the Gipsy Hill Federation (GHF):

- i. clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where positive handling is necessary
- ii. are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur.

The application of any form of restrictive physical intervention can place staff in a vulnerable position. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for positive handling.

Restrictive Physical Intervention will only be used as an appropriate last resort.

GHF Physical Contact Guidance

At the Gipsy Hill Federation our aim is to provide clear guidance to school staff on the use of physical contact. We want staff to be able to meet the needs of children with confidence, whilst safeguarding themselves and those in their care. Physical contact is necessary and justifiable when it meets the needs of pupils.

Physical contact can take many forms. A handshake is an accepted form of contact in many cultures, some people also touch the elbow or pat the back as part of a greeting. Staff are in a position of trust. They therefore need to maintain a professional distance and take greater care in their physical interactions. This applies equally on the school premises and elsewhere.

Equally, we recognise that appropriate physical contact is often an integral part of working with young people. For example:

- i. To demonstrate exercises of sports/PE techniques.
- ii. To demonstrate how to use a piece of equipment e.g. IT or teaching a pupil how to hold and play a musical instrument.

- iii. To administer first aid or support with intimate care.
- iv. To prompt or help young children.
- v. To comfort a pupil who is in distress

Definitions

Physical Contact

Situations in which proper physical contact with pupils take place. In line with the GHF touch guidance, professional judgment must apply taking into account knowledge of the individual child. Staff should act reasonably and in pupils' best interests at all times.

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 hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force.

Restraint (Restrictive Physical Intervention – RPI)

This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is a risk to pupils, staff or property or if good order is being seriously prejudiced. All such incidents will be recorded.

Underpinning Values

Everyone attending or working in the Gipsy Hill Federation has the right to:

- i. a recognition of their unique identity
- ii. be treated with respect and dignity
- iii. learn and work in a safe environment
- iv. be protected from harm

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

- i. individual consideration of pupils needs by staff that has responsibility for their care and protection
- ii. expect staff to undertake duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies
- iii. be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in the school and be informed about the school's complaint procedure

The school will ensure that all pupils understand the need for and respond to clearly defined limits which govern behaviour in the school. Where necessary, appropriate support will be given and reasonable adjustments made.

As part of the whole school community, parents commit themselves to working in partnership with the school to support their child to meet the requirements of the school behaviour policy.

Training

At Gipsy Hill Federation, we recognise that it is very rare that one of our pupils be the subject of restrictive physical intervention(s). All physical interventions are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. We look for early warning signs, taking steps to divert behaviours leading towards foreseeable risk. We always look for alternatives to physical control and use well-chosen words to try and de-escalate a situation. Physical intervention is a last resort.

Training needs are assessed in relation to foreseeable risk. Positive Handling training (accredited by the Institute of Conflict Management) is made available to designated staff and is the responsibility of the Head of each school in the Gipsy Hill Federation. Designated staff include Senior Leaders, non-class-based staff and staff supporting children with positive handling plans (see appendix 1) in place. Names of designated staff are displayed in the staff room. Prior to the provision of training, guidance will be given on action to be taken. All staff have a duty of care to all pupils so where a child is putting themselves or others in direct danger, all staff must act appropriately in the child's best interests within the context of the situation. Training for all staff through twilights and extended briefings is provided for this. We take the view that staff are not expected to put themselves in danger; and that removing pupils and themselves from a source of danger is appropriate. We appreciate the integrity of our staff and value their efforts to manage situations that are difficult and in which they exercise their duty of care for their pupils. However, we do not require them to go beyond what is reasonable. In particular, it is acceptable for any member of staff to make the decision that they will not use physical intervention for personal reasons.

The Team Teach Approach to Positive Handling

Reasonable force is not defined legally in isolation. It must be justified as appropriate by the circumstances.

We use only the minimum force that is needed to restore safety or appropriate behaviour; and we take account of the age, understanding and gender of the pupil. An uncaring attitude is likely to provoke students.

The Team Teach approach advocates:

- I. At least two members of staff
- II. Minimum force and time
- III. Maximum care and control
- IV. Last resort – after use of behavioural management strategies

Escalating Situations

The 1996 Education Act (Section 550A) stipulates that reasonable physical intervention may be legally defensible to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do any of the following;

- i. engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils; whether the behaviour occurs in a classroom, during a teaching session or elsewhere (this includes authorised out-of-school activities)
- ii. self-injuring or placing himself or herself at risk
- iii. injuring others
- iv. causing damage to property, including that of the pupil himself or herself
- v. committing a criminal offence (even if the pupil is below the age of criminal responsibility)

Examples of situations which fall within the above are:

- I. a pupil is physically aggressive towards a member of staff or another pupil
- II. pupils are fighting
- III. a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of materials or objects

- IV. a pupil is behaving in a way which he or she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him or herself or others
- V. a pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave the school and puts him/herself or others in danger by doing so

Acceptable measures of Physical Intervention

Restrictive Physical Intervention/restraint can only be deemed reasonable if:

- I. it is warranted by the particular circumstances of the incident
- II. it is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident and the consequences which it is desired to prevent
- III. it is carried out as the minimum to reduce risk
- IV. the age, understanding and the gender of the pupil are taken into account
- V. it is likely to reduce risk

Wherever possible, assistance will be sought from another member of staff before intervention

The form of physical intervention may involve staff doing the following:

- I. escorting a pupil
- II. shepherding a pupil away
- III. using Team Teach techniques to support the child to transition to a place (physical or emotional) of safety

Any such measures will be most effective in the context of the overall ethos of the school, the way in which staff exercise their responsibilities and the behaviour management strategies used.

Recording

Where restrictive physical intervention(s) have been used a record of the incident always needs to be kept. All recording needs to be completed as soon as possible after the event. The incident will also be recorded in a bound and numbered book.

Any incident of restraint will be reported as soon as possible to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The record of the RPI will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and any necessary actions or investigations will be carried out accordingly. Parents will be informed of any use of RPI(s) as soon as possible.

Reports are filed centrally on the school site and will be kept on file until the child is 21.

Action after an Incident

The Headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further as required. If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure:

- I. Child Protection Procedure
- II. Staff Facing Allegations of Abuse Procedure
- III. Staff or Pupil Disciplinary Procedure
- IV. School Behaviour Policy
- V. Exclusions Procedure

Members of staff will be kept informed of any action taken.

In addition to the above, staff and pupils involved in the incident will be given an opportunity to debrief and repair the relationship. It is acknowledged that any incident of Restrictive Physical Intervention can be very upsetting for all involved.

Positive Handling Plans

It is recognised that for some children additional support is needed, for example, where a child has a sensory need and might become over-stimulated and distressed. As part of the child's support, a positive handling plan might be put in place, written together with the parents/carers. The main purpose of the positive handling plan is to ensure consistent understanding of possible triggers for the child as well as effective de-escalation strategies to prevent the need for restrictive physical intervention. As part of this discussion, parents/carers and school will also transparently discuss behaviours which would result in the need for restrictive physical intervention to reduce risk, what this would like and how it will be shared with the parent. If restrictive physical intervention is used for a child who does not have a positive handling plan in place, parents/carers will be invited in to write one together with the school following the first incident. Every positive handling plan is individualised to each child so as to personalise de-escalation strategies using the form in Appendix 1 as a template. Any positive handling plan will be shared with all relevant staff.

Monitoring of Incidents

Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Headteacher to the needs of any pupil(s) whose behaviour can only be contained using positive handling.

This process will address patterns of incidents and evaluate trends which may be emerging.

Complaints

Parents have the right to complain about actions taken by school staff. If a specific allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff, then the Gipsy Hill Federation will follow the guidance for dealing with allegations against staff as outlined in our Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.

Other complaints will be dealt with under the school's Complaints Policy, which can be found at <https://www.ghf.london/policies>.

Appendix 1: Positive Handling Plan

The Gipsy Hill Federation Positive Handling Plan

Child's Name:	Date of Birth:
Year Group/Class:	School:
Summary of child's needs (including any background information or existing Special Educational Need) e.g. physical difficulties, medical conditions etc	
Effective strategies to support the de-escalation of unwanted behaviour	
Behaviours that might necessitate use of restrictive physical intervention(s) (RPIs) (only to be used as a last resort if behaviours are putting themselves or others in danger)	
Restrictive physical interventions that might be used (only to be used as a last resort if behaviours are putting themselves or others in danger)	
What will happen following the use of restrictive physical intervention(s)?	
Named parent to be contacted –	
Any incident where restraint is used will be recorded in a bound incident reporting book. This is shared and signed by named person responsible for handling RPIs and the designated safeguarding lead.	
Steps will be taken to ensure reconciliation following the incident.	
Agreed review date:	

I acknowledge receipt of the Positive Handling Plan, which I understand has been created to support my child's needs. I will inform the school if the child's situation changes.

Signed (Parent/Carer): _____

Date: _____

Signed (member of staff completing form): _____

Date: _____

Signed (named person responsible for RPI): _____

Date: _____