



Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy

St Richard Reynolds Catholic Primary School

Policy: Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy

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Introduction

At St Richard Reynolds Catholic Primary School we believe that we are all made in the image of God and therefore deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Our approach to behaviour and relationships is rooted in respect, care and mutual responsibility. We believe that all members of the school community have the right to learn and work in a calm, safe and supportive environment where positive relationships are central to personal growth and wellbeing.

There are rare occasions when a child may present unsafe behaviours that results in staff needing to use positive handling or physical intervention to prevent harm to themselves or others. This policy explains how the school meets its duty of care to protect pupils and staff while maintaining a positive ethos consistent with our Catholic mission.

The overarching aim of this policy is to ensure that every member of the school community understands when and how positive handling and physical intervention may be appropriate, and the standards that guide its use. The policy seeks to safeguard pupils' welfare, protect staff from unnecessary risk or false allegation, and ensure that all actions are lawful, reasonable and proportionate. It also aims to promote consistency, transparency and accountability through clear systems of reporting, reviewing and learning from incidents.

Positive Handling and Preventative Strategies

At our school, positive handling refers to the wide range of supportive strategies staff use to promote good behaviour, prevent situations from escalating, and maintain safety in a respectful, non-confrontational way. Positive handling is designed to create a safe and supportive environment for all pupils while reducing the likelihood of conflict or harm. It includes actions that help staff respond to challenging situations calmly and constructively, supporting pupils to regain control and make positive choices.

Positive handling can involve calm communication, de-escalation techniques, and, where necessary, minimal non-restrictive physical contact to guide or support pupils safely. Examples include:

- Speaking calmly to a pupil who is upset to help them regain control.
- Using non-threatening body language to create personal space and reduce tension.
- Gently guiding a pupil away from a potentially hazardous area.
- Standing between pupils who are arguing to prevent conflict from escalating, without using force.

- Offering choices to encourage cooperation and foster a sense of autonomy.
- Using co-regulation strategies linked to the Zones of regulation.

The most effective way to reduce the need for any physical intervention is to prevent situations from escalating in the first place. All staff are trained in preventative strategies that promote cooperation and self-regulation, including:

- Building strong, respectful relationships founded on trust and empathy.
- Understanding individual triggers and early signs of distress.
- Maintaining clear routines, expectations, and boundaries.
- Using calm, non-threatening language and body posture.
- Offering time, space, and choices to allow pupils to regain control.
- Employing humour, distraction, or changes of activity where appropriate.
- Seeking assistance early rather than managing a situation alone.

By using these positive handling and preventative approaches, the school ensures that all pupils are supported in a safe and respectful way, helping them develop the skills to manage their own behaviour and make positive choices.

Physical Intervention

Physical intervention refers to the use of reasonable physical force to prevent injury, serious damage to property, or behaviour that poses an immediate risk to the safety of pupils or staff. “Reasonable” means that staff use only the amount of force necessary in the circumstances, and only for as long as needed to ensure safety. Physical intervention is always a last resort, used only when all other strategies, such as calm communication, de-escalation, or supportive guidance, have been attempted or are clearly impractical.

Examples of physical intervention include:

- Restraint or guidance to prevent immediate harm, such as holding a pupil’s arm to stop them from hitting someone, blocking them from running into danger, or gently restraining them to prevent a hazardous action like climbing over a fence. In all cases, staff aim to use the minimum force required, applied calmly and safely.
- Removal of dangerous objects from a pupil’s hands to prevent injury to themselves or others, while maintaining a safe environment for everyone involved.

Staff are trained to act with professionalism, care, and a focus on de-escalation. Even in situations where physical intervention is necessary, the dignity, wellbeing, and rights of the pupil are always maintained.

The school follows the Equality Act 2010, making reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities or additional needs. Staff take into account that a pupil’s behaviour may be influenced by underlying medical, emotional, or developmental conditions, and interventions are tailored accordingly.

For pupils identified as presenting a higher level of risk, the school develops a Safety Plan with input from the pupil (where appropriate), parents or carers, the class teacher, the SENDCo, and any relevant external professionals. The plan clearly sets out:

- Strategies for de-escalation
- Approved physical techniques, if necessary
- Relevant medical, emotional, or behavioural considerations

This ensures that all interventions are carefully planned, proportionate, and consistent, with the safety and wellbeing of the pupil and those around them as the highest priority.

Authorisation and Training

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that staff understand the law and that only trained, authorised staff use restrictive physical interventions. Only members of staff who have successfully completed local authority accredited training are authorised to use restrictive physical intervention. A register of trained staff will be maintained and reviewed annually by the Headteacher. Training will be renewed as required by the provider, normally every two years.

All staff, including those not trained in positive handling, will receive regular professional development on de-escalation, behaviour management and safeguarding principles so that they understand how to respond and whom to call for assistance. Volunteers and visitors are not authorised to use positive handling.

Recording, Reporting, and Parental Involvement

At our school, every incident of positive handling or physical intervention is treated with the utmost seriousness. Staff are required to record incidents as soon as possible, and always within 24 hours, using a Physical Intervention Report Form. The purpose of this recording is to ensure transparency, accountability, and to provide a clear record of what occurred, how it was managed, and any follow-up actions. The report includes essential details such as:

- When and where the incident occurred (date, time, and location)
- Who was involved, including all pupils and staff
- A chronological description of events, including the reasons for intervention and any de-escalation techniques or physical strategies used
- Details of any injuries, damage, or witnesses present
- Who was informed, including parents or carers and senior staff

Parents and carers are informed as soon as possible, ideally on the same day, and always within 24 hours, either by telephone or in person. This ensures that families are aware of what happened, why it happened, and what support was provided. Copies of all reports are securely filed in the pupil's record, and a central log is maintained by the Primary Leadership Team. In cases of serious incidents, the Chair of Governors is informed, and where appropriate, the Local Authority is notified in line with health, safety, or safeguarding procedures.

Post-Incident Support and Reflection

The school recognises that physical interventions can be stressful for both pupils and staff. Immediate support includes first-aid if needed, time to calm, and checking the pupil's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Within 48 hours, a post-incident review is conducted with relevant staff, the pupil (where appropriate), a senior leader, and, if needed, the SENDCo. The review focuses on:

- Understanding triggers and sequence of events
- Evaluating the effectiveness and proportionality of the response
- Considering updates to the pupil's Positive Handling or Safety Plan and any additional support

For pupils identified as higher risk, a Safety Plan is created with input from parents, the pupil (where possible), teachers, the SENDCo, and relevant professionals. The plan outlines approved de-escalation strategies, any physical intervention techniques, and relevant medical or emotional considerations. This approach ensures all incidents are managed safely, transparently, and consistently, with the wellbeing and dignity of pupils and staff as the highest priority.

Complaints and Allegations

The existence of this policy and open communication with parents should minimise misunderstanding. However, any complaint regarding the use of force will be investigated promptly

and fairly in accordance with the **School Complaints Policy**. The Headteacher will inform the Chair of Governors of any such complaint. Governors not directly involved in the initial response will remain impartial in case a further appeal or disciplinary process is required.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Primary Leadership Team will monitor all recorded incidents to identify patterns relating to individual pupils, locations or staff members. Findings will inform staff training and risk assessments. A termly anonymised summary will be presented to the Governing Body as part of the Safeguarding Report.

St Richard Reynolds Catholic Primary School values its partnership with parents and carers. Should a situation arise where staff must intervene physically to ensure safety, parents will be informed at the earliest opportunity. We invite parents to discuss any concerns so that we may work together in the best interests of the child, fostering forgiveness, understanding and growth after difficulty

Policy effectiveness will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or best practice changes, ensuring that it continues to uphold the safety and rights of every member of the school community.