

# West Green Primary School



## Positive Handling Policy

- Policy Approved by the FGB on 14/07/22
- Due for Review on 14/07/23

## **Introduction**

This policy links with the school's Behaviour Policy and includes guidance for staff and for pupils.

## **Positive Handling**

### Range of Positive Handling

Positive Handling describes a broad spectrum of physical contact with children that staff may use in fulfilling their duty of care and job descriptions. It encompasses care, control and 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, defusing, and de-escalation. Risk assessment identifies positive prevention strategies and how a pupil may need to be supported in a crisis

#### 1. Physical Contact

At West Green we recognise that appropriate physical contact occurs 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 and age/person appropriate; for example comforting a child who has fallen in the playground, administering first aid, guiding a child safely past an obstacle, handshakes/ high-fives, demonstration or guidance in PE or sports lessons etc.

#### 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. Physical Control / Restraint

This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or property or if the child's behaviour represents a significant disruption to the maintenance of good order and discipline.

The level of compliance from the pupil determines whether or not the interaction is an intervention or a control/restraint. Restraint is the positive application of force by staff, in order to overcome rigorous resistance, completely directing, deciding and controlling a person's free movement (Team Teach definition).

Staff should ensure that it is **absolutely necessary** to physically intervene to maintain the safety of one or more children or members of staff. If a member of staff makes such a judgement they must ensure that they restrain a child in a **reasonable manner** that is **proportionate** to the nature of the incident for the **minimum possible time**.

## **Definition**

The Education Act, 1997, added a section to the 1996 Act to clarify when teachers may use physical force to restrain a pupil. Restraint occurs when a member of staff

uses physical force intentionally to restrict a pupil's movement against his or her will. It is to be used only in exceptional circumstances. There is no legal definition of "reasonable force", so it is not possible to set out comprehensively when it is reasonable to use force; or the degree of force that may reasonably be used. It will always depend on all the circumstances of the case.

## **Objectives**

Staff should have good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary where a pupil:

- puts him/herself or others at risk of injury
- causes serious damage to property
- causes serious disruption
- refuses to respond to other behaviour management strategies.

## **Equal Opportunities**

This policy is applicable to all groups of individuals within the school regardless of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or need.

## **Special Educational Needs**

Every attempt will be made to ensure reasonable adjustments have been made for children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND).

## **Minimising the need to use reasonable force**

Staff are expected to exhaust all behaviour management strategies (where possible) before using physical intervention. This may include:

- Dialogue, allowing space, talking, listening and humouring, cajoling and reasoning, distraction, and the pupil should be warned orally that physical restraint will be used unless he/she desists.
- Only the MINIMUM REASONABLE FORCE NECESSARY to prevent physical injury or damage should be applied.
- Making every effort to secure the presence of another staff member before applying restraint. These staff can act as assistants and witnesses.
- As soon as it is safe, restraint should be gradually relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control. Restraint should take place calmly but firmly.
- Restraint should be an act of care and control, not punishment.
- Physical restraint should not be used purely to force compliance with staff instructions when there is no immediate risk to people or property.
- Where a pupil may require restraint that pupil should already have a plan in place notifying staff that restraint procedures may be necessary. In such cases a Risk Assessment may also be in place to prevent risk of harm to the child and others.
- Ideally, parents/carers will have been involved in the creation of this plan.

## **Staff authorised to use reasonable force**

### **Permanent Authorisation**

Specific staff who have received Team Teach Training are authorised to use reasonable force to restrain a pupil, although they may choose not to do so. They may be used in a supportive role. Staff at West Green receive training on a rolling programme to ensure that there are some staff trained at all times.

### **Temporary Authorisation**

Any adult working with children in the school, in an extreme emergency, where a child is putting themselves in danger, may need to use reasonable force to restrain a pupil and will be given the statutory power to do so.

In any incidence where restraint is used the incident must be immediately reported to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head so that it can be correctly recorded on CPOMS and parents informed.

This policy is evidence of the use of temporary or permanent authorisation to use reasonable force to restrain a pupil.

### **Deciding whether to use reasonable force**

- A distinction must be maintained between the use of 'one-off' intervention, which is appropriate in the particular circumstances, and using it repeatedly as a regular feature of a regime.
- Staff must be able to show that the method of intervention was in keeping with the incident that gave rise to it.
- The degree and duration of any reasonable force applied must be proportional to circumstances.
- The potential for damage to persons and property in applying any form of restraint must always be kept in mind.
- The failure of a particular intervention to secure a pupil's compliance should not automatically signal the immediate use of another more forceful form of intervention.
- Escalation should be avoided if possible, especially if it would make the overall situation more destructive and/or unmanageable.
- The age and social competence of the pupil should be taken into account in deciding what degree of intervention is necessary.
- Consideration should be given to approaches to control that would be appropriate to that particular pupil.
- The risk associated with not using reasonable force should be outweighed by those of using reasonable force.

### **Operational procedural points relating to the use of physical restraint**

#### **All incidents must be reviewed to try to establish:**

- Cause
- Appropriateness of action taken
- Whether and how procedures need amending

- Afterwards, the pupil should discuss and be counselled on why it was necessary to restrain him/her. He/she should also be given the chance to state his/her side of the story.
- The circumstances and justification for using physical restraint must be recorded immediately. In the event of physical restraint being used on a child, parents/carers will be informed.
- The Head Teacher, or Senior Leader authorised to act for the Head Teacher, should discuss the incident with the teacher/person using reasonable force within 24 hours.
- A report of every incident should be prepared within 48 hours (the sooner the better).
- Where it is clear that the teacher/person concerned needs further advice/support/training, the Head Teacher should take prompt action to see that it is provided.
- Staff meetings should provide the opportunity for a review of the incident where discussion is essential to prevent the development of a culture where a physical response becomes routine.

### **Staff Training and Support**

Managing pupils, particularly those pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour, is a very physically, emotionally and mentally demanding task. Pupils on this continuum can engender high levels of stress that must be recognised and managed appropriately. Class teams must be the first point of support with effective team discussion playing a major part in reducing anxiety and stress.

Staff will be given the opportunity to discuss incidents where physical restraint was employed and, in particular, to identify whether any alternative strategy might have been equally effective using non-physical intervention strategies.

This policy recognises an ongoing staff training need. This will also involve Midday Supervisors and Teaching Assistants. With respect to management of behaviour and use of physical restraint, the Head Teacher will ensure that behaviour management occupies a proportion of the annual training programme as well as appearing on staff meeting agendas.

Specific behaviour related courses will also be brought to the attention of identified staff by the Head Teacher as deemed necessary.

Teachers of pupils who may have specific restraint plans in place will be briefed fully about the plan and strategies for management of this will be discussed with them by the SENCo. This would relate to a Child's Support Plan if they have additional needs, or may be outlined on a Child's Risk Assessment.

### **Review**

This policy will be discussed as appropriate at staff meetings, by the Senior Leadership Team and the governing body. The policy will be changed, as appropriate, in the light of new legislation and behaviour management techniques. It will be reviewed alongside the Behaviour Policy.

### **Further Guidance**

DfE: Use of Reasonable Force 2013:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>