Bollington St. John’s Church of England

Primary School



*Where talent grows*

Head Teacher: Mrs M. Walker

Head of Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Mrs E. Watson

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord”*

***Colossians 3:23***

**Positive Handling Policy**

**Policy Statement**

Staff at Bollington St John’s Primary School are trained to look after the pupils in their care. Where pupils may display challenging or physical behaviour, our staff have a duty to intervene in order to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others. There may also be situations in which a child seriously disrupts good order in the school or causes damage to property. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically they will follow the school’s Positive Handling Policy.

**Introduction**

Good professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in school respond positively to the discipline practised by the staff. 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 may be required. Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in Bollington St John’s Primary School:

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 and

II. Are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur.

The application of any form of positive handling places staff in a vulnerable situation. 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. 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.

**Definitions**

(a) Physical Contact

Situations in which proper physical contact takes place between staff and pupils,

e.g. in games/PE or to comfort pupils.

(b) 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.

(c) Positive Handling

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 and reported to the head teacher.

(d) Physical restraint

This is defined as when force is used to overcome active resistance and are referred to as ‘Restrictive Physical Interventions’ in national Guidance: (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention). A clear and consistent positive handling policy supports pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within an ethos of mutual respect, care and safety.

Pupils with severe behavioural difficulties sometimes present a risk to themselves and others. Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 describes the circumstances in which suitably trained teachers and others authorised by the Headteacher may use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils. Examples of when such action may be reasonable are to prevent injury to people, damage to property or the breakdown of discipline.

This policy details how we implement the guidance in this school. It should be considered alongside the most recent LA policy statements and recent local and national guidance. It is designed to help staff to ensure that any actions they take are reasonable, proportionate and absolutely necessary.

**School Expectations**

The school takes seriously its duty of care towards pupils, employees and visitors. Staff protection is an important part of child protection; both depend on confident and competent staff who feel supported by the leadership. This policy has a clear focus.

• The first and paramount consideration is the welfare of the children in our care.

• The second is the welfare and protection of the adults who look after them.

**Positive Behaviour Management**

All physical interventions at this school are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. The school 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 unacceptable behaviour and taking steps to divert behaviours leading towards foreseeable risk. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the development of their own Positive Handling Plans by focusing on positive alternatives and choices. Parents are also encouraged to contribute. 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.

**Alternatives to Physical Controls**

A member of staff who chooses not to make a physical intervention can still take effective action to reduce risk using a range of de-escalation techniques. They can:

• Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason.

• Give clear directions for pupils to stop.

• Remind them about rules and likely outcomes.

• 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.

**Help Protocols**

The expectation is that all staff should support one another. This means that staff always offer help and always accept it. Help does not always mean taking over. It may mean just staying around in case you are needed, getting somebody else or looking after somebody else’s group. Supporting a colleague does not only mean agreeing with their suggestions and offering sympathy when things go wrong. Real support sometimes means acting as a critical friend to help colleagues become aware of possible alternative strategies. Good communication is necessary so that colleagues avoid confusion when help is offered and accepted, which may include the use of practised scripts.

**The Last Resort Principle**

At Bollington St John’s Primary School, physical restraint is used only when there is no realistic alternative. This does not mean that we always expect staff to methodically work their way through a series of failing strategies, before attempting an intervention in which they have some confidence. Nor does it mean always waiting until the danger is imminent, by which time the prospect of safely managing it may be significantly reduced. National guidance is clear on this point.

“If necessary, staff have the authority to take immediate action to prevent harm occurring even if the harm is expected to happen sometime in the predictable future.” *Para 10 Page 4 Department of Health – 1997 – “The Control of Children in the Public Care: Interpretation of the Children Act 1989.”*

It does mean that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative. It also means that we expect staff to experiment and think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective.

**Proactive Physical Interventions**

It is sometimes reasonable to use physical controls to prevent extreme behaviour from becoming dangerous provided that it is an agreed part of the Positive Handling Plan. Examples of this are where a pupil has shown ritualistic patterns of behaviour, which in the past have led to the child becoming more distressed and violent. In such circumstances, it may be reasonable to withdraw the child to a safer place when the pattern of behaviour begins, rather than wait until the child is distressed and out of control. The paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the child and that it reduces, rather than increases, risk.

**Reasonable and Proportionate**

Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate. People should not react in anger. If they feel they are becoming angry they should consider withdrawing to allow someone else to deal with the situation. Where staff act in good faith, and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported.

When physical controls are considered staff should think about the answers to the following questions:

• How is this in the best interest of the pupil?

• Why is a less intrusive intervention not preferable?

• Why do we have to act now?

• Why am I the best person to be doing this?

• Why is this absolutely necessary?

If staff can answer these questions it is more likely that a physical intervention will be judged to be reasonable and proportionate.

**Unreasonable use of Force**

It is not reasonable to use force simply to enforce compliance in circumstances where there is no risk. Nor is it reasonable to use any more force than is necessary to achieve a reduction in risk. Under no circumstances should pain be deliberately inflicted or should pupils be deliberately subjected to undignified or humiliating treatment (this should not be confused with the unavoidable discomfort associated with some approved techniques for disengaging from assaults such as bites and grabs). Other than as a one-off emergency measure to protect health and safety, force should never be used to keep a pupil secluded. Seclusion is only lawful by specific court order and cannot become part of a planned strategy at this school.

**Team Teach**

At Bollington St John’s Primary School, we believe that to support staff and ensure that the well-being of pupils is paramount, there should be designated members of staff trained in the pre-emotive and responsive positive handling strategies and techniques of Team Teach, to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies adopted by the school. Further details of the Team Teach approach can be found on the Team Teach website (www.team-teach.co.uk).

**Health and Safety**

If dangerous behaviour presents a significant risk of injury to people, there is a legal Health and Safety issue to be addressed.

As a minimum requirement, in order to comply with health and safety legislation, each employee has a responsibility to ensure that they are conversant with school policy and guidance, and to cooperate to make the school safer. It is also a requirement that they participate in training if they are directed to do so. This does not necessarily mean that all staff can be involved in all the physical activities. The non-physical aspects of positive handling training are crucially important too.

When considering a pupil’s behaviour staff should think about the following questions:

• Can we anticipate a Health and Safety risk related to this pupil’s behaviour?

• Have we got all the information we need to conduct a risk assessment?

• Have we provided a written plan as a result?

• What further steps can we take to prevent dangerous behaviour from developing?

**Risk Assessment**

Informal risk assessments should be a routine part of life for staff working with pupils who may exhibit extreme behaviour. Responsible staff should think ahead to anticipate what might go wrong. If a proposed activity or course of action involves unacceptable risk the correct decision is to do something else.

Factors which might influence a more immediate risk assessment, and therefore a decision about how to intervene, might include the state of health and fitness of the staff member, their physical stature, competence, confidence and relationships with the pupils concerned. Confidence and competence are often related to the level of staff training. Other than in an emergency, staff should only attempt physical controls when they are confident that such action will result in a reduction of risk. When faced by extreme behaviour, or even in a fight situation, the judgement may be that by becoming involved, the member of staff will increase the chance of somebody getting hurt. In this situation the correct decision is to hold back from the physical controls.

**Getting Help**

At this school the following support structures are in place:

• Use of help protocols and language to remind all staff of availability of colleagues to offer help including change-overs of staff during a crisis situation with a pupil.

• Debrief sessions after a crisis with the pupil(s) involved, reflecting on how crisis was managed by all involved and identifying any points for review or learning.

• Refresher meetings for de-escalation and Team Teach strategies.

• Communication between staff about pupils at risk or presenting with challenging behaviour.

**Positive Handling Plans**

Risk management is regarded as an integral part of behaviour management planning. All pupils who have been identified as presenting a risk should have a Positive Handling Plan. The plan details any strategies which have been found to be effective for that individual, along with any particular responses which are not recommended (see appendix 3). If particular physical techniques have been found to be effective they should be named, along with alerts to any which have proved ineffective or which caused problems in the past. Positive Handling Plans should be considered alongside any statement/EHCP and any other planning documents which relate to the pupil. They should take account of age, sex, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special need and social context. Positive Handling Plans should result from multi-professional collaboration and be included in any Pastoral Support Plan or IPMs. These will be reviewed at Annual Reviews, where applicable.

**Responding to Unforeseen Emergencies**

Even the best planning systems cannot cover every eventuality and the school recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet. The key principles in any decision making where physical intervention is used should be that this intervention:

• in the best interest of the child;

• reasonable and proportionate;

• intended to reduce risk;

• the least intrusive and restrictive of those options available which are likely to be effective.

Whenever a physical intervention has to be made there should be a verbal warning. Where possible, staff should always attempt to use de-escalation methods (e.g. diversion or defusing) in preference to physical interventions. They should only use the techniques and methods approved for use in this school. If staff act in good faith and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported.

**The Post Incident Support Structure for Pupils and Staff**

Following a serious incident, the school would offer support for all involved. People take time to recover from a serious incident. Until the incident has subsided the only priority is to reduce risk and calm the situation down. Staff should avoid saying or doing anything which could inflame the situation during the recovery phase. Immediate action should be taken to ensure medical help is sought if there are any injuries which require more than basic first aid. All injuries should be reported and recorded using the school’s systems. It is important to note that injury in itself is not evidence of malpractice. Even when staff attempt to do everything right, things can go wrong. Part of the post incident support for staff may involve a reminder of this, as people tend to blame themselves when things go wrong. Time needs to be found to repair relationships. When careful steps are taken to repair relationships, a serious incident does not necessarily result in long term damage. This is an opportunity for learning for all concerned. Time needs to be given to following up incidents so that pupils where appropriate have an opportunity to express their feelings, suggest alternative courses of action for the future and appreciate other people’s perspective. When time and effort are put into a post incident support structure the outcome of a serious incident can be learning, growth and strengthened relationships.

**Complaints**

The school has a formal Complaints Procedure for pupils or parents of pupils to follow. The complaints policy applies equally to staff. We are an open school and promote transparent policy and practice in order to protect the interests of staff and pupils alike. Any staff concerns regarding the welfare of children should be taken to the designated person for safeguarding children. Any safety concerns should be reported to the designated person for Health and Safety.

**Training**

Teachers and anyone authorised by the Headteacher who are expected to use planned physical techniques should be trained. This school has adopted the Team Teach Model of training. All training courses have been fully accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) in accordance with DfE and Department of Health guidance. Positive handling training is always provided by qualified instructors with rigorous guidelines.

The level of training recommended is related to the level of risk faced by the member of staff. Our preferred approach is for a nominated group of staff to be trained in positive handling. The level of training required is kept under review and may change in response to the needs of our pupils. In the instance where staff require additional support, they should seek the guidance and support of the trained staff members.

**Recording**

Whenever overpowering force is used the incident must be recorded on the child’s Positive Handling Plan if one exists or on CPOMs. All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record which should be completed that day.

Staff should:

• Read through the CPOMs form carefully.

• Take time to think about what actually happened and try to explain it clearly.

Complete all names in full, indicating precise time of incident.

Bear in mind these records will be retained and could form part of an investigation at some time in the future.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Headteacher / SENCO will ensure that each incident is reviewed and instigate further action as required. The school incident log is open to external monitoring and evaluation.

**Follow Up**

Following an incident, consideration may be given to conducting a further risk assessment, reviewing the Positive Handling Policy or behaviour management policy. Any further action in relation to a member of staff, or an individual pupil, will follow the appropriate procedures.

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