



## SSMJ POLICY FOR

### **Positive Handling**

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*Following the example of Jesus, together we learn, love and respect one another to be the best we can be.*

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Date policy agreed – January 2024

Date to be reviewed – January 2026

## **Positive Handling Policy 2024**

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'A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.'

Proverbs 15:1

## **Introduction**

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff, who come into contact with pupils and for volunteers working within the school to explain the school's arrangements for care and control.

This policy sets out the framework for the use of reasonable force or positive handling, but it must be clearly understood that this should always be set within the school's overall behaviour management framework and only used as a last resort, under-pinned by sound risk assessment. Providing successful inclusion may necessitate physical restraint but only as one of the strategies available for the management of challenging behaviour. Only in the event of the failure of clearly defined protocols to bring control to the situation, or imminent danger to persons, should positive handling be considered.

Due account has been taken of DFE advice, in particular, "The Use of Reasonable Force- Advice for headteachers, staff, and governing bodies" issued in July 2013.

As teaching and non-teaching staff work 'in loco parentis' and have a 'Duty of Care' towards their pupils, they could be liable for a claim of negligence if they fail to follow the guidance within this policy.

## **Definitions of Positive Handling.**

Positive Handling describes a broad spectrum of 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, diffusion, and de-escalation. Risk assessment identifies positive prevention strategies and how a pupil may need to be supported in a crisis.

### **1. Physical Contact**

Situations in which proper 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.

## **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 / Restrictive Physical Intervention**

This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or property. The level of compliance from the pupil determines whether or not the interaction is an intervention or a control/restraint. Restraint is defined as the positive application of force by staff, in order to overcome rigorous resistance, completely directing, deciding and controlling a person’s free movement.

## **Underpinning Values**

This policy has been devised to accord with these underpinning values:

Everyone attending or working in this school has a right to:

- Recognition of their unique identity;
- Be treated with respect and dignity;
- Learn and work in a safe environment;
- Be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse.

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

- Individual consideration of pupil needs by the staff who have responsibility for their care and protection;
- Expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies;
- Be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in school;
- Expect behaviour support plans to be designed to achieve outcomes that reflect the best interests of the child whose

behaviour is of immediate concern and others affected by the behaviour requiring intervention;

- Be informed about the school's complaints procedure.

### **Positive Behaviour Management (See also Behaviour Policy)**

Good personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in our school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in our school respond positively to our behaviour management approaches. All pupils are aware of the expectations of our school with regards to behaviour and of the clearly defined consequences that we follow consistently. This ensures the wellbeing and safety of all pupils and staff in school.

However, it is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable, proportionate and necessary force may be required. St Michael and St John's RC Primary School acknowledges that such physical techniques are only a small part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management.

All staff must adopt a positive approach to improving behaviour in order to reward effort and application, and to build self-esteem.

As a staff we work in partnership with each other to:

- Develop effective communication with children helping them understand their own feelings
- Find out why a child behaves as he or she does
- Understand the factors that influence a child's behaviour
- Identify early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours are developing

This approach will help to ensure that early and preventative intervention is the norm. It should reduce the incidence of extreme behaviours and make sure that the use of physical force is rare.

Children who exhibit challenging behaviour will have a Behaviour Support Plan aimed at improving their ability to manage their emotions. This will be devised by the class teacher with support from the SENCO, others who know the child well, and where appropriate outside agencies. The plan is shared with the child's parents/carers and staff throughout school.

Should a child begin to exhibit other extreme or violent behaviour an additional Positive Handling Plan will be devised aimed at de-escalating any incidents that might occur and outlining possible physical interventions, should they be necessary. Once again all those who know the child well will contribute to devising the plan. This will be shared with parents and staff to ensure the child has a consistent approach and feels fully supported.

All incidents and documentation are uploaded to CPOMs to ensure a consistent and detailed view can be obtained and a detailed record of events are recorded.

Such plans will be formally recorded in accordance with school procedures, and set out the action taken to:

- Meet the pupil's needs
- Encourage the pupil to make positive choices and develop self-control
- Support the pupil in difficult situations
- Safely manage crises if and when they occur

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in this school clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where use of force is necessary.

### **Use of Positive Handling and minimising the need to use reasonable force**

No legal definition of reasonable force exists. However, for the purpose of this policy and the implementation of it in St Michael and St John's RC Primary School:

- Positive Handling uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming himself, herself, others or property.
- The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause.
- Staff are expected to follow the pupil's Behaviour Support Plan / Individual Positive Handling Plan in the first instance to manage an incident/challenging behaviour

- If this was unsuccessful and the situation continues to escalate staff would then be expected to employ other agreed techniques.
- The overriding consideration should still be the reasonableness and proportionality of the force used.

The application of any form of physical control inevitably carries an attached risk of unintended harm and this places staff and the school at risk of potential litigation. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff, therefore are only to use physical interventions if they are comfortable doing so and should be clear that if they do they have a responsibility to follow this policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention.

Staff must be aware that they are responsible for:

- Assessing risks related to individual circumstances which may arise in the course of their day-to-day duties (Dynamic Risk Assessment).
- Making judgements about when the use of force is necessary and the degree of force which may be regarded as necessary to manage a situation.

Staff need to be aware that they may be required to justify their decisions in writing through the recording and reporting procedures outlined later in this document.

### **Minimising the need for positive handling**

At St Michael and St John's RC Primary School, we constantly strive to create a calm environment that minimises the risk of incidents arising that might require the use of reasonable force. In addition to this, pupils who present with persistent challenging behaviour may work with identified teaching assistants who will work in partnership with the SENCO and class teacher, in supporting the behaviour support plan and behaviour targets.

Pupils who have issues relating to sensory dysfunction or other conditions that may result in increased anxiety levels, and therefore an increase in the likelihood of challenging behaviour, may have individualised support or programmes to help them to manage this.

Through the PSHE and RHE curriculum pupils learn about feelings and managing conflict, where this is appropriate to their level of development. The ethos further promotes independence, choice and inclusion; pupils are given maximum opportunity for personal growth and emotional wellbeing. Children are consistently given an opportunity to discuss any events and recognise/share their feelings.

All staff will employ a consistent approach to trying to defuse situations before behaviour becomes challenging and are aware of how to de-escalate incidents should they arise. Reasonable force will only be used when the risks involved in doing so, are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force.

Prevention of unsafe behaviour will be enabled through:

- The deployment of appropriate staffing;
- The deployment of appropriately trained and competent staff; School has a Senior Mental Health Lead allocated within school who is around to help support staff with appropriate strategies.
- Avoiding situations and triggers known to provoke challenging behaviour;
- Creating opportunities for choice and achievement;
- Developing staff expertise through a programme of Continuous Professional Development;
- Exploring pupils' preferences relating to the way/s in which they are managed.
- Staff employing 'diffusion' techniques to avert escalation of behaviour into violence or aggression.
- Areas around school designated as 'Calming Areas' (Prayer & Nurture Room, Rainbow Room, Library Area) which are open to children throughout the day.

### **Strategies may include:**

#### **1. Time out**

This involves restricting the child's access to positive reinforcements in a room or area which they may freely leave. It is a specific behaviour management technique and does not necessarily mean time spent out of the class/group, but rather refers to a withdrawal of attention and/or things they find rewarding. It could be as simple as turning away from a child who is attention-seeking, or positioning a child away from the class/group. This withdrawal of attention could also be achieved by sending a pupil to a quiet area.

## **2. Withdrawal**

This involves removing the child from a situation that causes anxiety or distress to a location where they can be continuously observed and supported until they are ready to resume their usual activities. This can mean removing a child from the class/group, to allow them time to calm down or to prevent a situation from escalating. They may need time away from staff and pupils (either on their own or in another class/group) in order to break the cycle/pattern of their behaviour or to reduce their level of anxiety/distress. The arrangement of “quiet time” shall be negotiated between the child and staff involved.

## **3. Planned Physical Intervention**

Possible scenarios will be identified and planned for when a pupil's Positive Handling Plan is drawn up. These will be outlined in the pupil's Positive Handling Plan, and should cover most potential interventions.

## **4. Emergency Physical Intervention**

This may be necessary if a situation arises that was not foreseen or is uncharacteristic of the pupil. Members of staff retain their duty of care to pupils and any response, even in an emergency, must be proportionate to the circumstances. Staff should use the minimum force necessary to prevent injury and maintain safety. Following any such incident, a risk assessment will be devised (or the existing one updated) to support effective responses to any such situations which may arise in the future.

Wherever possible, immediate assistance will be sought from another member of staff.

Positive Handling at St Michael and St John's RC Primary School (defined as the full range of strategies used to manage behaviour including where necessary physical intervention) is seen as a proactive response to meet individual pupil needs and any such measures will be most effective in the context of the overall ethos of the school, the way that staff exercise their responsibilities and the range of behaviour management strategies used.

### **Circumstances where reasonable force may be used:**

These are circumstances when reasonable force may be used, and follow those in the “Use of Reasonable Force” advice:

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.
- The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

The use of reasonable force documentation 2013 stipulates that reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do any of the following:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- Prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- Prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

As teaching and non-teaching staff work ‘in loco parentis’ and have a ‘Duty of Care’ towards their pupils, they could be liable for a claim of negligence if they fail to follow the guidance within this policy.

### **Recovery**

Pupils who may be distressed by events can be offered the following support:

- Quiet time taking part in a calming activity
- Quiet time away from the incident/trigger
- Resuming their usual routine/previous activity as soon as possible, especially for pupils with special needs
- Time with a member of staff to debrief the incident

### **Injury to the Child**

Whilst the physical techniques are intended to reduce risk, there is always risk when two or more people engage to use force to protect, release or restrain. The agreed techniques we use seek to avoid injury to the child, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally, and these are not to be seen necessarily as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent side effect of ensuring that the child remains safe. Any such injury will be reported to the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher and parents / carer, and appropriate written records made (See below).

Recording and Reporting Where physical control or restraint has been used, a record of the incident will be kept. All such incidents must be recorded on the Positive Handling Incident Report Form. This record should be kept in the SEN file located in the teachers' room. If anyone is injured an Accident/Incident report must also be completed. Records of incidents must be completed, signed by all the staff involved, and given to the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher as soon as possible. This must be prior to the member of staff going off duty, and **by the end of the school day at the latest.**

After the review of the incident, a copy of the details will be placed on the pupil's file as part of their educational record.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring and review 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 may require the use of reasonable force. Monitoring and review of incidents will take place on a regular basis (at least termly) and the results used to inform planning to meet individual pupil and school needs.

### **Complaints**

The availability of a clear policy about reasonable force and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them. Where the nature of any complaint made by a pupil, parent or other person in relation to the use of physical hold within the school indicates that an allegation of mishandling by a member staff, the school's complaints policy will be followed (see policy). In such circumstances the investigation of the

complaint/allegation and any resulting action in respect of child protection, disciplinary or other procedures will be carried out in accordance with the guidance received from the LA.