Physical Handling of Children at St Mark’s School

**Objectives**

The aim of this policy is to:

* protect every person, child and adult, in our school community from harm;
* prevent serious breaches of school discipline;
* prevent serious damage to property;
* protect all pupils from any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful;
* provide information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and are able to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations;
* enable the minimum degree of force to be used to accomplish positive handling;
* give full support to staff who have been assaulted or suffered verbal abuse from pupils or others;
* maintain accurate records of incidents where physical handling has been employed.

This policy is based on national guidance.

**Minimising the use of force**

Staff at St Marks aim to provide a calm learning environment that minimises the risk of incidents that might require the use of force.

The PSHE curriculum has an important place in our school life and pupils are taught how to manage conflict and strong feelings.

We teach strategies to enable children take responsibility for their own behaviour.

There is positive role modelling

Staff plan a range of interesting and challenging activities

All staff set and enforce appropriate boundaries and expectations

We provide positive feedback whenever possible.

Staff will make every effort to de-escalate incidents if they do arise, only using force when the risks in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force.

**Principles**

All staff who have control or charge of pupils automatically have the statutory power to use force.

Reasonable use of force may be used in the following circumstances:

* in self defence where risk of injury is imminent;
* where there is a developing risk of injury or significant damage to property;
* where good order and discipline are compromised;
* when activity occurs on the school premises or during authorised activity off premises.

Staff should only use force when:

* the potential consequences of not intervening are sufficiently serious to justify force;
* the chances of achieving the desired result by other means are low and
* the risks associated with not using force outweigh those of using force.

In cases where the school is aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a way that may require physical restraint, risk assessments and positive handling plans will be put in place. These plans will address:

* possible strategies for de-escalating a problem;
* ways of managing the pupil;
* informing parents about specific actions to be adopted;
* briefing staff to ensure they are clear about strategies;
* ensuring additional support can be summoned if appropriate.

Where individual children’s behaviour means that there is a probable need to use restrictive physical intervention, we will identify staff who are most appropriate to be involved. We will seek appropriate training and support in behaviour management as well as physical intervention for these practitioners. Staff and children’s physical and emotional health will be considered when such plans are made

**Using force**

There are three main types of physical handling.

# Positive Handling - The positive use of touch is a normal part of human interaction. Touch might be appropriate in a range of situations:

Giving guidance to children, such as how to hold a paintbrush or when climbing.

Providing emotional support, such as placing an arm around a distressed child).

Physical care, such as first aid or toileting.

Appropriate care is always used when using touch. For further guidance see the Child Protection Policy and the Intimate Care Policy.

**Physical intervention**

Physical intervention can include mechanical and environmental means such closed doors, safe areas where a distressed child can do themselves no harm. These may be appropriate ways of ensuring a child’s safety.

**Restrictive physical intervention**

This intervention uses physical force intentionally to restrict a child’s movement against his or her will. In most cases this will be through the use of the adult’s body rather than mechanical or environmental methods. The aim in using restrictive physical intervention is to restore safety and order, both for the child and those around him or her.

**Using force**

Any use of restrictive physical intervention in our setting is consistent with the principle of reasonable minimal force.

We will:

Always give a clear oral warning to the pupil that force may have to be used.

Aim for side-by-side contact with the child.

Aim for no gap between the adult’s and child’s body.

Aim to keep the adult’s back as straight as possible.

Beware in particular of head positioning, to avoid head butts from the child.

Hold children by ‘long’ bones i.e. avoid grasping at joints where pain and damage are most likely.

Ensure that there is no restriction to the child’s ability to breathe.

Where possible try to ensure that another adult is present to support, observe and call for assistance.

# Recording and reporting

Any use of restrictive physical intervention will be recorded (see attached). This will be done as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident. According to the nature of the incident, the incident will be noted in other records, such as the accident forms or the Incidents and Restraints log book.

# Supporting and reviewing

It is distressing to be involved in a restrictive physical intervention, whether as the person doing the holding, the child being held or someone observing or hearing about what has happened. After a restrictive physical intervention, support is given to the child so that they can understand why they were held. A record is kept about how the child felt about this where this is possible. Where appropriate, staff may have the same sort of conversations with other children who observed what happened. In all cases, staff will wait until the child has calmed down enough to be able to talk productively and understand this conversation. If necessary, an independent member of staff will check for injury and provide appropriate first aid.

Support will be given to the adults who were involved, either actively or as observers. The adults will be given the chance to talk through what has happened with the most appropriate person from the staff team.

A key aim of after-incident support is to repair any potential strain to the relationship between the child and the adult that restrained him or her. After a restrictive physical intervention the child’s behaviour plan will be reviewed so that the risk of needing to use restrictive physical intervention again is reduced.

# Monitoring

Monitoring the use of restrictive physical intervention will help identify trends and therefore help develop our ability to meet the needs of children without using restrictive physical intervention. This will be done through keeping records and ongoing discussions.

**Complaints**

Where anyone (child, parent/carer, guardian) has a concern, this should be dealt with through the class teacher and the Senior Management Team.

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