



Positive Handling Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Principles, Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Medical Policy and with DfE guidance 'Use of reasonable force' July 2013

1. Context and Legal Framework

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force (Section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2006).

This means members of staff, or those whom the Head Teacher has temporarily authorised to be in charge of pupils, are able to use such physical contact as is reasonable in the circumstances, to control or restrain pupils to prevent them from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. (Examples of possible situations are given in Appendix 1)

2. Mission Statement

At Belmont Primary School, we believe that positive behaviour, both in terms of attitudes to learning and personal conduct and relationships, is a crucial underpinning for learning and success. The School's governors have agreed a statement of principles promoting good behaviour within the context of the School's core values.

Staff at Belmont Primary School recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the strategies available to secure pupil safety and well-being and maintain good order and discipline and that it must only be used in appropriate circumstances.

Positive handling is defined at Belmont as the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming himself or others or seriously damaging property.

'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed

2.1 Aims

- To protect every person in the school community from harm
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and able to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations

3. Positive Handling Strategies

Positive handling strategies should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him/herself or others. Such strategies are only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which these strategies would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own professional judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the School's policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in *loco parentis* and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well being.

Failure to physically intervene with a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time, staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

3.1 Alternative strategies

There are some situations in which the need for physical intervention is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. a pupil is about to run across a road). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives e.g. use of assertiveness skills such as:

- the *broken record* in which an instruction is repeated until the pupil complies;
- use of a distracter, such as a loud whistle, to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective;
- withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened;
- other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour (in these cases the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high);
- a pre-agreed 'safe place' (for children with certain vulnerabilities around their behaviour or emotional well-being) to take themselves to when they feel they need time away to calm down. This could be a library, Head or Deputy room, Regulation Station etc.
- the employment of other sanctions consistent with the School's Behaviour Policy.

3.2 Use of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment.

Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying physical restraint, although there is no absolute definition of this, as what constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied. However, as a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below.

There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil and another pupil or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate or effective; physical restraint should be a last resort. When such strategies become necessary:

DO

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

DON'T

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Attempt to reason with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in private areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

3.3 Actions after an incident

Use of reasonable force often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff member(s) involved and the pupil. **A member of the leadership team should be informed of any incident as soon as possible** and will

take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of an individual plan or risk assessment, which may include an anger management programme, or other strategies agreed by the SENCO.

It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

All incidents should be recorded immediately on CPOMS (online recording system for behaviour/ incidents/ well-being concerns). All relevant staff members should be linked through CPOMS to ensure they are fully aware of the situation. A member of the leadership team will contact parents as soon as possible after an incident, normally on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it.

4. Risk Assessments and Training

Staff at Belmont have received training in Positive Handling and the need for this is revisited regularly. If the School becomes aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a way that may require the use of reasonable force, staff will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- Management of the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary)
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for further training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate

5. Complaints

A clear Positive Handling Policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents or pupils. Should any complaint be made, however, in line with DfE guidance it should be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated. Where a member of staff has acted within the law – that is, they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder – this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action. When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably.

Any allegation of abuse is managed in accordance with the 'Hounslow Council Child Protection Procedures for Dealing with Allegations against Teaching and Other Staff'

Appendix 1: When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

Examples of situations that may require restraint are when:

- a pupil is at risk of harming her/himself through physical outbursts
- a pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil
- pupils are fighting
- a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- a pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him/herself or others
- a pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave an area
- a pupil absconds from a class (NB this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom) or tries to leave school
- a pupil behaves in an unsafe way on a school trip