



Positive Handling Policy

Approved by: Headteacher & SLT

Last reviewed: September 2023

Next review: July 2025

Introduction

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils who may need to be positively handled. This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and pupils specifically the school's Whole School Behaviour Policy. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Governing Body.

Purpose of the policy

It is our aim at Gaskell Primary School to create and maintain a secure, happy, calm and safe environment throughout the school, in which all children learn well, and staff deliver quality lessons. Good professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital for a happy, thriving school community. It is recognised that the vast majority of pupils in school respond positively to the Whole School Behaviour Policy followed by all 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 relevant staff at Gaskell Primary 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 are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations, should they occur. This training is provided by behavioural experts Aspire.

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, agreed de-escalation 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; when pupils or staff are at risk of harm or there is a risk of significant damage to property.

Where physical intervention is required, it must adhere to the principles of 'reasonable force' set out below.

What is Reasonable Force?

The term covers a broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point during their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight.

- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- Force may be used to control pupils, e.g. passive physical contact to block a pupil's path or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm
- Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control and is typically used in more extreme circumstances e.g. pupils fighting

Please see the following publication from the DFE for more information. [Use of reasonable force in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools)

Physical Contact with Pupils

It is not illegal to touch a pupil and there are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. Some examples of this are:

- Holding a child's hand to guide them around school
- Comforting a distressed pupil
- When congratulating or praising a pupil
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises of techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- To administer first aid

Staff Training

At Gaskell Primary School, we have adopted the Positive Handling Techniques. Key Staff undertake the Positive Handling Training where there is a likelihood that they would have to deal with a situation that requires the use of 'reasonable force'. The use of positive behaviour management is always used first in line with our behaviour policy and de-escalation strategies are integral to that approach. Positive Handling is only ever used when all other strategies have not worked or a member of staff, another pupil or property are at risk of harm.

Staff will always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil. Only staff that are trained in Positive Handling are able to use its methods. In the event of an incident where reasonable force is required, individual members of staff, who have not received training, must seek immediate assistance from other colleagues. However all staff must take any immediate, necessary action to prevent injury to a child or adult in an extreme situation.

When can reasonable force be used?

The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on individual circumstances. The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can be used:

- 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 (including off site visits)
- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves or others through physical outbursts

It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment. The school acknowledges its legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with SEN when considering if the use of reasonable force is appropriate for such children. Individual Behaviour/Positive Handling Plans Pupils who are known to present challenging behaviours will have detailed Individual Behaviour Pupil

Passports/Positive Handling Plans. Where a pupil presents concerns, any member of staff can ask for a behaviour meeting to be convened to discuss key issues, by arrangement with the Head or Deputy Head responsible for Behaviour Management.

Other Education, Health or Social Services professionals involved with the pupil may be invited to this meeting, or provided with a synopsis of the outcomes if unable to attend. Parents are invited and kept informed of both the strategies being adopted in school and the difficulties experienced by the school. A member of the Senior Management Team / SENDCO will chair the meeting. A record will be kept by completing the "Individual Behaviour/Positive Handling Plan" pro forma. The Positive Handling part of this plan is only completed where physical handling is appropriate. This must be agreed with parents as part of their IBP/Pupil Passport. The form must be signed by parents before implementation. A second, signed copy must be made available for the parents to keep. A risk assessment will also be completed for that individual child.

At the meeting the following issues will be discussed:

1. Positive aspects to the pupils character, his or her likes and dislikes.
2. The specific behaviours that challenge school.
3. Early warning signs of behaviours
4. Strategies, including rewards, de-escalation, diffusion or distraction.
5. Physical handling issues and, where appropriate, completion of the Positive Handling section of the plan.
6. Who should share the outcomes of the meeting, who will be responsible for this and how will it be done.
7. Time-scale for review. All relevant staff will be kept informed about the agreed strategies for a particular pupil via staff briefing and staff meetings. Parents will be given an overview of the Positive Handling training and techniques used. (see Information for Parents).

Use of Reasonable Force in Unforeseen and Emergency Situations

Planned physical intervention is where an incident is foreseeable; emergency intervention occurs where the incident cannot reasonably be anticipated and consequently there is no Positive Handling Plan for the child involved. Before using physical intervention, diversion or diffusion should be attempted. In such situations a Physical Intervention record form must be completed and a Behaviour Meeting must be held as soon as possible after the incident to ensure future strategies and interventions are co-ordinated and planned.

Reporting and Recording Incidents

Parents will be informed about serious incidents involving the use of force. In deciding what a serious incident is, the school will consider:

- The pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident
- The degree of force used
- The effect on the pupil or the member of staff
- The child's age

It is very important that serious incidents are recorded. Recording incidents at the time will not only protect staff from allegations of misconduct at a future date, but will help to see any patterns of challenging behaviour and therefore provide information to help understand and reduce incidents.

Physical Intervention Record Forms must be completed for all incidents that involve the use of reasonable force. This must then be numbered and logged in the Record of Physical Intervention. All forms and the Record Book are kept in the Record of Physical Intervention File in the school office. These will also be held within our pupil recording system CPOMS.

Accident Forms

These must be completed whenever injury occurs to staff or pupils – completed forms should be passed to the Head Teacher.

Monitoring the Use of Force

The use of physical intervention will be monitored by the Head/Deputy responsible for Behaviour Management and this information will be shared with the Head / Deputy.

Responding to complaints

All complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated following Gaskell School's Complaints Policy. The school will consider carefully whether the circumstances of the case warrant a member of staff being suspended until the allegation is resolved or whether alternative arrangements are more appropriate (see guidance 'Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and other staff')

Post-incident

- First Aid- Key members of staff are fully trained in paediatric and adult first aid.
- The safety of all should always be the priority before, during and after incidents of challenging behaviour

As staff working in a school for pupils with a variety of needs and more specific issues, we must expect to come across some incidents of challenging behaviour. However, some incidents are so intense that they can cause considerable and understandable stress and/or injury to staff. Whenever staff are injured or traumatised by an incident, they should not return to the stressful situation until they have been given time to feel calmer and more confident about going back to class. Staff should feel confident about expressing their feelings after an incident and asking for whatever support they feel they need at that time. Accepting help will be seen as a professional strength, not a weakness. This may have a knock-on effect on other staff and classes, the class team involved, etc., but all staff must be willing to support colleagues who are hurt or distressed.

Pupils

Pupils should be encouraged to understand their consequences of their behaviour wherever possible, and supported in this through positive reward strategies where appropriate. Pupils displaying challenging behaviours should be encouraged to take control of their own behaviour as soon as

possible. It is vital that all staff working with pupils who have challenging behaviour make themselves aware of the Individual Behaviour/Positive Handling Plan as this will contain information that helps ensure everyone's safety. Pupils witnessing or being hurt by the challenging behaviour of others should be immediately offered support and comfort. They should be offered the opportunity to discuss their experiences with a familiar member of staff, in whatever way is understandable to them. Parents should be informed if a pupil is hurt or particularly distressed by an incident, but should not be given the name of the pupil with challenging behaviour unless this has been discussed with their parents first.

Families

Parents should receive an accurate and balanced view of their son/daughter's performance at school. This includes being informed of any serious incidents of challenging behaviour, although this should be balanced if, for instance, the pupil has produced some good work that day that parents can also be told about. It is not acceptable to "withhold" information about challenging behaviours from parents because you are concerned about them being distressed. They will be far more distressed if the first they hear of their son/daughter's challenging behaviour is when someone is hurt. If families are distressed and require support following an incident, contact with the school Senior Management Team will be offered. It may be appropriate to hold a Child in Need meeting.

Underpinning Values

This policy is underpinned by Gaskell School's values.

Everyone attending or working at Gaskell Primary School has the right to:

- a recognition of their unique identity
- be treated with respect and dignity
- learn and work in a safe environment
- be protected from harm