# Positive Handling / Restrictive Intervention Policy

**INTRODUCTION**
The staff at Holbeach Primary School are trained to look after pupils in their care and have a duty to intervene in order to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically they will follow the school's Positive Handling / Restrictive Intervention Policy.

At Holbeach Primary school, we only use Positive Handling when there is no realistic alternative. We expect staff to risk assess the situation and choose the safest course of action for everyone. It also means that we expect staff to experiment and think creatively about alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective.

Our paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the child and that it reduces rather than increases the risk of harm to those present. Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate.

**THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK**
Positive handling should be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort. Under the Children Order 1995, it is only permissible as described under the heading "Physical Control". Article 4 of the Education Order 1998 clarifies powers that already exist in common law.

It enables teachers and other members of staff in the school, authorised by the Headteacher, to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances, to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing an offence,
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any other pupil or person (including the pupil himself),
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its pupils, whether in the classroom or otherwise.

**THE DEFINITION OF POSITIVE HANDLING AT HOLBEACH PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Positive Handling is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming him/herself or others or seriously damaging property.

**THE AIM OF THIS POLICY**
Staff at Holbeach Primary School recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the strategies available to secure pupil safety/well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline.

The key objectives of the policy are:

- 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 to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations

**WHY USE POSITIVE HANDLING?**

Positive handling 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. It is 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 physical restraint would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the school's Positive Handling Policy.

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 wellbeing.

Failure to positively handle 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.

**ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES**

<u>De-escalation first</u>

The aim of de-escalation is to reduce the level of agitation/risk so that at an appropriate time, discussion becomes an option and a better outcome can be achieved.

De-escalation techniques are most successful when used early, so it is essential to spot the individual signs for individual pupils; usually captured in a risk assessment or behaviour plan.

De-escalation strategies will be captured within the school's behaviour policy.

Sometimes, no matter how carefully and skilfully you try to de-escalate a situation, it may still reach crisis point and restrictive intervention is necessary.

<u>Stand back second</u>

If the pupil, other pupils and staff members are safe, the next course of action is to stand back and attempt to de-escalate. This de-escalation could involve saying and doing very little, just being present to ensure safety for all. If the pupil leaves the area, it is recommended that a line of sight is maintained – this will depend largely on the age and need of the pupil.

<u>Restrictive interventions including reasonable force – last resort</u>

If all other strategies have been exhausted (or if the situation is an immediate crisis where someone is at risk of getting very badly hurt) then the following positive handling strategies should be employed:

- physically interposing between pupils
- blocking a pupil's path

- holding – usually hands and/or arms
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm from the classroom/space to another place away from others, in order to keep everyone safe
- (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds. If these are used, they are used by staff who have been trained
- If the hold is on the ground – (which would only be in very rare and extreme circumstances for the shortest time possible) the force applied to the pupil must be alongside and holding, rather than from above, pressing down

The restrictive intervention used would need to be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent - e.g. its use cannot be justified to prevent trivial misbehaviour.

There are some situations in which the need for positive handling is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. if a pupil is about to run across a road).

However, in most circumstances there are alternative strategies that a member of staff should use, such as:
- An instruction is being repeated until the pupil complies
- Use of a distracter to interrupt the behaviour 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 then remove the audience)
- Other techniques designed to de-escalate 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)
- The employment of other sanctions consistent with the School's policy on Behaviour

**THE USE OF POSITIVE HANDLING**

Positive handling 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 positive handling, 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 and positive handling should be a last resort.

**WHEN POSITIVE HANDLING BECOMES 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 he/she 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
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in genital areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck

**ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN AFTER AN INCIDENT**

Positive handling often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff 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 a co-regulation plan or other strategies agreed by the SENDco.

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 in the Positive handling Record book stored in the Headteacher's office. All sections of this report should be completed so that in the event of any future complaint a full record is available.

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.

**RISK ASSESSMENT**

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may need the use of reasonable force, we 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 training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate

**COMPLAINTS**
A clear positive handling policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under disciplinary procedures or by the Police and Social Services department under child protection procedures.

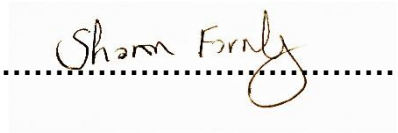
It is our intention to inform all staff, pupils, parents and governors about these procedures and the context in which they apply.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**
The Headteacher is responsible for:

1. Ensuring that all the staff are familiar with Lewisham LA guidelines and the school policy.
2. Ensuring that all relevant staff have received training in non-physical interventions in order to reduce the need for physical restraint.
3. Ensuring that named personnel have received training in physical restraint techniques.
4. Monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the school's policy.

# Positive Handling Policy

**Chair of Governors:** *Sharon Farnley* **(please print name)**

**Signed:**  .....

**Headteacher:** *Tom Bulpitt* **(please print name)**

**Signed:**  .....

**Date of Policy:** September 2026

**Date of Review:** September 2027