

# THE TONBRIDGE FEDERATION



## POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY 2021

School in which policy applies:	HC & LM
Date written:	March 2021
Date agreed by Governing Body:	March 2021
Date of renewal:	March 2023
Senior member of staff with oversight:	Heads of School
Governor with oversight:	Sue Mason

Throughout this policy, all references to a school, schools or the Federation, refers to both Long Mead Primary School and Hugh Christie, unless otherwise stated.

## **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 themselves or the school.
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school or amongst its pupils, whether in the classroom or otherwise.

## **The Definition of Positive Handling at the Tonbridge Federation**

Positive Handling is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming themselves, others or from seriously damaging property.

## **The Aim of this Policy**

Staff within the Tonbridge Federation recognise that the use of reasonable force, is only one of the strategies available to secure pupil safety and well-being and to maintain good order and discipline and should only be used as a last resort when all other strategies have been exhausted.

The key objectives of this 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 protect staff when the need arises to use positive handling techniques.
- 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 themselves 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 schools' 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**

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 many circumstances there are alternatives such as:

- Repeating a command / instruction until the student complies.
- Use of assertiveness skills.
- Use of a distractor (e.g. a whistle), to interrupt the behaviour for long enough to enable other methods of verbal control to be effective.
- Withdrawal of an action (e.g. remove the audience) if an action such as damage to property is threatened.
- Offering a solution or a private place to reflect and calm down.
- Other techniques designed to diffuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, silence or the use of humour, so that the situation can be dealt with at a later point when emotions are not running as high.
- The employment of other sanctions consistent with the school's conduct policy.

## **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, and physical force should only be applied for the minimum amount of time to secure the safety of everyone.

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**

Teachers in the Tonbridge Federation have been trained to use Positive Handling techniques. If appropriate, call for a trained teacher to apply the Positive Handling techniques. However, if time does not allow, all members of staff are entitled to use the Positive Handling techniques within the constraints of this policy.

Do:

- ✓ Tell the pupil what you are doing and why.
- ✓ Talk to the pupil / person constantly so they are not surprised by the actions being taken.
- ✓ Inform other students or adults, who are witnessing the event, what you are doing and why. Ideally, ask them for advice and if there are any other strategies that have not been tried.
- ✓ Give the student / person numerous opportunities to choose an appropriate alternative solution.
- ✓ Only use the minimum amount of force.
- ✓ Try to act from the side of the person.
- ✓ Involve another member of staff / adult if possible and if safe to do so.
- ✓ Tell the pupil / person what they need to do for the restraint to be removed.
- ✓ Use simple and clear language.

- ✓ Use 'soft hands' in an attempt to avoid leaving bruising.
- ✓ Relax restraint in response to the pupils / persons compliance

Do not:

- Act in temper (involve another member of staff if you are losing control).
- Shout at the pupil / person.
- Intimidate or threaten the pupil / person.
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil / person.
- Involve other pupils in the restraint.
- Touch or hold the pupil / person in genital areas.
- Twist **or** force limbs back against the joints.
- Bend fingers or pull hair.
- Stand directly behind the pupil / person.
- Slap, punch, kick or trip the pupil / person.
- Hold the pupil in such a way as to restrict breathing or blood flow.

### **Actions to be taken after the Incident**

1. The incident must be officially reported to the Head of School using the Positive Handling Incident Report Form.
2. The DSL must be informed and the incident reported to the LADO immediately.

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 Behaviour Support Plan, 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.

A member of the leadership or safeguarding 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 it becomes apparent that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may need the use of reasonable force, a risk assessment will be written which will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- The management of the pupil e.g. reactive and de-escalating strategies and the holds to be used if necessary.
- The involvement of the parents and pupil / person to be clear about the specific actions the school may need to take.
- A briefing to the staff so that they know exactly what action they should be taking.
- Identification of additional support and mechanisms / processes to support the pupil / person.

Please refer to the risk assessment form linked to this document.

## **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.

## **Other Linked Documents**

- ✓ Positive Handling Incident Report Form
- ✓ Student Risk Assessment Form