

Oastlers School

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Positive Handling Policy

Introduction

This policy provides a framework for the use of Physical Intervention within Oastlers School and takes into account information provided in circular 10/98 (section 550A of the Education Act 1996) as well as the DfES 'Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions for Staff Working with Children and Adults who Display Extreme Behaviour in Association with Learning Disability and/ or Autistic Spectrum Disorders'.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies and forms part of the suite of policies on attendance and behaviour. It also takes account of the RBWM policy and guidance on Positive Handling.

Oastlers School has trained tutors in the Team Teach method; aims and guidelines central to this approach are incorporated within the policy.

Central to this policy is the understanding that any Physical Intervention used by staff must be in accord with the idea of 'Reasonable Force' and used only as a last resort once all other strategies have been exhausted.

There is no legal definition of reasonable force. The use of force can only be regarded as reasonable if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it and the degree of force employed is proportionate to the level of challenging behaviour presented or the consequences it is intended to prevent.

It is essential that any discussion of Physical Intervention is set in the wider context of education and behaviour management: it should not be seen as an isolated technique. 95% of the time there will be no need for physical intervention and other methods can be used.

The Legal Context

The document that concerns us most is Section 550A of the Education Act 1996. This led to Circular 10/98 which sets out guidelines for the use of reasonable force. Reasonable force may be used to physically restrain learners, namely:

- (i) Where a learner is committing a criminal offence,
- (ii) Where a learner is causing injury to themselves or others,
- (iii) Where a learner is causing damage to property (including his/her own) or,
- (iv) Where learner behaviour is prejudicial to good order and discipline in school or among any of the learners.

A calm, considered approach to the situation is needed. When circumstances justify, staff can:

- Physically interpose between learners
- Use holding, pushing, pulling
- Lead a learner by the arm
- Shepard a learner away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- (In extreme circumstances) use more restrictive holds
- Any necessary action consistent with the concept of 'Reasonable Force'

Types of incident where the use of 'Reasonable Force' may be necessary fall into three broad categories:

- 1) Action due to imminent risk of injury
- 2) Action due to developing risk of injury or significant damage to property
- 3) Action where a learner is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline

Examples of 1 and 2

- A learner attacks a member of staff or another learner
- A learner is engaged in or on the verge of starting to damage property
- A learner is running up and down a corridor in a way that could cause injury
- A learner is absconding (NB this only applies if the child is at risk if they leave the room/building).

Examples of 3

- A learner persistently refuses to leave the room
- A learner is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting the lesson

Training on Physical Intervention given to staff will include sections on the background, theory and rationale behind the Team Teach approach as well as an understanding of personal space and body language before any physical techniques are taught.

Any Physical Interventions used will need to take account of age, cultural background, gender, stature and medical history of the student involved.

Placing Physical Intervention in Context

Physical Intervention is never seen in isolation at Oastlers School. It is but one strategy available to staff and should always be seen as a last resort when all other strategies have failed. Physical Interventions can be placed in 2 broad categories:

- 1) Emergency Interventions
These involve staff employing, where necessary, one or a combination of the strategies mentioned in the previous section in response to an incident. This will occur when all other strategies have been exhausted or the incident requires a rapid physical response (for example a child running onto a road).
- 2) Planned Interventions
These involve staff employing, where necessary, one or a combination of the strategies mentioned in the previous section as an agreed response to an identified behaviour. This will be documented in a Positive Handling Plan and will be reviewed half termly. Permission of parents/ guardians will be sought before initiating this as an accepted response. The Positive Handling Plan will list the accepted strategies to be used, as well as strategies that may be used beforehand. A risk assessment will also be completed identifying the risks involved in the procedure as well as the risks involved if a planned Physical Intervention is not used.

Physical Intervention should be seen in an environmental context. If an appropriate curriculum is in place and there is an emphasis on a total communication environment then the necessity for Physical Intervention will be reduced.

'Tools' or strategies used can be divided into those that are preventive and those that are reactive.

Preventative strategies need to be:

- Clear and understood by all those that come into contact with the individual

- Based on thoughts/ discussion about possible reasons for challenging behaviour
- Where possible the functional opposite of the behaviour (functionally incompatible) we are trying to stop. E.g. as simple as if a learner is constantly hitting someone else then we need to aim for them to be sat in their seat (if they are sat in their seat they can't be hitting someone).

Reactive strategies need to be:

- Clear understood by all those who come into contact with the individual
- Manageable
- Focused on the behaviour, not the child
- Flexible
- Aimed at de-escalation

Physical actions such as holding a learner around the neck, by the collar or in any other way that might restrict their ability to breathe, slapping, kicking or punching are not permissible.

Any act of positive handling must be an act of care and not of punishment. Deliberate use of physical contact to punish a young person, cause pain, injury or humiliation is unlawful, regardless of the severity of the young person's behaviour or the degree of provocation.

Risk Assessment

In the case of emergency interventions staff will make a risk assessment at the time comparing the risks associated with intervention against the risks of not intervening.

In the case of planned interventions staff involved with the child will meet with the member of staff responsible for Physical Intervention in the school (currently the Headteacher). A risk assessment form will be filled out prior to a Positive Handling Plan.

Reporting and Monitoring of Incidents

Reporting and monitoring is of paramount importance for a number of reasons:

- Protection for staff and learners
- Keeps a record of number of incidents so times/ areas that most incidents occur can be tracked

Recording at Oastlers School can be split into two categories:

- Pre incident
- Post incident

Training and Authorisation of Staff

All staff who have satisfactorily completed Team Teach training are authorised to use Physical Intervention. Once staff have received their full training, refresher training will take place each year.

Team Teach is provided as part of an in house training programme involving: induction, communication and lifting and handling training.

Post Physical Intervention Procedures

As soon as is reasonably possible and within 24 hours after an incident staff need to fill out an Incident Form and the Incident Log. The form should be given to the Behaviour Manager who will provide a debrief for the staff and check their welfare. When both the staff and the child involved

are calm then a debrief needs to take place between them. This should include (if appropriate) a discussion about strategies that the child could use in the future.

Completed forms are passed from the Behaviour Manager to the Headteacher for signature. Details from completed forms are entered onto a database. This information is monitored at least half termly by the Governing Body along with positive handling plans.

Complaints

Should there be any complaint about physical intervention procedures these should be addressed to the Headteacher in the first instance, who will attempt to resolve your complaint. If you are not satisfied with the way the headteacher has dealt with your complaint or if the complaint is against the Headteacher then you should write to the chair of the school's governing body who will arrange for an investigation into the complaint. The name of the Chair of the Governing Body is Ms Lynne Smith.

Adopted by the Governing Body _____ Date _____