

The Willows School Academy Trust



Positive Handling Policy

Reviewed: September 2024
Next Review: September 2025

Objectives

At The Willows School Academy Trust, we are committed to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. This policy has close links with the Behaviour Policy. It is written to explain our procedures in line with:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006
- British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) Code of Practice
- DfCS Guidance “Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils” November 2007
- Joint DfES/DH guidance issued July 2002, “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 disorder”
- Local authority policies
- LA behaviour support plan (for individual pupils)
- School Behaviour Policy and Practice
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024

School Expectations

In our school we create a calm environment to minimise incidents that may require any physical intervention. We de-escalate incidents when they do arise. We only use physical interventions when the risks involved of doing so are outweighed by the risks of not doing so. We have 3 school rules which we uphold to ensure a safe learning environment for all they are:

To follow instructions

To be kind, polite and respectful to everyone

To keep hands, feet and other objects to ourselves

Positive handling is not necessarily used in the event of a breach of these rules, staff are equipped with common language, de-escalation strategies as well as the support of the Senior Leadership team and Behaviour Support Team.

Positive Behaviour Management

All staff and volunteers adopt a positive approach to supporting an improvement in behaviour. Positive pupil behaviour is encouraged in order to reward effort and application, and to build self-esteem, and promote a safe environment for students and staff. All staff work in partnership with those who know the child to help those concerned:

- Find out why this child behaves as he or she does
- Understand the factors that influence this child’s behaviour
- Identify early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours are developing
- The use of common language and common de-escalation strategies ensure consistency

This approach helps to ensure that early and preventative intervention is the norm. It reduces the incidence of extreme behaviours and makes sure that the use of physical intervention is kept to a minimum. Supportive aftercare and reflection regarding the behaviours leading to positive handling instance ensures pupils are supported to self-

reflect on their experience and make repairs where necessary.

What is reasonable force?

The non-statutory guidance provided by the Department of Education states:

1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
2. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
4. As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.
5. Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
6. School staff should 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.

Who can use reasonable force?

1. All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force.
2. This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.

When can reasonable force be used?

1. Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
2. In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
3. The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

Positive behaviour reinforcement:

In all circumstances other methods including those listed below should be used if appropriate and effective positive handling should be a last resort. Staff are committed to reinforcing good behaviour by daily use of praise, rewards and positive behaviour management strategies. This is reinforced across the curriculum e.g. through a strong emphasis on the importance of self-management in the community.

- Create and maintain a stimulating environment that encourages pupils to be engaged.
- Display the school rules
- Common Language
- The Willows De-escalation strategies
- Develop positive relationships with pupils, which may include:
 - Greeting pupils in the morning/ at the start of lessons
 - Establishing clear routines and spaces for children to work at
 - Using every available opportunity to communicate expectations of behaviour
 - Highlighting and promoting good behaviour
 - Concluding the day positively and starting the next day afresh
 - Having a plan for dealing with low-level disruption
 - Using positive reinforcement

Where physical interventions are needed to prevent injury to the student, other students or staff, or to prevent serious damage, these will be for the minimum length of time possible and using the least possible force. All staff must consider whether they are using reasonable force. All instances of positive handling are recorded on CPOMs before the end of the school day and are reviewed and processed by SLT, Behaviour team and Safeguarding Lead.

Staff Training

It is the policy of this school that all staff working closely with pupils are trained in behaviour management, de-escalation, the pro-active and responsive positive handling strategies. These are to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the School Behaviour Policy and Practice.

General Advice for Staff

- Be sure that you are aware of and complying with the school policy for behaviour and discipline and positive handling procedures.
- It is better to defuse situations wherever possible, as this prevents them from escalating to a level where force is necessary
- Send for the assistance of another member of staff if necessary as soon as possible, using the agreed call-out
- All those involved should be de-briefed after incidents to explore more positive/effective responses to future difficult situations

Responding to Unforeseen Emergencies

Even the best planning systems cannot cover every eventuality and the school recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet. It is not enough to thoughtlessly apply rules without thinking through the likely consequences.

The key principles are that any physical intervention should be:

- In the best interest of the child
- Reasonable and proportionate
- Intended to reduce risk
- The least intrusive and restrictive of those options available which are likely to be effective.

Whenever a physical intervention has to be made there should be a verbal warning. Where possible, staff should always attempt to use common language and de-escalation strategies in an attempt to diffuse the situation in preference to physical interventions. They should only use the techniques and methods in which they have been trained and that have been approved for use in this school.

Recording

Whenever positive handling is used the incident ***must*** be recorded using CPOMs. All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record which should be completed before the end of the school day. The details recorded are kept confidentially. Parents/carers must also be notified before the end of the school day.

Post-Incident Support

Incidents that require use of restrictive physical interventions can be upsetting to all concerned and could result in injuries to the child or staff. After incidents have subsided, it is important to ensure that staff and children are given emotional support and basic first aid treatment for any injuries. Immediate action should, of course, be taken to ensure that medical help is accessed for any injuries that require other than basic first aid. All injuries should be reported and recorded in accordance with school procedures. The school should take action to report any serious injuries to staff or students in accordance with LA guidelines (see First Aid and Medicines Policy and Practice).

Monitoring use of Restrictive Physical Interventions

Use of physical intervention in school is recorded and assessed which informs planning that is then reviewed in order to help staff learn from experience, promote the well being of children in their care, and provide a basis for appropriate support. This monitoring strategy can help the school to determine what specialist help is needed for children and to assess the appropriateness of the child's placement at the school. The use of physical intervention is monitored and evaluated regularly at SLT. Individual student risk assessments are reviewed annually.

Responding to Complaints

The use of restrictive physical intervention can lead to allegations of inappropriate or excessive use. In the event of a complaint being received by a school in relation to use of force by staff, the matter should be dealt with in accordance with LA guidelines and agreed procedures for handling allegations against members of staff.

Policy Review and Evaluation

This policy has been developed in liaison with school staff and governors. It will be reviewed annually, or when relevant national or local guidance indicates additional need.

Other Relevant Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Staff Induction

- Volunteer Policy

The Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy was reviewed by:

Name/s and job title of reviewer	Date of review
M. Shaw Headteacher	Sept 2024
S. Powell SLT	Sept 2024
S. Hales- Owen Safeguarding Lead	Sept 2024
W. Roberts Behaviour and Inclusion Lead	Sept 2024

