

St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School



Positive Handling of Pupils Policy

“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible to you.” (Matthew, 17:20)

GDPR

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Policy to be reviewed every 3 years
Reviewed by S Taylor and A Clark 02/02/2026
Reviewed by Governors: J Hall 23/02/2026
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Pupil 'Positive Handling' Policy

1. The legal framework
2. Definition of reasonable force and restraint
3. Our approach
4. Use of physical restraint or intervention
5. Actions after an incident
6. Risk assessments
7. Complaints and allegations

This policy has been written in accordance with DFE Use of reasonable force in schools (effective until 31 March 2026) and DFE Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (effective from 1 April 2026).

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 aggressive or potentially violent situations.
- To establish clarity and maintain good communication/collaboration with parents and carers.

St Bartholomew's Primary School encourages pupils to follow our CARES code and make positive behaviour choices.

This policy acknowledges that sometimes, a situation may require some form of physical intervention (a guide or restraint) by a staff member(s) to:

- maintain the safety of a child, and/ or prevent injury to other pupils in the area around them;
- enable classroom learning to continue;
- prevent damage to school property and/ or equipment.

1. The legal framework

Sections 93 and 93A of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 allows teachers to use such force as is reasonable in the following circumstances:

Power of members of staff to use force

(1) A person to whom this section applies may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing a pupil from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following, namely—

- (a) committing any offence,
- (b) causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself), or

(c) prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

(2) This section applies to a person who is, in relation to a pupil, a member of the staff of any school at which education is provided for the pupil.

2. Definition of reasonable force and restraint

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 DFE guidance (2026) on 'Restrictive Interventions, including the use of reasonable force', defines and explains these terms in the following way:

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.

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 pupil needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

'Reasonable in the circumstances', means using no more force than is needed.

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.

Support - 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.

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.

In certain circumstances, with the safety of children as priority, all members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. 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 pupils on a school organised visit.

The DFE Guidance 2026 on '**Restrictive Interventions, including the use of reasonable force**' states that schools can use reasonable force to:

- 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 or a school trip or visit
- Prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others
- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves, through physical outbursts

Schools cannot use force as a punishment; it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. Pupils should not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, Headteachers and authorised staff can use such force, as is reasonable given the circumstances, to conduct a search for the following 'prohibited items': knives and weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images and any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules, e.g. toys, latest 'trend' items.

3. Our approach

We **always** aim to avoid the need for physical intervention and regard this as a last resort in a minority of situations. We always ~~aim~~ **seek** to deal with behaviour using a positive approach and therefore this policy should be read alongside our latest 'Behaviour & Discipline' Policy.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which physical restraint would be necessary or appropriate. Staff exercise their own professional judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff act within **the guidelines of** our school's policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour. Once again it is stressed that physical intervention is only used when all other strategies have failed to have the desired effect on a pupil's behaviour.

Where there is a need, teachers and members of support staff are trained in positive handling techniques through 'Team Teach' methods.

NB It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. This includes members of staff as well as people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils accompanying students on a school organised visit. Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- **For our younger pupils (EYFS/Key Stage 1)**, holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking **and talking** together around the school
- When comforting a distressed pupil
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- To give first aid

Staff are 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 thereby have a 'Duty of Care' to all children of whom they are **working with, including taking** reasonable action to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils. This being said, staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

4. Use of physical restraint or intervention

Physical restraint is 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 never takes a form which could be seen as punishment.

It is important to note that the use of reasonable force will only be applied at this school as a last resort, when all other alternatives have been exhausted and that force used will be reasonable, proportionate and absolutely necessary.

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.

Strategies and the use of Team Teach

At this school we are committed to training all staff as an advanced part of their continuing professional development. The School retains a list of all Team-Teach trained staff.

Schools do not require parental consent to use reasonable force on a pupil. However, for some pupils an individual risk assessment known as a Positive Handling Plan (PHP) may form as part of their package of support. Parents will have been involved in drawing up these plans.

Team Teach techniques seek to avoid injury to the service user (in this case, child), but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally, and these are not to be seen as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent 'side-effect' of ensuring that the service user remains safe.

Our practice includes the following:

- **Restrictive physical intervention will only be considered when other behaviour management options have proved ineffective or are judged to be inappropriate or in an emergency situation.**
- **Before intervening in this way, staff will weigh up whether the risk of not intervening is greater than the risk of intervening.**
- **Any actions will be carried out with pupils' best interests at heart.**
- **Physical intervention will never be used to punish a pupil or cause pain, injury or humiliation.**
- **Staff must not place themselves at unreasonable risk. In such circumstances, they must take steps to minimise risks for example, by calling for assistance.**
- **Staff must always conduct a dynamic risk assessment before intervening, considering the pupil's age, SEND status, and known triggers. Where possible, staff should seek support from colleagues and avoid lone intervention.**
- **Parents and volunteers in the school are not given authorisation to use restrictive physical intervention.**
- **When a restrictive physical intervention is justified, staff will use 'reasonable force' 'warranted by the situation'.**
- **'Reasonable force' must 'be proportionate to the circumstances' of the incident and the consequences it is intended to prevent'.**

- Any force used will always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result and for the shortest amount of time.
- During an incident the member of staff involved will tell the pupil that his or her behaviour may be leading to restraint.
- After the use of an unplanned restrictive physical intervention the details of the incident will be reported to the Head Teacher on the same day and a written record of the incident will be kept.
- Parents/carers will be informed by the Head Teacher/SENDCo on the day of the incident.

The use of positive handling must be free from bias and discrimination. Staff must be vigilant to ensure that interventions are not disproportionately applied to pupils with SEND, those from minority backgrounds, or those with social vulnerabilities.

5. Actions after an incident

Physical intervention can occur in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for pupil(s) and staff members involved. The Headteacher (or member of SLT in his/ her absence) will be informed of any incident as soon as is possible and takes responsibility for making arrangements for restorative conversations, once the situation has stabilised.

An appropriate member of the teaching team (including SENDCo) or support staff (including ELSA) debriefs the pupil concerned, including consideration of the circumstances that precipitated the incident and exploring ways in which future incidents may be avoided. Any other individuals, including staff member(s), involved in the incident will also be offered support.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern, it may be necessary to address the situation through the development or review of **Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBS Plan)** which may include a risk assessment, **emotional regulation support** and/ or possible involvement of external agencies.

All incidents **requiring restrictive practices** are recorded **as soon as practicable after the event and no later than the same day** in the 'Bound and Numbered Book' **and CPOMS**. All sections of the report are completed so that any patterns of behaviour can be identified and addressed. In the event of any future complaint or allegation, this record provides essential and accurate information. This book is kept in the Head Teacher's Office.

Schools should record the following details as a minimum:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

A member of SLT (or SEND support) contacts parents/ carers (**by phone initially with follow-up in writing**) as soon as possible after an incident - 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.

6. Risk assessments

If we become aware, through our building picture of a child - i.e. supporting information with admission, or an escalating pattern of incidents - that they are likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of positive handling, we will plan our potential responses. Such planning (recorded on a **Positive Behaviour Support Plan**) would address:

- strategies to be used prior to intervention;
- ways of avoiding 'triggers' if these are known;
- 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;
- the school's duty of care to all pupils and staff.

7. Complaints and allegations

A clear 'Positive Handling of Pupils' Policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with families via the school website, is essential to safeguard the health and well-being of our pupils and staff team.

It is unlikely to prevent a complaint(s), relating to a situation requiring physical intervention. However, clear guidance and expectations for the application of these measures, reduces the likelihood of 'handling' being needed other than as a last resort, as outlined.

A dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation under our 'Complaints, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying of Staff' Procedure. In the event of a 'low level concern' reported and further to preliminary investigations, the Headteacher may contact the LADO in line with our 'Safeguarding and Child Protection' Policy.

It is our intention to inform all staff, pupils, parents and governors about these procedures and the context in which they apply. We will review this policy annually.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People in School Settings (Feb 2022)