



## Positive Handling Policy

Responsible Staff member: Headteacher/DHT

Governor Lead: SEND Gov

Reviewed: Autumn 2023

Board approval date: Autumn 2023

Policy Type: Mandatory

Implementation date: Autumn 2023

Publication: Guildford Grove Primary School

Review cycle: 3 years

Next Review date: 2026



# Positive Handling Policy

**School Values: A culture of achievement where all can succeed.**

At Guildford Grove, we

- are responsible and respectful members of our diverse community
- are empowered to make safe, informed choices
- have high aspirations and a “can do” attitude to learning and we
- develop and foster our individual abilities and interests.

## Introduction

It is our task as staff at Guildford Grove School to promote and support our children’s learning and enable each one of them to achieve their full potential. We endeavour to provide a school day that excites challenges and motivates each child and allows them to develop as independent learners. Our organisation of their learning promotes enjoyment, perseverance and self-discipline. We encourage the children to achieve personal excellence in all aspects of work and behaviour.

The staff at Guildford Grove are aware that children learn best when they are happy and safe both at school and at home. We recognise that we have a responsibility to safeguard the health, welfare and safety of the young people in our care and strive at all times to follow the principles outlined in this policy. The main objective of this policy is to ensure all staff, parents and children are aware of the procedures and practice that will be carried out to ensure that this is the case at the school. This policy links with the school’s behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy and SEND policy. It is intended to ensure that it will prevent serious breaches of school discipline and prevent injury to individuals or serious damage to property.

## 1. Underpinning Principles

At Guildford Grove School we believe that pupils need to be safe, know how to behave, and know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently. To minimise the need to use force or restrain a child, staff will strive to:

- Create a calm environment that minimises the risk of incidents that might require the use of force and apply the school rules consistently and fairly.
- Develop effective relationships between staff and a child that is central to good order.
- Ensure all supervision of children is carried out in a consistent manner so that children and staff are comfortable in our school.
- Teach the children how to manage conflict and strong feelings
- Ensure all staff have appropriate instructions and training to enable them to be effective in their roles in and out of the classroom.
- Ensure that handling plans will be put in place and training given to ensure staff are equipped to deal with individual children who have been identified.
- Whenever possible, warn a child that force may have to be used before using it.

For a very small minority of pupils, the use of positive handling may be needed, and, on such occasions, acceptable forms of intervention will be used.

Staff believe that the use of force should, wherever possible, be avoided. Staff will always use de-escalation and prevention strategies first to resolve the situation (outlined below). We do, however, recognise that on rare occasions the use of minimum force (restraint) may be appropriate. In these situations, the procedures outlined in this policy will always be followed in order to maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned.

Most pupils behave well and conform to the expectations of our school. We have responsibility to operate an effective behaviour policy that encompasses preventative strategies for tackling inappropriate behaviour in relation to the whole school, each class, and individual pupils.

All staff need to feel able to manage inappropriate risk and behaviour, and to have an understanding of what and how challenging behaviours might be communicated. They need to know what the options open to them are, and they need to be free of undue worries about the risks of legal action against them if they use appropriate physical intervention. Parents need to know that their children are safe with us, and they need to be properly informed if their child is the subject of a positive handling intervention, including the nature of the intervention, and the rationale for its use.

## **2. Responsibilities**

It is the Headteacher's duty to ensure all staff are aware of their statutory powers to use force and or restrain a child or young person. As part of the induction process into school the Headteacher will inform staff if they have the powers to restrain, and who they can turn to if they are in a situation with a child or young person that may be causing concern.

The Headteacher will inform the governors through the Head's report those people that have been authorised to use force or restrain a child or young person in school. All staff at school may have the statutory powers to use force to restrain a child or young person or remove them from a classroom. A record of 'authorised' staff will be indicated on the DBS checklist retained in the school office.

## **3. Aims**

- to ensure staff are aware of the legal position regarding the use of restraint in school;
- to keep our pupils and staff safe;
- to ensure that staff understand the different types of de-escalation and prevention strategies;
- to understand how to assess potential risk;
- to ensure that staff are aware of the procedures to follow when they are faced with managing actual or potential physical aggression,
- to ensure that procedures are followed when recording an incident.

#### 4. Definition of positive handling

The Law allows for teachers and other persons authorised by the Headteacher to use positive handling interventions to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do any of the following: -

- committing a criminal offence
- injuring themselves or others
- causing damage to property
- engaging in any behaviour that is prejudicial to maintain the good order and discipline at the school

There is no legal definition of “reasonable force”. However, there are two relevant considerations:

- the use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of an incident warrant it
- the degree of force must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent

The definition of physical force also includes the use of mechanical devices (e.g. splints on the pupil prescribed by medical colleagues to prevent self-injury), forcible seclusion or use of locked doors. It is important for staff to note that, although no physical contact may be made in the latter situations, this is still regarded as a Restrictive Physical Intervention.

#### 5. De-escalation & Prevention Strategies

Physical interventions with a pupil will always be used as a last resort when all other strategies (outlined below) have failed. These strategies include:

- **Structuring the environment** so discussions about their behaviour take place in a business-like manner
- **Planned ignoring** - not giving attention to minor, harmless attention seeking behaviour and by praising appropriate behaviours
- **Prompting** - giving gentle reminders to adjust certain behaviours. This could include verbal or sensory input
- **Active Listening** – exploring and acknowledging their feelings through the use of reflective responses
- **Backing Away** – giving the child space and time to calm down before you discuss the situation with them
- **Humour** – taking the heat out of the situation. Care is needed here as humour can sometimes be perceived as critical
- **Personal warmth** – if a child’s behaviour is motivated by fear, anxiety or uncertainty, an injection of personal warmth (physical or verbal) can help to head

off a crisis. However, be aware of what touching means to the child as this can sometimes exacerbate a situation

- **Hurdle help** – where a child is stuck then providing assistance can help overcome feeling of inadequacy or failure
- **Non-verbal Interventions** - nods, looks, proximity to the child or use of touch control can be enough to give a signal to a child to modify their behaviour
- **Redirecting** – trying to refocus the child away and using distractions often de-escalates situations
- **Directive Statements** – a clear instruction to stop their behaviour or start something else
- **Time Out** – requiring the child to move away to another quieter area to calm down.

Every effort is taken by staff to prevent all situations where our children may lose control of their behaviour. Where we have recognised that a child has difficulty in this area, their Provision Map, SEND Review Plan and/or their Social Services Care Plan will outline the measures that staff will take to both prevent and control the child's behaviour. Full risk assessments and proactive plans will be carried out and all of these will be shared with the child's parents/carers.

## **6. When the use of positive handling may be appropriate in Guildford Grove School**

Positive handling will only be used when all other strategies have failed, and therefore only as a last resort. However, there are other situations when physical management may be necessary, for example in a situation of clear danger or extreme urgency. Certain pupils may become distressed, agitated, and out of control, and need calming with a brief positive handling intervention that is un-resisted after a few seconds.

The safety and well being of all staff and pupils are important considerations. Under certain conditions this duty must be an over-riding factor.

Only key senior staff are authorised by the Headteacher to have control of pupils, and **must** be aware of this policy and its implications. Authorised staff include the Headteachers, the Deputy Headteachers and the Assistant Headteachers.

We take the view that staff should not be expected to put themselves in danger, and that removing pupils and themselves is the right thing to do. We value staff efforts to rectify what can be very difficult situations and in which they exercise their duty of care for the pupils.

## **7. Planning for the use of positive handling interventions in Guildford Grove School**

Staff will use the minimum force needed to restore safety and appropriate behaviour.

The principles relating to the intervention are as follows: -

- Positive handling is an act of care and control, not punishment. It is never used to force compliance with staff instructions
- staff will only use it when there are good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary and, in the pupil's, and/or other pupils' best interests
- staff will take steps in advance to avoid the need for positive handling intervention through dialogue and diversion and at the level of understanding of the child or young person
- only the minimum force necessary will be used to prevent severe distress, injury, or damage
- staff will be able to show that the intervention used was in keeping with the incident
- every effort will be made to secure the presence of other staff, and these staff may act as assistants and/or witnesses
- as soon as it is safe, the positive handling intervention will be relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control
- a distinction will be maintained between the use of a one-off intervention which is appropriate to a particular circumstance, and the using of it repeatedly as a regular feature of school policy
- escalation will be avoided at all costs, especially if it would make the overall situation more destructive and unmanageable
- the age, understanding, and competence of the individual pupil will always be taken into account
- in developing Provision Maps, consideration will be given to approaches appropriate to each pupil's circumstance
- procedures are in place, through the pastoral system of the school, for supporting and debriefing pupils and staff after every incident of positive handling, as it is essential to safeguard the emotional well-being of all involved at these times

## **8. Acceptable forms of intervention in Guildford Grove School**

There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with pupils for a variety of reasons, for example:

- to comfort a pupil in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age)
- to gently direct a pupil
- for curricular reasons (for example in PE, Drama etc)

- in an emergency to avert danger to the pupil or pupils
- in rare circumstances, when a physical intervention is warranted

In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:

- the pupil's age and level of understanding
- the pupil's individual characteristics and history
- the location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present)

Physical contact is never made as a punishment, or to inflict pain. All forms of corporal punishment are prohibited. Physical contact will not be made with the participants neck, breasts, abdomen, genital area, other sensitive body parts, or to put pressure on joints. It will not become a habit between a member of staff and a particular pupil.

## 9. Developing a positive handling plan in Guildford Grove School

If it is felt that a pupil may require physical interventions, then a Positive Handling Plan will be completed. This Plan will help the pupil and staff to avoid difficult situations through understanding the factors that influence the behaviour and identifying the early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours that may be developing.

The plan will include:

- an involvement of parents/carers and pupils to ensure they are clear about what specific action the school may take, when and why
- a risk assessment to ensure staff and others act reasonably, consider the risks, and learn from what happens
- a **record** of risk reduction options that have been examined and discounted, as well as those used
- details of how to manage the pupil, strategies to de-escalate a conflict, and stating at which point a positive handling intervention is to be used
- an identification of key staff who know exactly what is expected. It is best that these staff are well known to the pupil
- a system to summon additional support
- Identification of training needs

[\*The school may also need to take medical advice about the safest way to hold a child with specific medical needs.]

## 10. Post incident management

All incidents involving physical restraint of a young person should be discussed as soon as possible with the Headteacher. The following procedures should always be followed:

- All senior staff involved must record details of their involvement at every stage, together with details of follow up action (Appendix 1). This record should include;
  - √ name of the young person
  - √ details of any de-escalation techniques used
  - √ details of when and where the incident took place (a sketch plan may be helpful)
  - √ circumstances and significant factors which led to the incident
  - √ the duration and nature of the physical restraint used
  - √ a description of any injury sustained by child or staff and subsequent medical attention
  - √ a description of relevant action taken after the incident
  - √ details of any damage to property
  - √ the pupil's response and the outcomes of the incident
- At an appropriate time, the young person and staff involved should be given time to talk about the incident
- Parents/Carers should be informed of what has happened and offered an opportunity to discuss this with the Headteacher

## **11. Guidance and training for staff**

Guidance and training are essential in this area. We need to adopt the best possible practice. At Guildford Grove School this is arranged at a number of levels including:

- awareness for governors, staff and parents
- behaviour management - all staff
- managing conflict in challenging situations - all staff
- specific training on positive handling techniques - all staff

## **12. Complaints**

It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping parents and governors informed we could avoid the need for complaints. All disputes that arise about the use of force by a member of staff will be dealt with according to Surrey's Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.