

The Birches Specialist Support School

Positive handling Policy *Version 2*



Reviewed by (name and role)	Anna Skolik-Wieczniak AHT
Date reviewed (month and year)	March 2024
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Date of submission for ratification (specific date)	Previous timeframe revised – present to Governors in October 2024
Method of ratification (e.g. via email responses or at a specific Governors' meeting)	Present to Governors at FGB1 - Tuesday 29th November 2024

THE BIRCHES SCHOOL SPECIALIST SUPPORT SCHOOL POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

At The Birches School we have some children who can present with challenging behaviour that necessitates the use of physical intervention. This policy has been written to support all staff who come into contact with pupils who may need some form of positive handling.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy.

POLICY

Aim

At The Birches physical interventions are seen as only a small part of a holistic approach to meeting the many and varied needs of our pupils, including the need/right to be safe from harm (from themselves or others).

- This school has a commitment to reduce the use of any Restrictive Physical Intervention.
- Staff will be trained in the understanding and use of de-escalation strategies. In a very small number of cases use of low level RPI will be sanctioned to prevent self harm or risk of injury to others.
- The aim of positive handling is not punishment or control but to support safe learning for everyone.
- To ensure staff understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where use of physical intervention is necessary.

Underpinning values

Everyone attending or working at The Birches has a right to:

- recognition of their unique identity;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- learn and work in a safe environment
- to be provided with a framework so that all staff who come into contact with pupils are clear about their roles and responsibilities within the context of positive handling.
- Be informed about the school's complaints procedure.

Reduction in the use of RPI

At The Birches we constantly strive to create a calm environment that minimises the risk of incidents arising that might require the use of force. We have a total communication environment and staff use a range of strategies, e.g., de-escalation strategies, symbols and photos, within task schedules, objects of reference etc to support pupils in communicating.

All staff are trained in skills to help them to defuse situations before behaviour becomes challenging and how to de-escalate incidents should they arise. These alternative strategies will be used in preference to physical interventions wherever it is possible and safe to do so. Reasonable force will only be used when the risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not intervening in this manner.

Implications of the policy.

Teaching and support staff work '*in loco parentis*' and have a Duty of Care towards their pupils (they could be liable for a claim of negligence if they fail to follow the guidance within this policy.) The use of Team Teach techniques is one of our health and safety control methods for reducing risks presented by pupils' challenging behaviour. Pupils' Behaviour Support Plans are Safe Systems of Work under Health and Safety Regulations. As such it is imperative that these plans are consistently followed and implemented by all members of staff.

The application of any form of physical support/intervention inevitably carries an attached risk of unintended harm and this places staff and the school at risk of potential litigation. Staff have a responsibility to follow this policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention. Staff need to be aware that they are responsible for:

- assessing risks (dynamic risk assessment) related to individual circumstances which may arise in the course of their day-to-day duties and
- making judgements about when the use of force is necessary and the degree of force which may be regarded as necessary to manage a situation.

Staff are required to justify their decisions in writing through the recording and reporting procedures outlined later in this document.

Prevention and De-escalation

Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to pupils or staff, property, buildings or the environment. The proactive/preventative strategies section of a pupil's Behaviour Support Plan will outline specific ways to help prevent incidents with the individual pupil. Good classroom organisation, clear boundaries that are consistently maintained and interesting lessons, that engage pupils' positively in their learning, will be effective in preventing incidents with almost all pupils.

De-escalation techniques should be used wherever possible and appropriate to defuse a situation and prevent an incident from occurring – a non-confrontational, calm but assertive approach is generally the most effective.

Diverting the pupil's attention and distracting them from the "trigger", or a third person, intervening can also help to prevent incidents. Where possible these should all be used before resorting to restrictive physical interventions, unless safety is at risk.

Primary Prevention (Pro active)

This is achieved by: -

- Use of visually presented information to support understanding and promote functional communication.
- An understanding of and the provision for the sensory needs of pupils.

- Creating opportunities for communication, choice and achievement;
- Exploring pupils' preferences relating to the way/s in which they are managed;
- Developing staff expertise through a programme of Continuous Professional Development;
- The deployment of appropriate staffing numbers;
- The deployment of appropriately trained and competent staff;
- Focus on the importance of structure and environment.

Secondary Prevention (Active)

This involves the recognition of the early stages of a behavioural sequence or pattern that is likely to develop into heightened anxiety and over arousal and employing 'defusion' techniques to avert any further escalation.

Tertiary prevention(Re active)

This involves agreed strategies including as a last resort use of RPI to deal with crisis behaviour to maintain safety and welfare of pupil and others,

Where there is clear documented evidence that particular sequences of behaviour escalate rapidly into anxiety and challenging behaviour, the use of a restrictive physical intervention (RPI) at an early stage in the sequence may, potentially, be justified if it is clear that:

- Primary prevention has not been effective, and
- The risks associated with **NOT** using a RPI are greater than the risks of using a RPI

Types of Incident

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 stipulates that reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do any of the following:

- self – injuring
- causing injury to others
- committing a criminal offence
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether the behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere within school (this includes authorised outof-school activities).
- Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury.
- Where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property.
- Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order or discipline.

Where a pupil's behaviour threatens good order and discipline and provokes intervention, some or all of the following approaches should be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

- A calming activity should be offered/made available to the pupil, including the option to withdraw from the task/activity
- A clear positive statement (or use of visuals) should be given to tell the pupil what it is that you want them to do – i.e. give a positive instruction
- Positive reinforcement, praise and reward should be provided to the pupil for any attempt to calm down and/or behave appropriately, however small the effort

- Warning of intention to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies. If possible summon assistance.
- Physical intervention - positive handling using Team Teach techniques to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property.

Problems are normal where children are learning and testing the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Our success is not measured by the absence of problems, but by the way in which we deal with them.

Risk Assessment and deciding whether to use Restrictive Physical Interventions

It may be necessary to make a judgement about the relative risks and potential benefits arising from activities which might provoke challenging behaviours, compared with the impact on the pupil's overall quality of life if such activities are not allowed.

Both challenging behaviour and restrictive physical interventions will involve a risk – to both staff and pupils. A risk assessment aims to balance these risks. The aim of the individual pupil's Behaviour Support Plan, and of this policy, is to reduce the risks associated with pupils' challenging behaviour as far as is reasonably practicable – both the risks that are associated with the behaviour itself and the risk of managing that behaviour. The risks of employing an intervention should be lower than the risks of not doing so.

A Challenging Behaviour Risk Assessment can be carried out if it is foreseeable that a pupil's behaviour may pose a risk to staff or pupils. This may result in a Behaviour Support Plan being devised. This will be done by the teacher in discussion with the staff team working with the pupil and SLT consulted.

Where possible any staff suitably authorised to use physical intervention will be involved in RPI. All staff authorised to use physical intervention with pupils will receive training in Team Teach techniques as a risk reduction strategy and receive information about the risk to pupils of positional asphyxia. There are very clear protocols delivered during training to minimise the risk of harm to pupils and to ensure that appropriate safeguards are implemented.

Any intervention needs to be **reasonable... proportionate... and ... necessary**

Therapeutic devices

A decision to use therapeutic devices to prevent problem behaviour **MUST** be agreed by a multi-disciplinary team in consultation with child (if appropriate), their families, those with parental responsibility and advocates, and recorded within an individual's Behaviour Support Plan.

An example of this is using an arm splint to avoid 'eye-popping'. Parental, medical and physio. input would be sought before a decision to use an arm splint as a therapeutic device.

Strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour and supporting pupils in crisis

All staff at The Birches will consistently use positive strategies to prevent the likelihood of incidents occurring, and to develop appropriate behaviour and good order – research shows that the way to

improve behaviour is to praise and reward appropriate behaviour to increase the likelihood of it happening again! Alternative, positive behaviours are actively taught to replace inappropriate behaviour. (See Behaviour Support Policy)

The Governors acknowledge the ethos and high expectations of good behaviour throughout the school that have led to many pupils with challenging behaviour developing coping skills and ultimately being able to manage their own behaviour within the inclusive setting at The Birches. It is also acknowledged that progress can be very slow and some pupils may take many years to develop socially acceptable behaviour. A small steps approach, with positive reinforcement consistently and enthusiastically employed, and where progress is carefully recorded, allows staff and parents/carers/others to acknowledge the progress that all pupils make in changing their behaviour.

Definitions 1. Positive Handling

Positive Handling describes a broad spectrum of risk reduction strategies. Positive handling is a holistic approach involving policy, guidance, management of the environment, and deployment of staff. It also involves personal behaviour, diversion, diffusion, and de-escalation. Positive Handling at The Birches is seen as a proactive response to meet individual pupil needs and any such measures will be most effective in the context of the overall ethos of the school, the way that staff exercise their responsibilities and the range of behaviour change support strategies used.

Positive Handling Plans, referred to as Behaviour Support Plans, are a plan for the positive management of pupils' behaviour. They are based on a risk assessment and identify positive prevention strategies and how a pupil may need to be supported in a crisis. The focus of these plans is how to keep everyone safe whilst ultimately teaching/supporting a pupil to change their behaviour to a more positive alternative.

2. Physical Contact

These are situations in which appropriate physical contact occurs between staff and pupils, e.g. in the care of pupils, and in order to support their access to a broad and balanced curriculum. It would seem reasonable that young children do require opportunities for close contact such as cuddles/hugs and as long as this is within public view, sensitively carried out and age/person-appropriate the Governors would fully support this approach. At all times, (especially whilst assisting a pupil with their personal care and when teaching/practicing personal independence skills) staff should use discretion to preserve the dignity of those pupils needing help/support.

3. Physical Intervention (PI)

This may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the arm or shoulder where the pupil is compliant.

This technique cannot be emphasised enough and in the hands of a skilful practitioner many pupils can be deflected from a potentially volatile situation into a less confrontational situation i.e. it may be possible to “defuse” a situation by a timely intervention.

4. Physical Control/Restraint/Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI)

This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or property. **All such incidents must be recorded** on IRIS. If anyone is injured an accident/incident report must also be completed. For a serious incident this must be reported to a member of the SLT as soon as practicably possible, and by the end of the school day at the latest. The pupil's parents will be informed of any significant incident concerning their child as soon as is practicable after the incident by phone or home school book.

The level of compliance from the pupil determines whether or not the interaction is an intervention or a restraint/RPI. Restraint is defined by Team Teach as the positive application of force by staff, in order to overcome rigorous resistance; completely directing, deciding and controlling a person's free movement.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment was abolished in all Maintained Schools by the Education (No2) Act 1986. Corporal punishment is the intentional use of force as a punishment. This is not used at The Birches.

Planned and emergency physical interventions

A **planned intervention** is one that is described/ outlined in the pupil's Behaviour Support Plan. This should cover most interventions, as possible scenarios will be identified through risk assessment and planned for when the Behaviour Support Plan is drawn up. These interventions may include the use of Team Teach techniques.

An **emergency physical intervention** may be necessary if a situation arises that was not foreseen or is uncharacteristic of the pupil. Members of staff retain their duty of care to pupils and any response, even in an emergency, must be **proportionate to the circumstances**. Staff should use the minimum force necessary to prevent injury and maintain safety, consistent with the training that they have received. Wherever possible assistance will be sought from another member of staff.

Following any such incident, a Behaviour Support Plan will be devised (or the existing plan amended) to support effective responses to any such situations which may arise in the future.

School has a portable staff alarm system to enable staff to support pupils and each other in the event of an escalating or more serious situation.

Using Force

No legal definition of reasonable force exists; however, for the purpose of this policy and the implementation of it within The Birches:

- Positive Handling uses the **minimum** degree of force necessary for the **shortest period of time** to prevent a pupil harming himself, herself, others or property.
- The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be **proportionate** to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause.
- Where possible staff would be expected to follow the pupil's Behaviour Support Plan in the first instance to manage an incident/challenging behaviour.

- If this was unsuccessful and the situation continues to escalate staff would then be expected to employ other Team Teach techniques that they have been trained in.

Any use of force by staff outside of the Team Teach training framework would need to be judged on whether it was reasonable, proportionate and necessary in the particular circumstances concerned.

All the techniques taught take account of a young person's;

- age
- gender
- level of physical, emotional and intellectual development
- special needs
- social context

They also provide a gradual, graded system of response.

Acceptable measures of physical intervention (PI)

The use of Team Teach PI techniques can be justified if:

- it is warranted by the particular circumstances of the incident;
- it is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident and the consequences which it is desired to prevent;
- it is carried out as the minimum needed to achieve the desired result; (d) the age, understanding and gender of the pupil are taken into account; (e) it is likely to achieve the desired result.

Wherever possible assistance should be sought from another member of staff before intervening.

This form of physical intervention may involve staff:

- ^ escorting a pupil;
- > shepherding a pupil away;
- ^ supportively holding a pupil to keep them or others safe until they have regained control of themselves or can be supported to an area to calm down.

Restrictive Physical Interventions

In some circumstances, trained staff may need to use more restrictive holds - Team Teach RPI techniques. Acceptable methods are taught as part of the training procedures made available to appropriate staff.

Any such measures will be most effective in the context of the overall positive and caring ethos of the school, the way in which staff exercise their responsibilities, and the behaviour change support strategies used.

Staff may need to rotate roles and have a break if the incident is prolonged – you should follow the pupil's Behaviour Support Plan at all times acting in the best interests of the child.

- It is acknowledged that with some disengagement techniques pupils may encounter some minimal discomfort when appropriate release techniques are used. However, this is very brief,

transient and poses less of a risk than the behaviour they are showing, e.g. biting, head butting.

- Named staff are trained in First Aid and there is a school nurse on site. Any of these may be called upon to implement First Aid or to seek further guidance from in the event of an injury or physical distress arising as a result of a physical intervention.

Time out, withdrawal and seclusion

Time out :This involves restricting the pupil's access to positive reinforcements as part of the behavioral programme in a room or area which they may freely leave. It is a specific behaviour management technique and does not necessarily literally mean time spent out of the class/group, but rather refers to a withdrawal of attention and/or things they find rewarding (it could be as simple as turning away from a child who is attention seeking, or positioning a child away from the class/group). This withdrawal of attention could also be achieved by sending a pupil to another class/group or a quiet area.

Withdrawal: which involves removing the person from a situation which causes anxiety, high arousal levels, or distress to a location where they can be continuously observed and supported until they are ready to resume their usual activities. This can mean removing a child from the class/group to allow them time to calm down or to prevent a situation from escalating. They may need time away from staff and pupils (either on their own or in another class/group) in order to break the cycle/pattern of their behaviour or to reduce their level of anxiety/distress. This “quiet time” could be time in the playground, a quiet room, the Safe Space, or sitting in an office supervised by other staff including the Head or Deputy.

Seclusion: Is when a person is forced to spend time alone against their will. This involves restricting a person's freedom of movement and should be considered a form of physical intervention. The use of seclusion usually requires statutory powers unless in an emergency and so should only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Recording/Reporting incidents

All incidents will be recorded on IRIS. All serious incidents should be reported to the HT or a member of the SLT as soon as is practicably possible but at least at the end of the day.

All incidents recorded on IRIS will be reported to parents. This may be by telephone or in the home-school diary - depending on the nature of the incident and the procedure agreed with parents when their child's Behaviour Support Plan is devised/reviewed.

Where there is any concern over the appropriateness of a response the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, or the LA Safeguarding Officer may refer the incident to the Manchester Children's Safeguarding Board for clarification and/or investigation.

Whilst the physical interventions are intended to reduce risk, there is always risk when two or more people engage to use force to protect, release or restrain. Team Teach techniques seek to avoid injury to the pupil and staff, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally, and these are not to be seen necessarily as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent side effect of ensuring that the service user remains safe. Any such injury will be reported using the HS1 form and/or a skin map if necessary. Any injuries to pupils as a result of

incidents involving restraint will be reported in line with locally agreed LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) procedures.

Where appropriate an annual copy of the details of incidents will be placed on a pupil's file as part of their educational record.

Monitoring incidents

Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Headteacher to the needs of any pupil(s) whose behaviour may require the restrictive physical intervention/s and/or an adjustment to the provision made for them at the school.

Monitoring of incidents will take place on a regular basis (usually daily via IRIS) by the Behaviour Support Lead Assistant Head and the results used to inform planning to meet individual pupil and school needs. To safeguard pupils and ensure transparency, the Head teacher will present a regular summary of incidents to the Governing Body.

Positive Listening, Learning (PLL) and support following incidents

Physical interventions are not used in isolation and the school is committed to ensuring that as a result of incidents learning opportunities are created for children that allow them to 'own' and take responsibility for their behaviour at a level appropriate to their stage of development.

In addition PLL procedures are in place to ensure that appropriate support is provided and recorded for staff and pupils, and that following an incident pupil/staff relationships are rebuilt and repaired to ensure that a positive learning environment is maintained. Pupils who may be distressed by events can be offered the following support:

- Quiet time taking part in a calming activity
- Quiet time away from the incident/trigger
- Resuming their usual routine/previous activity as soon as possible, especially for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Condition.

PLL Time with a member of staff to "discuss" the incident, using a symbol debrief sheet or other alternative or augmentative forms of communication (AAC). Staff should ensure that they are fully recovered from an incident before resuming their duties and colleagues are encouraged to seek and offer support where it is deemed necessary. Where staff have been involved in an incident involving a Restrictive Physical Intervention, they should have access to counselling and support as needed. Within the school, this will be made available/supported through the SLT. Staff may also choose to access confidential counselling services

The Headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further as required. If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure/s:

- Review of Behaviour Support Plan
- Child Protection Procedure (this may involve investigations by Police and/or Social Services)
- Staff or Pupil Disciplinary Procedure
- School Behaviour Support Policy
- Exclusions Procedure; in the case of violence or assault against a member of staff or pupil this may be considered
- The member of staff will be kept informed of any action taken.

- In the case of any action concerning a member of staff, he/she will be advised to seek advice from his/her professional association/union.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to provide additional training or professional support for particular staff in relation to the management of incidents where although the criteria for the application of the above procedures were not met, it is decided that the incident could have been managed more effectively.

Health and Safety of Staff

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, employees have a responsibility to report any circumstances which give rise to an increased risk to their Health and Safety.

Staff who have, or acquire, permanently or temporarily, any medical condition that may impact on their ability to carry out pupils' Behaviour Support Plans have a duty to report these to the Headteacher immediately as there may be an impact on their own safety and that of colleagues and/or pupils.

Staff Training

Training at some level will be available for **all** staff at The Birches. For most staff this is enhanced by Team Teach training in the use of positive handling and it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure this training is kept up to date. No member of staff will be expected to use Team Teach techniques without appropriate training. Prior to the provision of training, guidance will be given on action to be taken in the event of an incident. Arrangements will be made clear as part of the induction of staff and training will be provided as part of on-going staff development.

This distinction in training and certification is considered a sensible risk-assessed approach to managing the training needs of all staff and is supported by Team Teach Ltd.

Authorised staff

All teachers, support staff and therapists the Headteacher has authorised to have control or charge of pupils automatically have the statutory power to use reasonable force within the context of The Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the subsequent guidance 'The Use of Force to Control and Restrain Pupils' 2010 and Behaviour and discipline in schools DfE 2012

Supply staff must ensure that they are familiar with this school's policy. Appropriate guidance will be given if they have not undertaken Team Teach training.

Staff from the CSA and PCT working within the school

Support Services may have their own policies for Care and Control/Behaviour Support of pupils. When working within The Birches it is the Head teacher's responsibility to ensure that colleagues from Support Services are aware of school policy and practice, and comply with this.

Parent Training and Support

The previous section on Behaviour Support Plans outlines the process for involving parents in devising these plans and in giving consent for these plans to be shared. This process encourages consistency between everyone supporting our pupils whether at home, in school or in other settings and services. It also allows parents to make informed decisions about the care of their child whilst in school.

There is a range of support available to parents including home visits, advice, guidance and training. Simply knowing that you are not the only parent dealing with a particular behaviour can be just as helpful as being empowered through learning simple techniques to defuse, divert and de-

escalate incidents.

Complaints

The availability of a clear policy about the use of reasonable force and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them.

Where the nature of any complaint made by a pupil, parent or other person in relation to the use of RPI within the school indicates that an allegation of mishandling by a member of staff is being made which complies with the criteria as recognised by MCSB the matter may be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in accordance with LA procedures.

In such circumstances the investigation of the complaint/allegation and any resulting action in respect of child protection, disciplinary or other procedures will be carried out in accordance with the guidance received from the LA.

Whistle Blowing

Whilst the training in TEAM TEACH provided to all staff encourages the use of help protocols and reflective practice, it is acknowledged that under some circumstances, physical intervention can be misapplied. Staff are reminded that part of their duty of care to pupils includes the requirement to report any such matters which cause them concern in relation to pupil management and welfare. Any such concerns, (short of immediate Child Protection concerns which should, of course, be passed to the Police /LADO), should be raised with the Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher or with the Chair of Governors in order to allow concerns to be addressed and practice improved.

Safeguarding

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

THE BIRCHES SCHOOL SPECIALIST SUPPORT SCHOOL

POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

Policy Information and Review

Review frequency: annually

Date	Version	Changes made	By whom (name and role)	Due date for next review
Policy agreed September 2017		Policy split from Behaviour Policy	Dani March AHT	June 2019
June 2018	1	Added covering sheet	Dani March AHT	June 2020
July 2018		<i>06/07/18 The Policy Ratification Committee has met and requested that all current statutory policies are ratified for one year only whilst an appropriate cycle of ratification is implemented. Policies will then be approved for their full length of term either through the Full Governing Body or one of the committees following an agreed plan of ratification.</i>		
February 2019	1	Dates changed for ratification purposes – policy is the same just the dates altered	F Shah DHT	February 2022
February 2021	1	Dates changed for ratification purposes to be in line with annual review	D March AHT behaviour lead	February 2022
March 2022	2	Dates changed for ratification purposes to be in line with annual review Name of review person changed Replaced weekly checking IRIS to daily	A Skolik- Wiecezniak AHT behaviour lead	March 2022
March 2023	2	Name of review person changed Dates changed for ratification purposes	Dani March AHT	March 2024

March 2024	2	Name of review person changed Dates changed for ratification purposes	Anna Skolik-Wieczniak	March 2025
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