



Redbridge Alternative Provision

# Positive Handling Policy

Written by

New Rush Hall School

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# Positive Handling Policy

## 1) Introduction

This policy provides a framework for the use of Positive Handling strategies and techniques at New Rush Hall School. It takes into account DfES Circular 10/98 (Section 550A of the Education Act 1996) and the DfES 'Guidance on the Use of Physical Interventions for Staff Working with Children who Display Extreme Behaviour in Association with Learning Disability and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders'.

New Rush Hall School uses the Team Teach approach to Positive Handling. This policy incorporates aims and guidance intrinsic to this approach. Central to this is the fundamental principle that any physical intervention used by staff must be within the context of 'reasonable force' and only used as a last resort once all other strategies have been exhausted. Force can only be regarded as reasonable if the particular circumstances of an incident warrant it and the degree of force employed is proportionate to the level of risk of the behaviour or its consequences.

This policy will set physical intervention into a wider context of education and behaviour management: it is not an isolated subject and according to Team Teach is necessary in only 5% of situations.

## 2) Legal Context

Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 states that staff are allowed to use reasonable force in relation to a pupil to prevent him/her:

- Committing an offence;
- Causing personal injury or damage to property;
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils.

This led to DfES Circular 10/98, which sets out guidelines for the use of reasonable force, allowing staff to:

- Physically interpose between two pupils;
- Use holding and guiding;
- Use more restrictive holds in extreme circumstances;
- Employ an accepted range of personal safety responses.

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The DfES suggest that the use of Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI) should be minimised by fully documented risk assessments and the use of a range of preventative strategies whenever it is foreseeable that the use of force might be required.

## 3) Preventative Strategies

Central to the Team Teach approach is the core belief that 95% of situations can be resolved without the need for physical intervention. This involves the use of a range of non-verbal and verbal support and intervention strategies to defuse, divert and de-escalate.

- Talking – communication with the student;
- Body language – posture can communicate how people are feeling;
- Awareness of personal and social space – keeping a safe and respectful distance;
- Para verbal skills – tone, pace and volume of one’s voice;
- Team culture – offering and accepting help according to agreed staff protocols;
- Offering students choices;
- Help protocols and help scripts – allow communication without misunderstanding in difficult situations.

Staff presence in a situation may be enough to defuse it. The use of touch may also help, e.g. a hand on a shoulder, arm around a shoulder, leading or guiding a pupil out of a dangerous or difficult situation.

Always advise a pupil before intervening physically. Stay in adult/grown-up mode; do not overreact; stay calm, emotionally neutral but caring, reassure the pupil that you are in control and engage in dialogue, making it clear that it is your intention to keep everyone/everything safe and that their behaviour will have consequences both now and in the long term if they do not take control.

A dialogue/conversation is usually helpful – if a child is very stressed you will need to speak slowly and clearly in a non-threatening voice. You may need to repeat yourself. A dialogue, sometimes constant, also signals your intentions or approach to your colleagues with whom you are working as a team in a situation.



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## 4) Physical Interventions

It is anticipated that, because of the approaches adopted at New Rush Hall School, focusing on high quality personal relationships within a caring framework, the necessity for Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPIs) is very much a last resort. This policy is based on that premise. It is not anticipated that this policy should affect our day-to-day care practices in terms of the way we work for 95% of the time, but is intended to cater for the 5% of situations where our normal strategies are not enough to maintain effective and safe control.

If physical intervention becomes necessary, it is acceptable to use both your arms and natural body weight to help take control of the situation. Staff should display sensitivity when involved in a physical intervention with pupils, bearing in mind gender and child protection history and issues.

If interventions to this level are impossible (e.g. because of a 1:1 situation) or if your action does not control the situation, it may be appropriate to contact colleagues or even the police for assistance. Staff are not expected to remain *in situ* in a volatile situation if they do not feel safe or able to control it. Help should be sought immediately the confidence threshold has been breached. In calling for assistance, staff may choose to remain *in situ* or withdraw. Staff may also be advised by colleagues to withdraw if their presence is detrimental to establishing a calm, safer situation.

It is the school's intention to use strategies and techniques which, when required, provide the minimum amount of restraint necessary to avert or reconcile the situation which triggered the intervention.

The mental state of the staff is crucial. An adult attitude of calm confidence, expressed in unemotional but caring terms and with close attention paid to one's non-verbal communication, is most likely to preclude a major incident. Remaining within the teacher/child parameters of the school's policy is fundamental.

Staff need to exercise judgement in deciding whether it is appropriate to intervene physically. Whenever restrictive physical interventions are employed, staff should use Team Teach techniques.

Physical interventions **must not** be used to force compliance with general rules or general staff instructions. It is only to be used in circumstances that comply with these guidelines.

## 5) Accepted Physical Interventions

Listed below are the accepted Team Teach techniques, which are taught to staff:

- Personal safety responses to deal with wrist, hair grabs, neck holds, bear hugs, bites, punches, kicks and head-butts.
- Guides, escorts and holds with one or two persons and a student, using friendly hold, single elbow, figure of four, wrap and shield.
- One person and two persons to chairs with a student, using friendly hold, single and double elbow, figure of four, wrap and shield.
- Ground recovery holds are the most restrictive and consequently carry the highest risk to students. Staff are encouraged to avoid going to the ground wherever possible, exceptions being when a child is already on the ground when the intervention has begun, or if circumstances are of such a high risk that a ground recovery strategy is perceived and/or documented as the appropriate strategy to employ in order to keep the situation safe.

Any physical intervention used will need to take account of age, gender, child protection history, stature and medical history of the student involved.

## 6) Post Intervention

As soon as possible after an intervention has been concluded (and not more than 24 hours after) the incident should be recorded on the Serious Incident pro-forma on e1.

Parents and carers should be informed that a Restrictive Physical Intervention has been used.

As soon as appropriate and practical, the incident should be discussed with the pupil involved, i.e. why a Restrictive Physical Intervention was used, what happened and events leading up to the intervention.

The incident should be debriefed by the line manager to the staff involved. This line manager should also discuss the incident with the pupil.

The Headteacher will inspect the Serious Incident log on e1 every month.



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## 7) Risk Assessments and Positive Handling Plans

In the case of anticipated, planned interventions, staff should produce risk assessments on the children they work with. This information will be shared with the rest of the staff and will form the basis for a Positive Handling Plan.

In the case of unplanned, emergency interventions, where an unanticipated response is deemed necessary, a risk assessment should be updated afterwards in case such a situation arises again.

## 8) Reporting and Monitoring of Incidents

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

- Protection of staff and pupils.
- Keeps a record of the number and nature of incidents so patterns can be noted, e.g. recurrence of particular pupils, locations, types of physical intervention, etc.

## 9) Training

At New Rush Hall School on-going training in Positive Handling strategies (both preventative and restrictive) forms a part of induction for all staff. LA trained coaches give a two-day intensive Team Teach training course delivered all staff. This is followed up with an annual one day Team Teach refresher course for each Department.

There should be regular reviews of policy, procedures and training.