



# Safe Touch and Positive Handling Policy

Date adopted by the Board of Governors:	<b>October 2024</b>
Date for review:	<b>October 2025</b>

## Safe Touch and Positive Handling Policy

At Bushbury Nursery School we believe that children have the right to independence, choice and inclusion, and we seek to provide opportunities for personal growth and emotional health and wellbeing. Children who are unable to control their actions or unable to appreciate danger have a right to be protected; as do those around them and staff have a duty of care, for all, to exercise.

### Rationale

Children learn who they are and how the world is, by forming relationships with people and things around them. The quality of a child's relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing.

Many of the pupils who require emotional support from school may have been subject to trauma or distress or may not have had a positive start in life. It is with this in mind, that staff seek to respond to children's developmental needs by using appropriate safe touch.

Our school policy takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills. The school has adopted an informed, evidence based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning.

Our policy rests on the belief that every member of staff needs to know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Hence, staff need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference. Equally, when a child is in deep distress, staff need to know when and how sufficient connection and psychological holding can be provided *without* touching.

All staff need to be clearly aware of procedures within this policy. The policy should be seen in the wider context of the 'Behaviour Policy' which aims to promote positive values and good behaviour choices.

## **Different types of touch**

There are four different types of touch and physical contact that may be used, these are:

### **1. Casual / informal / incidental touch**

Staff use touch with pupils as part of a normal relationship, for example comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. This might include putting an arm out to bar an exit from a room, taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or putting an arm around the shoulders. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating.

### **2. General reparative touch**

This is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child's emotions triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Reparative touch may include stroking a back or squeezing an arm.

### **3. Contact/interactive Play**

Contact play is used by staff adopting a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship. This will only take place when the child has developed a trusting relationship with the adult and when they feel completely comfortable and at ease with this type of contact. Contact play may include an adult chasing and catching the child or an adult and child playing a game of building towers with their hands. This sort of play releases the following chemicals in the brain:

- Opioids – to calm and soothe and give pleasure;
- Dopamine – to focus, be alert and concentrate;
- BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor) – a brain 'fertiliser' that encourages growth.

### **4. Positive handling (calming a dysregulating child)**

Staff may use force as is reasonable in circumstances in order 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 behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline. (This could be to prevent a pupil behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a lesson or to ensure a pupil leaves a classroom where the pupil persistently refuses to follow an instruction to do so.[ as defined in the DfCSF, 'The use of force to control or restrain pupils. Guidance for Schools' 2013).

The relevant consideration which must be taken into account:

- The degree of force must be proportionate to the circumstances and incident, and seriousness of the event (or the consequences it is intended to prevent).
- It should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result, (it might also depend on the age, understanding and sex of the pupil).
- Use of force is only reasonable if particular circumstances warrant it, otherwise it is unlawful; it therefore follows that it should not be used for situations that can be resolved without it, or for trivial misdemeanours.
- Positive handling must not be used to make a child comply with instructions unless it complies with the key points above.

A child who is in a state of dysregulation and has no mechanism for self calming or regulating their strong emotional reactions will be physically contained by staff. This kind of containment will usually involve two members of staff. It may also be necessary for another member of staff to control a child's kicking legs. Staff will employ the safest and gentlest means of holding a child, which is entirely designed to enable the child to feel safe and soothed, bring him or her down from an uncontrollable state of hyper arousal. Maintaining boundaries in such cases can be a vital corrective emotional experience, without which the child can be left at risk of actual physical or psychological damage.

The brain does not develop self-soothing neuronal pathways unless this safe emotional regulation has been experienced. Physical containment of a dysregulating child can be the only way to provide the reassurance necessary to restore calm. Such necessary interventions are fully in line with guidelines set out in the government document "New Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force in School" (DfEE, 1998) and in the Education Act Section 550A.

During any incident of physical holding intervention, staff must seek as far as possible to:

- lower the child's level of anxiety during the restraint by continually offering verbal reassurance and avoiding generating fear of injury in the child;
- cause the minimum level of restriction of movement of limbs consistent with the danger of injury (so, for example, will not restrict the movement of the child's legs when they are on the ground unless in an enclosed space where flailing legs are likely to be injured);
- ensure at least one other member of staff is present.

## Steps to take before positive handling

If the school is aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a way that might require physical restraint, it should plan how to respond. This will be done using the school Behaviour Management Plan. Consideration should be given to:

- managing the pupil. Use re – active strategies to de – escalate event
- involving parents so that they are fully aware of how the school may have to react
- briefing staff – ensure that everyone knows what action should be taken
- ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate
- the need to take specific advice about the safest way to hold pupils with specific health needs (particularly in SEN settings)
- Prevention strategies and calming measures which will be employed and the following action should be taken, as much as possible, before a restraint is used;
  - conversation, distraction, coaxing skills, gentle persuasion or redirection to other activities (e.g. touching the child’s arm and leading him/her away from danger, gently stroking the child’s shoulder).
  - encouraging the pupil to help him/herself feel more secure by wrapping a blanket tightly around him/herself or holding on tightly to a large cushion or stuffed toy.
  - put distance between the child and others - move others to a safer place.
  - calmly remove anything that could be used as a weapon, including hot drinks, objects, furniture.
  - to prevent a child continuing to pose harm in a dangerous situation, advise others to leave but remain with the child.
  - use seclusion only if necessary for a short period while waiting for help, preferably where a staff member can observe the child.
  - keep talking calmly to the child, explain what is happening and why, how it can stop, and what will happen next.
  - use first aid procedures in the event of injury or physical distress when safe to do so.
  - adults in charge should take a calm, measured approach to a situation, and never give the impression that they have lost their temper, or are acting out of anger, frustration, or to punish a pupil
    - physically interposing between pupils or blocking a pupil’s path.
    - touching, holding, pushing, pulling or leading a pupil by the arm
    - shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back.
    - in extreme circumstances) using a more restrictive holds

Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent. In exceptional circumstances, when there is an immediate risk of injury, (eg to prevent a pupil running on to a busy road, hitting someone or throwing something) staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of ‘reasonable force’.

In other circumstances, staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- Holding a pupil around the neck or in a way that might restrict breathing.
- Slapping, punching, kicking, tripping or forcing limbs against a joint.
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair.
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground.

The key issue is to establish good order, and so any action which could exacerbate the situation should be avoided. The age and level of understanding of the pupil is very relevant in these circumstances. Physical intervention to enforce compliance with staff instruction is likely to be increasingly inappropriate with older pupils. It should never be used as a substitute for good behaviour management.

### **Recording Incidents:**

Immediately following the incident where positive handling is used, the staff member should tell the HT or senior member of staff.

Parents should be informed of the incident, and given the opportunity to discuss it. The HT will need to consider whether parents should be told immediately, or at the end of the school day, and whether they should be informed orally or in writing.

If a Behaviour Management Plan is in place this should be reviewed and updated if necessary following a Positive Handling incident. If there is no plan in place then it is essential that a meeting be arranged as soon as possible to create a plan, this should involve parents as well as relevant staff.

Following any incidents where force is used the Unacceptable behaviour log will be completed, the positive handling report form will be filled in and the positive handling log will be filled in for each incident.

The headteacher will review records of the use of positive handling and reasonable force on a termly basis, in order to analyse the frequency of occurrence and determine what further measures could be taken to prevent these situations from reoccurring

The policy will be monitored and evaluated regularly by the governing body curriculum committee and leadership team. Updates and amendments will be approved by the governors and updated as necessary.

### **REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

This policy will be monitored by the Governing body and is reviewed annually.

## Positive handling report form

Bushbury Nursery School believes that positive handling and reasonable force should only be used when absolutely necessary. With this in mind, this form has been created to ensure that all incidents of this type are recorded. Incidents must also be documented in the Positive Handling Log.

<b>Name of staff member:</b>	
<b>Name of pupil:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Time:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	
<b>Name(s) of staff member(s) who witnessed the incident:</b>	
<b>Informed parties (parents/carers, social workers, police etc.):</b>	
<b>Circumstances prior to the incident:</b>	
<b>Details of the incident:</b>	
<b>Details of any negative impact on other pupils:</b>	
<b>Reason(s) for positive handling (please tick):</b>	
Danger to self	<input type="checkbox"/>
Danger to others	<input type="checkbox"/>
Significant damage to property	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Details of the intervention:**

**Any disciplinary additional action taken:**

**Injuries (if any) to staff members, the pupil concerned or other pupils:**

**Damage (if any) to property:**

**Recommendation(s) to avoid future incidents:**

**Headteacher signature:**

**Date:**

**Signature of staff member concerned:**

**Date:**



## Positive handling log

Bushbury Nursery School believes that positive handling and force must only be used when absolutely necessary. Positive handling will always to be used in accordance with the Positive Handling Policy. All incidents of this nature must be recorded in this log. Details of the individual incident will be recorded using the Positive Handling Report Form.

Date and time	Name of pupil	Name of staff member	Name(s) of witnesses	Injuries (if any) to pupils or staff	Damage (if any) to property	Nature of intervention	Was the HT notified?	Signed by staff member

Checked by the Headteacher : ..... (Signed)

Date: .....