

# St Augustine's Academy



## Positive Handling and Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Hegarty', is written over a white rectangular background.

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*'Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.'*

*Matthew 5:16*

## **Introduction**

*“Be kind to one another, and tender hearted.”* Ephesians 4: 32

All children have the right to be educated in a loving community, where a climate of dignity, respect, safety and support exists. We have high aspirations for all members of our community and aim to create an atmosphere in which they can flourish and can enjoy, achieve and learn. At times it may be necessary to use reasonable force to ensure this vision is realised in a way that is safe for all.

Positive handling should be limited to emergency situations and used only in the last resort. It enables staff in the school, to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances, to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing an offence
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil him/herself)
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

(Examples of possible situations are given in Appendix 1)

## **Definition of Positive Handling**

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 to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or restraining a child who is hurting themselves or others. Reasonable means using no more force than is needed. Control can be 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. Restraint means to hold a child back physically or to bring a pupil under control. This is typically used in more extreme circumstances such as separating 2 fighting pupils or with pupils who are hurting themselves or others. Staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury.

## **General Aims**

Staff at St. Augustine's Academy recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the last in a range of strategies available to secure pupil safety / well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. Our policy on positive handling should therefore be read in conjunction with our Behaviour and Safeguarding policies.

## **Specific Aims of the Positive Handling Policy**

- 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 violent or potentially violent situations.

## **Why Use Positive Handling?**

Positive handling should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him / herself or others. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which positive handling would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the school's policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour. Staff should be 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 should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

Failure to positively handle a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time, staff are not expected to place themselves in dangerous situations but should seek emergency assistance.

### **Alternative Strategies**

There are some situations in which the need for positive handling is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. is a pupil about to run across a road?). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives e.g. use of assertiveness/de-escalation skills such as:

- the *broken record* in which an instruction is repeated until the pupil complies
- use of distraction or diversion to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective
- withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened, by removing other children from the room/space
- change of adult dealing with the situation

### **Use of Positive Handling**

In the event that a pupil poses a risk to their own safety, the safety of others or serious damage to property they will be moved to a safe, quiet space, where they will be given time to calm.

Positive handling should be 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 should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment.

In an emergency situation, any member of staff may need to use positive handling to restrain a pupil. All members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. In such a situation the incident must be immediately reported to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.

In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate or effective. Positive handling should be a last resort. When positive handling becomes necessary:

#### **DO**

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the pupil what they must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)

- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

### **DON'T**

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Attempt to reason with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around
- the neck
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

### **Actions After an Incident**

Positive handling often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher must be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

The member of staff who carried out the positive handling must firstly write up a detailed account of the incident and log the incident in the red, bound, numbered book. Parents must be shown a copy of the completed log to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it. They must sign it on the same day (if possible).

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a risk assessment and/or behavioural plan by the SENCO, with parents.

It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

### **Risk Assessments**

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- Management of the pupil ( e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary)
- 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

### **YOU CANNOT USE FORCE AS A PUNISHMENT**

Reasonable force will only be used when all other strategies /provisions have been utilised and there is still a risk of a pupil hurting themselves or others, damaging property or causing a disorder. These strategies may include:

- Distraction techniques
- Use of reward systems
- Use of the behaviour staircase
- Change of tone of voice /intonation of voice
- Change of adult supporting the child who is escalating
- Individualised strategies outlined on a child's SEND plan.

### **Other physical contact**

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. For example: Holding a hand to lead a child to assembly, or walking 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; To give first aid.

### **Appendix 1**

#### **When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?**

Examples of situations that may require restraint are when:

- a pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil
- pupils fighting
- a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- a pupil is moving about dangerously e.g. on a stairway in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure her/himself or others
- a pupil absconding from a class or trying to leave school (NB this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school)
- a pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave an area
- a pupil behaves in such a way that seriously disrupts a lesson.