



MULTI ACADEMY COMPANY

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Positive Handling Policy

This incorporates St Teresa of Calcutta MAC and St Augustine's Catholic Primary School policy on the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

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Introduction

At St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, we are committed to creating a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all pupils, staff, and visitors. This Positive Handling Policy outlines our approach to promoting positive behaviour, preventing incidents that might require the use of reasonable force, and safely managing situations where restrictive interventions may become necessary.

This policy is aligned with our mission to uphold the dignity and wellbeing of every individual and complies with the Department for Education guidance on the use of reasonable force in schools.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide all practice and decision-making in relation to physical intervention:

Behaviour as Communication: All behaviour is a form of communication. A child or young person's distressed or challenging behaviour often signals unmet needs. School staff must make every effort to understand and respond to those underlying needs through appropriate support, rather than through punitive or restrictive responses.

Respecting the Child's Voice: Every child and young person has the right to be heard. Their views, wishes, and feelings must be sought, listened to, and considered in any decisions made about them, including decisions relating to behaviour and intervention strategies.

A Right to Safety and Protection: All children, young people and staff have the right to be protected from harm, to feel safe in their learning environment and working environment, and to have their wellbeing and development prioritised. This includes protection from harmful or excessive use of restraint and seclusion.

Non-Routine and Proportionate Use: Physical intervention or restraint is not to be used routinely, and should never be part of a standard support plan unless based on an individualised risk assessment and subject to regular review. They should only be used:

- In the context of positive relationships, preventative approaches, and a culture of wellbeing;
- As a last resort, where a child or young person is non-compliant and there is an immediate risk of injury to the child or young person, or to others, and no less restrictive alternative is viable;
- For the shortest duration necessary, and in the safest, least restrictive way possible;
- Only by appropriately trained staff, except in true emergencies;
- In a way that does not degrade, humiliate, or punish, nor unlawfully restrict liberty.

Aims of this Policy

To ensure that all members of the school community feel safe and respected.

To minimise the need for the use of reasonable force or restrictive interventions.

To promote positive relationships and proactive strategies for de-escalation.

To support pupils in developing self-regulation and positive behaviour strategies.

To ensure that any use of force is lawful, necessary, proportionate, and used as a last resort.

Terminology

For clarity, this policy will use the following definitions:

Reasonable force: Physical contact by a member of staff on a pupil to control or restrain their actions/movements. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances. Any use of reasonable force is an example of a restrictive intervention and may or may not involve the use of restraint.

Restrictive interventions: Any planned or reactive action which limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. Restrictive interventions may include use of equipment seclusion/isolation. Restrictive interventions may or may not involve the use of reasonable force.

Restraint: A form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact and force where the intention is to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. Restraint may or may not involve the use of force.

As noted within the definitions, these terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories.

Use of Reasonable Force

In line with DfE guidance, reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from:

- Hurting themselves or others;
- Damaging property;
- Causing disorder.

Use of force is always a last resort and will be:

- **Reasonable:** Using no more force than is necessary;
- **Proportionate:** To the situation and risk presented;
- **Legal:** In accordance with DfE and school guidance.

Use of Reasonable Force to Search Pupils

Headteachers and authorised staff have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions if they have reasonable grounds to suspect the presence of a prohibited item (as defined by law).

A member of staff may use reasonable force when searching for legally prohibited items, but not when searching for items only banned under school rules. The use of force will always be decided on a case-by-case basis, considering the specific context and level of risk.

Unacceptable Uses of Force

Staff will never use force for the purpose of punishment.

Under no circumstances will a pupil be deliberately restrained in a manner that could compromise their airway, breathing, or circulation. This includes:

- Covering the mouth and/or nose
- Applying pressure to the neck or abdomen

Ground restraints pose a particular risk and will be avoided wherever possible. If a pupil is unintentionally taken to the ground during an incident:

- Staff will release holds or reposition to a safer alternative (preferably standing) as quickly as possible
- A medical assessment will be sought promptly for the pupil, and any injuries will be treated without delay
- Even when restraint is seated or standing, it carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, and its use will always be a last resort

Who Can Use Reasonable Force

Under section 93 of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*, all members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from:

- Committing a criminal offence;
- Causing injury to themselves or others;
- Causing damage to property;
- Disrupting the good order and discipline of the school.

Other Physical Contact with Pupils

In accordance with DfE guidance, St Augustine's Catholic Primary School does not adopt a blanket 'no contact' policy. Furthermore, St Augustine's Catholic Primary School will not agree to any requests from parents or staff to avoid using reasonable force or other restrictive interventions where appropriate. A 'no contact' policy can prevent staff from taking necessary and reasonable actions to safeguard pupils effectively.

There are circumstances where physical contact with pupils is appropriate and does not raise concerns regarding the use of reasonable force or restrictive practices. The appropriateness of such contact depends on the context, but common examples include:

- Providing first aid
- Guiding or escorting pupils, for example:
- Holding a pupil's hand at the front or back of the line when walking to assembly or around the school
- Supporting a pupil in moving to a designated self-regulation space
- Comforting a distressed pupil
- Offering praise or congratulations, such as a pat on the back or a handshake
- Demonstrating how to use a musical instrument
- Teaching techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

When considering whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, staff will exercise professional judgement. Staff will take into account:

- The school's child protection and safeguarding policies
- The specific circumstances, such as the presence of other adults
- The pupil's age and developmental stage
- Any additional needs or vulnerabilities the pupil may have, including SEND
- Physical contact should always be respectful, proportionate, and in the best interests of the pupil and staff.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for promoting positive behaviour and using de-escalation strategies. Staff receive annual training in positive behaviour and in using de-escalation strategies.

Designated staff receive enhanced training in positive handling techniques.

The Senior Leadership Team monitors the use of reasonable force and ensures accountability.

Prevention and De-escalation

At St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, we believe that prevention and early intervention are key to reducing the need for restrictive practices. As such, we:

- Promote a whole school ethos of positive behaviour, respect, and emotional literacy.
- Use a clear, consistent behaviour policy that includes restorative practices.
- Train all staff in de-escalation techniques and positive behaviour support.
- Foster strong relationships between staff and pupils to build trust and understanding.
- Regularly monitor behaviour trends to identify early signs of distress or escalating behaviour.

Whole School Measures to Minimise the Need for Reasonable Force

The following proactive strategies are embedded throughout the school:

Clear Expectations: Communicated regularly through assemblies, lessons, and displays.

Behaviour Curriculum: Taught explicitly through PSHE and tutor time.

Staff Training: All staff receive annual training de-escalation and safeguarding.

Safe Spaces or Staff: Designated areas where pupils can go to self-regulate or de-escalate.

Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs): Used for pupils with identified needs to outline tailored strategies.

Parental Engagement: Ongoing communication with parents to reinforce consistent approaches at home and school.

Trained Staff

While any staff member may use reasonable force when necessary, those who are more likely to encounter situations where restrictive interventions may be required receive additional training. This includes training in:

- Safe and lawful use of reasonable force;
- Preventative strategies, including de-escalation techniques and positive behaviour support.
- School leaders are responsible for assessing their specific context to determine which staff require training, and for ensuring that all training aligns with national guidance and the principles of this policy.
- Training will be delivered by certified positive handling trainers who undergo annual training and assessment.

Employer Responsibilities

Employers have a legal duty to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their employees under the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974*. As such, schools must:

- Conduct risk assessments to identify roles where there may be a foreseeable need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions;
- Ensure that staff in these roles are appropriately trained and supported to carry out such duties safely and confidently;
- Regularly review these assessments to reflect changes in pupil needs or staffing.

Tailored Approaches for Individual Pupils

At St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, we recognise that some pupils may require a personalised approach to behaviour support. For these pupils, we aim to provide:

- **Individual Risk Assessments:** Identifying triggers, signs of escalation, and personalised de-escalation strategies.
- **Positive Handling Plans:** Developed collaboratively with staff, parents/carers, and where appropriate, the pupil.
- **Multi-agency Support:** Involving SEND, pastoral, safeguarding, and external professionals, where necessary.
- **Regular Reviews:** To ensure strategies remain appropriate and effective.

Considerations for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and pupils who are vulnerable

At St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, we also recognise that pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) may respond differently to certain situations, and we are committed to ensuring that their needs are met with understanding, compassion, and proactive support.

Some pupils with SEND may display behaviours that could be harmful to themselves or others in response to distressing or confusing situations. Such behaviours may be triggered by:

- Physical pain
- Sensory overload
- Unfamiliar environments
- Feelings of fear or anxiety

Particularly for pupils who have difficulty with verbal communication, behaviour may be their primary way of expressing discomfort, confusion, or unmet needs. We acknowledge the potential for pupils with SEND to be disproportionately subject to the use of reasonable force or other restrictive interventions.

To address this, we will:

- Strive to understand the underlying causes of behaviours rather than focusing solely on the behaviours themselves.
- Ensure our policies and practices support inclusivity, and do not inadvertently create distress or disadvantage for pupils with SEND.
- Recognise that school culture, routines, and expectations may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND and adjust our approach accordingly.

Proactive Support and Risk Reduction

Staff who know pupils well play a key role in identifying potential triggers, managing risk, and supporting individual pupils to prevent escalation. Preventative and de-escalation strategies may include:

- Removing distressing stimuli
- Adjusting staff body language, tone, or posture
- Supporting the pupil to express their feelings before becoming overwhelmed
- Using calming or distracting activities
- Providing access to familiar objects, routines, or safe spaces
- Behaviour Support Plans

Where appropriate, the school will work with parents, pupils, and professionals to co-produce personalised Behaviour Support Plans. These will:

- Detail agreed de-escalation strategies

- Specify any required environmental adjustments
- Outline how the pupil communicates distress or needs
- Identify when and how increased physical contact might be necessary, with clear boundaries around its use

Plans will also reference risk assessments where there is an identified likelihood of the use of reasonable force or restrictive interventions. These plans will be regularly reviewed, particularly after any significant incidents, to ensure they remain appropriate and effective.

Recording and Reporting the Use of Force by Members of Staff

In accordance with section 93A of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*, St Augustine's Catholic Primary School ensures that a clear and consistent procedure is in place for recording and reporting all significant incidents in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil. This includes incidents where reasonable force or other restrictive interventions have been used, even if such interventions are part of an agreed Behaviour Support Plan.

Recording Incidents

All staff involved in a use-of-force incident will record the incident in writing as soon as practicable after the event. The school has a consistent template for the recording of incidents which includes:

- Names of the pupil(s) and staff involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including SEND status and SEN code
- Date, time, location, and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief factual account of the incident, including:
 - What led up to it
 - Any known or suspected triggers
 - Preventative or de-escalation strategies used
 - Type and degree of force applied
 - Any injuries sustained (by pupil or staff)
 - The rationale for the use of force
 - Details of how and when parents were informed
 - Any post-incident support or medical treatment provided
 - Follow-up actions or reviews of behaviour support plans

All records will be kept securely and used to evaluate practice and ensure accountability.

Reporting Incidents to Parents

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School will report the use of force to each parent of the pupil involved as soon as practicable, unless:

- The pupil is aged 20 or over; or
- Reporting to parents is likely to cause significant harm to the pupil (e.g., risk of abuse or neglect). In such cases, the incident will be reported to the Local Authority where the pupil is ordinarily resident.

The school has a consistent template for reporting incidents to parents which includes:

- Date, time, location, and length of time force was used
- Type and degree of force applied
- Details of any physical injuries (if applicable)
- Brief explanation of why the use of force was deemed necessary

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School will choose the most appropriate method to report to parents (e.g., phone call, email, secure online system) and will offer a follow-up meeting where appropriate.

This meeting may include:

- A discussion of triggers or warning signs
- Review of the Behaviour Support Plan and its effectiveness
- Consideration of alternative strategies or adjustments
- Opportunities to gather parental and pupil feedback
- Any necessary amendments to Behaviour Support Plans will be made collaboratively following such discussions.

Compliance and Oversight

The Local Governing Body, supported by St Teresa of Calcutta MAC, ensures this policy aligns with the latest statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education and all relevant safeguarding duties. All staff involved in restrictive interventions will be appropriately trained and supported.

Monitoring of reasonable force and restrictive interventions

Use of Data

Data on the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions will be routinely monitored and analysed by St Teresa of Calcutta MAC and St Augustine's Catholic Primary School to improve practice, support vulnerable pupils, and uphold the school's duty of care. This includes:

Identifying policy and practice improvements: We will evaluate whether existing behaviour strategies and interventions are effective and where St Augustine's Catholic Primary School should seek to strengthen or revise policy and practice.

Informing staff training and development: We will use data to identify specific areas where additional training or support is needed—whether for individual staff members, year groups, or departments.

Understanding pupil patterns and needs: We will analyse patterns of repeat incidents to identify possible behavioural triggers or support gaps. This analysis should be shared with relevant staff and, where appropriate, used to revise or establish behaviour support plans in partnership with parents and external professionals.

Monitoring Disproportionality: We will monitor data for any disproportionate use of force or restrictive interventions concerning pupils:

- With protected characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, disability, gender)
- With Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Or who experience other vulnerabilities

This scrutiny helps ensure that practice is equitable, lawful, and reflects an inclusive ethos.