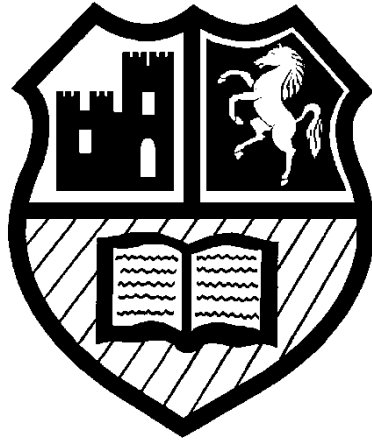


Otford Primary School



Otford Primary School Positive Handling Policy.

Date February 2026
Amended

For review (Annual) February 2028

OTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

POSITIVE HANDLING

POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Ethos Statement

Otford Primary School offers a positive, safe learning environment for its community, in which everyone has equal and individual recognition and respect. We celebrate success and are committed to the continuous improvement and fulfilment of potential in every child. We encourage increasing independence and self-discipline amongst the pupils. Everyone within the school has an important role to play in sharing responsibility for the development of positive behaviour and attitudes.

Introduction

Otford Primary School prefers the term "Positive Handling" to the term "Control and Restraint". Throughout this document any reference to restraining and controlling a pupil will be stated as the positive handling of a pupil. However for clarity the policy section refers to control and restraint.

Section 550A of the Education Act 1996, The use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils clarifies the powers of teachers and other staff who have lawful control or charge of pupils to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing a crime, causing injury or damage or causing disruption.

The Act does not authorise the use of corporal punishment in any circumstances.

Intention

This school recognises the rights of every person to be protected from harm and for that reason we seek to protect all our pupils from physical intervention which is either; unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or unlawful.

This Policy should serve three distinct purposes:

- It should protect the interests of the children in our care
- It should serve to protect the staff who implement policies

- It should serve to protect the Leadership Team

Good Professional Practice

It is the responsibility of Governors and Headteacher to determine what is good practice in terms of professional contact with children and young persons.

All staff are aware of the School's Policy regarding physical control and restraint. It is important that all members of staff who may have to intervene clearly understand the options and strategies open to them and that staff have appropriate training.

The Act allows for non-teaching staff to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils in the same way as teachers provided they have been authorised by the Headteacher to have control or charge of pupils. These persons have been adequately prepared and have had a level of awareness raising on the issues of positive handling.

All members of staff whether authorised by the Headteacher or not retain the rights of self defence. This means that staff may take action to neutralize an attack on themselves but may not retaliate. This document clarifies the position of teachers should the positive handling of pupils be necessary. There is no requirement on anyone to use any method of restraint and this document should be read in context of a situation.

What is physical restraint?

Physical restraint is the positive application of force with the intention of preventing the child from harming himself/herself or others or from seriously damaging property. Physical restraint will only be used when all attempts to diffuse or de-escalate the situation have failed. The restraint will continue only for the minimum time for it to be effective.

The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. Therefore, physical force cannot be used to prevent a pupil committing a minor misdemeanour.

Guidance on physical restraint

The method of intervention used will always depend upon and need to be in keeping with the circumstances including the age, competence and nature of the pupil and the potential risks involved.

Any intervention should always be preceded by clear verbal instructions relating to the consequences of ignoring them and then accompanied throughout by attempts to de-escalate and calm the situation until any risk has passed. The age and level of understanding of a young person will make a difference to their ability to recognise and understand dangers to themselves, others and property. These factors therefore must be taken into account when trying to decide on the appropriate response to a child who may need to be controlled by means of some sort of physical intervention. Adults should never give the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting out of anger or frustration.

Where there is an immediate risk of injury or damage to property, a teacher may have to intervene physically straight away, for example to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road or to prevent a pupil hitting someone or throwing something. A teacher should not intervene without help if it puts himself at risk. In these circumstances other pupils in the room should be told to leave and assistance should be summoned from a colleague or the police.

Again the teacher should attempt to diffuse the situation orally, speaking calmly and quietly. A pupil is likely to respond to the tone and volume of your voice.

Types of physical restraint

Restraint can be:

- Partial – restricting and preventing particular movements
- Total – as in the case of immobilisation

Partial restraint

This covers a wide range of actions, which can be applied in degrees to meet the needs of particular circumstances. It may involve:

- Physically moving a child from a situation where there is an imminent risk of a violent incident and where the pupil has refused to respond to a reasonable verbal request.

- Holding a child to restrict their movements i.e. to stop them hurting themselves or others, or to prevent them from running away when on a school trip in a dangerous situation – for example near a busy road. Restraining a child in a confined area e.g. a corner of a room where a member of staff blocks their way, in order to prevent damage to individuals or property.

Any member of staff could potentially be involved in the above situations and has the backing of the school's management team to partially restrain pupils, providing they have done so in the spirit of this policy and when it has been done in order to protect pupils, staff or property from harm. Any partial restraint of a pupil must be reported immediately to the Headteacher who will keep a log of any incidents of this kind, and will inform the parents / carers of the pupil concerned.

It is illegal to lock a pupil in a room or cupboard which they cannot leave of their own volition.

Total Restraint:

This is where a pupil may be held in such a way which prevents them from moving. This could mean a pupil being held on the floor. This is an extreme form of restraint and would be used only when it is thought that there is a serious risk to the child or others. (See appendix 2 for more information on total restraint.)

Only specific staff named by the Headteacher can place a child in total restraint. These staff are currently the Head Deputy Headteachers and Inclusion Manager, although all other staff at the school are authorised to support the Head or Deputy in this situation.

When might physical restraint be necessary?

Section 550A applies to a wide variety of situations in which reasonable force might be appropriate to control or restrain a pupil. The following are some examples of situations in which the use of reasonable force may be appropriate:

- Pupils are fighting.
- A pupil is engaged in or is on the verge of committing deliberate damage or vandalism to property
- A pupil is causing or at risk of causing injury or damage by accident, by rough play or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects.
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he/she may have or cause an accident likely to injure himself, herself or others.
- A pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom.

- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (N.B. this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school).

Meaning of "Reasonable Force"

There is no legal definition of "reasonable force".

The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of reasonable force. Therefore physical force could not be justified to prevent a pupil from committing a minor misdemeanour (e.g. dropping litter).

The degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should always be the minimum to achieve the desired results. Whether it is reasonable to use force and the degree of force that could be reasonably employed might also depend on the age and sex of the child.

Prohibited forms of control and/or restraint

Teachers and authorised persons will not:

- Hold a pupil around the neck or by the collar or in any other way that might restrict the pupils ability to breathe.
- Slap, punch, prod or kick a pupil.
- Twist or force limbs against a joint.
- Throw an object.
- Trip up a pupil.
- Hold or pull a pupil by the hair or ear.
- Staff should always avoid using injury or unnecessary pain.
- Staff should always avoid touching or holding the pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

Reporting / Recording Incidents

All incidents where a teacher or authorised member of staff has to restrain or control a pupil will be recorded. The staff member involved in the restraint or control incident will report the incident to the Headteacher orally, then as soon as possible will make a written report (See appendix 1) which will be countersigned by the Headteacher, a copy of which will go into the Child Contact File and a copy will go onto the pupil's file.

The report should include:

- The name (s) of the pupil(s) involved and when and where the incident took place
- The names of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident
- The reason that force was necessary (e.g. to prevent injury to the pupil/another pupil/member of staff)
- How the incident began and progressed including details of the pupil's behaviour
- What was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse/calm the situation, the degree of force used.
- How the force was applied and for how long.
- The pupil's response and the outcome of the incident.
- Details of any injury suffered by the pupil, another pupil or a member of staff and of any damage to property.
- Details of any restraint outlined on a body map.

Following an incident of positive handling there should be the opportunity for both the pupil and the teacher to discuss the event with a senior member of staff.

The pupil's parents/carers will be informed of the incident by the Headteacher or Deputy Head and they will be given the opportunity to come into school to discuss the incident.

The Child Contact records will be retained by the Headteacher at the end of each school year. All the non-teaching staff have been authorised by the Headteacher to act in accordance with Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 in the use of force to control or restrain pupils and have received appropriate training. Otford Primary School has an open and accepting attitude towards children as part of its responsibility for pastoral care. Staff hope that parents and pupils will feel free to discuss any concerns with them.

Complaints

Incidents involving the use of force can cause the parents of the pupil involved great concern. Involving parents when an incident occurs plus a clear policy about physical contact with pupils that is adhered to by staff should help to avoid complaints from parents.

It will not prevent all complaints however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff may arise. The possibility that a complaint might result in a disciplinary hearing or a criminal prosecution or in a civil action brought by a pupil or parent cannot be ruled out.

In those circumstances it will be for the Disciplinary Panel or the Court to decide whether the use and degree of force was reasonable in all circumstances. In that event however, the Panel or Court would have regard to the provisions of Section 550A. It would also be likely to take account of the school's policy in regard to restraint, whether it had been followed and the need to prevent injury, damage or disruption in considering all the circumstances of the case.

Any complaints regarding staff behaviour should be made to the Headteacher or to the Chair of Governors.

Physical Contact with Pupils in other circumstances

All staff can be vulnerable to misplaced allegations. It is unrealistic that these persons should touch children only in emergencies. There are situations in which physical contact with a pupil may be appropriate or necessary other than those covered by Section 550A of the 1996 Act.

Some physical contact may be necessary to demonstrate exercises or techniques in the course of P.E. lessons or sports coaching or if a member of staff has to administer first aid.

Touching may also be appropriate where a pupil is in distress and needs comforting- please refer to the Touch Policy. Teachers will use their own professional judgement when a pupil needs this kind of support. Some children may find being touched uncomfortable for a number of reasons, so it is important that education staff are sensitive to a child's reaction to physical contact and act appropriately. Physical contact between teachers and pupils of the opposite sex becomes increasingly open to question as pupils reach and proceed through adolescence. Teachers should also bear in mind that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact can sometimes be misconstrued.

In some circumstances there will seem to be a very fine line between what is seen as positive handling and what is seen as a child protection issue. If a child sustains an injury through the inappropriate use of force or the unreasonable use of one of the prohibited forms of positive handling, this may constitute physical abuse and the Child Protection procedures would need to be initiated.

Appendix 1

Oxford Primary School

Record of an incident of force to control or restrain a pupil

Name of pupil involved:

Date:

Name of member of staff reporting:

Name of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident:

(Please attach their account of the event)

When did the incident take place?

Where did the incident take place?

The reason that force was necessary:

How the incident began / progressed?:

Details of pupil's behaviour:

What was said by different parties?:

Steps taken to defuse or calm the situation:

The degree of force used / how it was applied / for how long:

What was the pupil's response and the outcome of the incident?:

Details of any injury suffered by the pupil, another pupil or a member of staff and or damage to property

Appendix 2

Additional Guidance for Total Restraint (to be supervised only by the Headteacher/

Deputy Headteachers or Inclusion Manager and supported by an additional member of staff)

- If at all possible, this type of restraint should be performed away from the main access areas of the school so as to limit the trauma experienced by the pupil in question and other pupils at the school. It is best performed in a carpeted area, where there is visual access into the room from another school area. It is understood however, that the situation may not allow for the child to be moved to such an area due to the nature and dangers involved in moving a pupil.
- Usually the pupil should sit on the floor facing away from the main supervising restraining adult so as to minimise the risk of spitting and kicking. Sitting on the floor is a more comfortable position for the pupil, but restricts their movements at the same time. They should hold the child from behind, ensuring that the child's hands are held securely. The additional supervising adult may need to hold the pupil's legs if there is a significant risk of damage or injury to any of the parties involved or their property. This should be done so under the instruction of the main supervising adult.
- The adult's head should be well above the level of the child's in order to minimise the risk of damage by the pupil's head being thrown backwards. Sitting on a chair behind the pupil limits the risk of injury to the adult, and will ensure that there is no risk of injury from the child's head. Also any jewellery (watches, bracelets) should be removed to avoid injury to the child.
- If this technique fails to protect the child, adult or any property adequately, then the child should be restrained face down on the floor with their arms to the side and their head placed to one side in order to ensure that the child does not bang his/her head on the floor. Once again, two members of staff should be involved in this restraint in order to minimise the risk of injury to all parties.

- The restraining adults should not respond to verbal or physical abuse from the pupil. Instead they should give very clear instructions and remain as positive and soothing as possible. They should not continue to hold once the situation has relaxed, and should slowly release the child once they are responding appropriately to adult requests.
- A pupil who has been placed in total restraint should be given a calming down period following the restraint and offered support if necessary in order to deal with the effects of the incident.
- Following such an incident, a pupil would not usually return to their classroom, but what happens following such an incident is entirely up to the discretion of the Head or Deputy based upon the severity of the situation and the needs of the pupil concerned.