

# Guidelines for the use of physical intervention

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At Stella Maris we believe that every person has the right to be protected from harm in so far as this is reasonably practicable. We seek to protect everyone using the school, both children and adults, against any form of physical intervention which is inappropriate, excessive or harmful.

## **Aims**

- To assist all staff in school to deal effectively with challenging behaviour.
- To contribute to the protection of both staff and pupils.
- To guard against any form of unwarranted physical intervention.
- To secure for all pupils a safe environment in which their right to learn is secured.

Promoting self-discipline and encouraging good behaviour and respect for others is crucial for creating a positive ethos in the school. Our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy outlines ways in which we do this to maintain good standards of behaviour in the school. Our Supportive Behaviour Management approach emphasizes our belief that the most effective way to promote good behaviour is through support rather than a culture of compliance.

However, we recognize that there may be occasions when physical intervention and restraint are required to prevent injury to pupils or adults in the school.

## **Use of control and restraint by staff**

DfE guidance, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 1998, makes it clear that under the 1997 Education Act, members of staff are allowed to use such force as is reasonable in all circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

- *Committing a criminal offense including behaving in a way which would be an offense if the pupil were not under the age of criminal responsibility;*
- *Injuring themselves or others;*
- *Causing damage to property including the pupil's own property;*
- *Engaging in any behaviour which is prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils.*

## **Examples of situations where reasonable force, including more restrictive holds, might be appropriate**

- Where pupils are fighting each other, attacking other pupils or members of staff
- Where a pupil is damaging, or about to damage, property
- Where a pupil is trying to abscond

The law applies where a member of staff is either on the school premises, or elsewhere when, as a member of staff, he or she has lawful charge of the pupil concerned.

A 'member of staff' in relation to the law means any teacher who works at the school, and any other person who, with the authority of the Headteacher, has lawful control of charge of pupils on roll at the school, including teaching assistants and any other support staff.

## **Guidance on the use of physical intervention techniques at the school**

Staff need to develop strategies to manage a variety of behaviours and thereby ensure the health and safety of all the pupils. The strategies necessary to manage challenging behaviours should permeate both the culture of the school and its policies. Whenever possible, intervention by

adults should be on the basis of incentives, not sanctions. Good relationships between adults and children depend on respect, trust and honesty.

Most children will respond more positively to reward and praise. There are, however, some for whom rewards appear to have less effect, and the threat or implementation of sanctions is not a deterrent from behaving in an inappropriate manner.

It is acknowledged that staff may have to deal with challenging behaviour and will need assistance in preserving order and in promoting and maintaining an environment conducive to the education of pupils. At the same time there is a need for staff to protect themselves, to minimise the risk of accusations of improper conduct and to reduce the risk of injury to themselves.

Staff should be clear about the appropriateness of their actions to minimize doubts and anxieties and should always notify the Headteacher or a senior member of staff of the circumstances as soon as possible.

In addition to verbal reporting of an incident to the Headteacher or senior member of staff, a written account should be completed. Whenever any kind of physical intervention has taken place, this must be communicated to the pupil's parents by a member of the leadership team within 24 hours.

### **Non-verbal crisis intervention techniques**

#### **Do:**

- Appear calm and relaxed
- Keep the pitch and volume of your voice down
- Learn how to relax your muscles and keep them in control
- Feel comfortable with the fact that you are in control (if you are in control of yourself you are more likely to be able to control the situation)
- Project a calm, assured feeling that you will see the situation through to a peaceful end, no matter what happens
- Talk with the child
- Be very matter of fact if the child becomes agitated
- Stay close to the child and attend to him/her
- Be patient and don't give up

If a child's agitation increases to the verge of attack:

- Acknowledge his/her feelings
- Continue with a matter of fact attitude
- Assume a neutral expression
- Be polite at all times
- Always leave the child an avenue of escape (they are more likely to be aggressive if they feel trapped in a situation)

#### **Do not:**

- Appear afraid or unsure yourself
- Appear bossy, arrogant, or with a 'don't give a damn' attitude
- Raise your voice
- Look as if you expect to be attacked (or you might be!)
- Give peremptory commands or make demands
- Make threats (especially any that you are not absolutely sure you can carry out)
- Rest your eyes on the child's chest and eyes (chest movements telegraph any aggressive responses)

- Maintain continuous eye contact (staring can be perceived as threatening)
- Tense your muscles
- Turn you back or leave
- Argue or disagree
- Display emotions overtly
- Corner the child physically or psychologically

### **Holding and guiding**

For the purposes of this document 'holding and guiding' is distinguished from 'physical restraint' by the former being seen as a strategy for *discouraging* unwanted behaviour and the latter as a means of *preventing* such behaviour. Holding and guiding would generally involve no more than a hand being placed lightly on an arm or shoulder. Holding may also be seen in the context of caring for certain groups as a method of conveying friendship, providing a sense of security and offering comfort in distress. In some special situations physical contact offers therapeutic benefits. The context is also important – what might be acceptable with a 6-year-old might not be for an eleven-year-old. In all cases, the utmost care must be taken to avoid:

- Harming
- Creating apprehension of harm
- Giving cultural offense
- Acting in a manner that might be perceived in a sexual context.

### **Physical intervention: the issue of touch**

**Reasons to touch:** To comfort, assist, greet, reassure (the other person, not oneself), protect and play. This kind of physical intervention may involve pulling or leading away by the hand or arm or with a hand in the centre of the back.

**Reasons not to touch:** to satisfy one's own feelings, to exert power/authority, if touching could be seen as a criminal act, if it is dangerous, if it will evoke past memories (i.e. physical abuse), if it might offend cultural norms.

### **Principles of physical restraint**

- There should be a verbal directive to stop the damaging or risky behaviour, with a warning of what will happen if it continues, and a statement that the physical restraint will end as soon as the offending behaviour does.
- There must be good grounds for believing that there is immediacy (i.e. within one minute) of injury or serious property damage.
- It should be a last resort. Non-physical methods must have been tried and have failed.
- Only the minimum force necessary should be applied.
- Whenever possible the intervention should be witnessed by other staff.
- Physical restraint should stop as soon as possible.
- Physical restraint should be for care and control, **not** for punishment (**corporal punishment is illegal**).
- Physical restraint should not be used merely to force compliance, where instructions are disobeyed in a non-threatening context.

### **Any approved method of handling young children will avoid:**

- Hitting or striking them;
- Deliberately inflicting pain on them, for example using finger holds or those which lock joints;

- Restricting their breathing – nothing must be done which involves pressing or is likely to press on the airway, for example using throat holds or pushing a face against soft furnishing;
- Hands making contact with the genitalia, buttocks or breast area of the child;
- Tripping or holding by the ear or hair;
- Placing weight on the child's spine or abdomen.

**In addition it is advisable, given all the circumstances of a situation, to:**

- Seek to lower the child's level of agitation during any physical intervention by offering reassurance and by avoiding generating a fear of physical injury in that young person;
- Cause the minimum level of restriction of movement of limbs which is consistent with the risk of injury, for example legs may not need to be held unless in an enclosed space; but thrashing legs may be injured or injure;
- Be aware of the possibility of accidental injury by using an appropriate method suitable to the environment in which it takes place, for example do not place a child face down on a paved or gravel surface;
- Stay near the young person, about one arm's length away, and to the side;
- Remain seated as long as the young person does.

### **Other sanctions**

#### **Corporal punishment (or the threat of it)**

- ***Corporal punishment (any act or threat of an act, such as hitting, kicking, biting, throwing and object at, rough handling etc. which causes or threatens to cause harm or the expectation of harm to a child) is not permissible and its deliberate use, or a threat to use it, would in all circumstances be considered serious misconduct, and could lead to instant dismissal.***

#### **Confiscation**

- Confiscation of a pupil's property (i.e. removal with the intention of returning it at a later time) is a lawful sanction – provided there is a good reason for it and that the length of time the article is confiscated is reasonable.
- Any item that is causing a distraction to either the owner or other children in the class may be confiscated until the end of the day when the child should ask for it to be returned.
- Teachers, having confiscated an item, take on legal responsibility for that item and should not destroy it. Similarly, they should ensure that they take reasonable care in looking after it. This will normally mean ensuring that the item is retained on the teacher's person or kept in a secure place before transfer, for example, to the school office where it should be securely stored. It is wise to keep records of confiscated items.

#### **Restrictions of liberty by confinement**

- No young person should be locked in a room at any time.
- Where there is an immediate risk of danger, either to the individual child concerned or to others, or of danger of serious damage to property, a child may be restricted to a building or part of a building until the immediate difficulty has passed. This must not involve locking in or prolonged physical restraint.

#### **Deprivation of food or drink**

- No child should be deprived (except on medical advice) of full access to the amounts and range of food and drink normally available to others, or be forced to eat foods which he/she dislikes.

***No sanction must degrade the recipient in any way, including on sexual, racial, cultural or religious grounds.***