



St Bartholomew's CE Primary School and Nursery

Safe Touch and Positive Handling Policy

This policy will evolve as the school works towards ensuring we are a nurturing environment where children can 'Thrive' emotionally and socially. It is endorsed through full staff training in Team Teach and open, mutually supportive staff evaluation.

Aims

At St Bartholomew's CE Primary School and Nursery 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. However rights also involve responsibilities, such as not infringing other people's rights.

Children unable to control their actions or are unable to appreciate danger have a right to be protected and children around them also have a right to be kept safe. Staff have a duty of care to protect all children.

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.

As a developing 'thrive' school our 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 premise that every member of staff understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch and staff through induction, training and ongoing conversations know 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 by for example calm talking, change of face.

The policy should be seen in the wider context of the 'Behaviour Policy', which aims to promote positive values and good behaviour choices and team teach training, which emphasises de-escalation and colleague support.

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 offering congratulation. 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. At the

beginning of each academic year parents are consulted to ensure that they are happy for staff to use this 'safe touch'.

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, lightly touching an arm, rocking gently, cuddling, tickling or sitting on an adults' lap, hand or foot massage. Children identified as in need of this type of touch will be following individual THRIVE programme and as such parents will have provided signed consent. The Home School agreement asks all parents to 'trust the school to de-escalate challenging behaviour and to support children 'in crisis professionally and with compassion'.

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 Neurotropic Factor) – a brain 'fertiliser' that encourages growth.

Children identified as in need of this type of touch will be following individual THRIVE programme and as such parents will have provided signed consent.

4. Positive handling (calming a dysregulating child)

Staff may use force as is reasonable in all the 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' 2010)).
- The degree of force must be proportionate to the circumstances and incident, and the 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 restraint 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.
- Restraint must not be used to make a child comply with instructions unless it complies with the key points above.
- Staff must only use 'holds' as determined through Team Teach Training;

- 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 in the first instance involve one member of staff standing with the child using the appropriate hold i.e. a wrap. However, where it is judged safer to do so the containment may move to the wrap taking place on the floor. This enables the member of staff to provide a safe, calm and soothing presence. If the child does not respond and calm it may be necessary for another member of staff to support the hold especially if the child is attempting to hurt staff or other children. 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.

Staff are trained to make the judgement as to whether it is more appropriate to let the child ‘run off’ their emotional ‘over load’ but this must always be balance against the importance of protecting **all** children.

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 restraint, staff must seek as far as possible to use VRF’s to de-escalate the child’s state of hyper arousal:

Attune
Validate
Contain

- Attune – I notice that, I can see that – shine the light on the behaviour
- Validate – I can imagine, poor you, it must be hard, oh no he hurt you that must be so painful
- Contain – I am here to keep you safe.

Staff will always try to:

- lower the child’s level of anxiety and during the restraint by continually offering verbal reassurance and avoid generating fear of injury in the child;
- cause the minimum level of restriction of movement of limbs consistent with the danger of injury
- 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. Consideration should be given to:

- involving parents so that they are fully aware of how the school may have to react
- brief staff – ensure that everyone knows what action may need to be taken
- ensure 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.
- Prevention strategies and calming measures will be employed and where possible staff will use the following action before a restraint is used i.e. conversation, distraction, coaxing,

gentle persuasion or redirection to other activities, touching the child's arm and leading him/her away from danger, gently stroking the child's shoulder;

- encourage 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 and if necessary calmly remove anything that could be used to damage others, including hot drinks, furniture;
- to prevent a child continuing to pose harm in a dangerous situation, advise others to leave the area but remain with the child;
- keep talking calmly to the child, explain what is happening and why, how it can stop, and what will happen next;
- 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.

All trained staff should apply their 'Team Teach' restraint training knowledge.

Physical intervention can take many forms:

- physically interposing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path
- touching, holding, pushing, pulling or leading a pupil by the arm – in line with team teach training
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back.
- (in extreme circumstances) using a more restrictive holds – as per Team Teach restraint training

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 not 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
- Where the risk is not so urgent, the staff member should:
- Consider carefully whether – and if so when – physical intervention is right
- Always attempt to deal with the situation through strategies other than force
- Use force only when all other methods have failed.

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.

Who can use positive handling?

Only staff trained in Team Teach techniques can contain a child as they are trained to know when positive handling is an appropriate course of action.

On occasions where staff have had to 'restrain' a child twice in succession, they should not be involved in managing the same child again.

Where children have witnessed an episode where containment/restraint has taken place the class teacher should de-brief the class explaining why it had been necessary to 'hold' a child and reassure them i.e. A is calm and safe now, staff took that action because of their responsibility to keep A and others safe etc. The teacher may judge it important to take questions but generally acknowledgement of the incidence and reassurance may be all that is required.

Recording Incidents:

Immediately following the incident where restraint/containment is used, the staff member should tell the HT or, if they are not available, a phase leader. They must be given time to 'de-brief' with the Officer for Vulnerable children. They must then fill in the Team Teach record book clearly especially with regard to location, staff involved etc. This will ensure there is a clear record of action taken, justification for the need to restrain/contain. On completion of the Team Teach record book it should be given to the Officer for Vulnerable children who will alert the phase leader to the need to inform parents that their child has been restrained. Where parents have given permission for their child to be contained/restrained a notification letter will be sent home with the child. Where the containment/restraint has occurred 'without warning' parents should be spoken to 'face to face' i.e. called into school. If this is not possible then the Phase leader should speak to parents via the telephone prior to the child leaving school. If it is not possible to speak to parents prior to the child leaving school then a letter should be sent home with the child and the Phase leader should make the call at the earliest opportunity. If this is not possible the call should be delegated to the Officer for Vulnerable children or the head teacher. The time of the call home should be noted in the Team Teach record book and this should then be placed on the head teachers desk. This will enable the head teacher to check parents have been informed.

The possibility of a complaint:

The best way of avoiding complaints is to involve the parents when incidents occur, and by following the clear guidelines provided within this policy. Use of containment/restraint might lead to an investigation either under disciplinary procedures or child protection procedures, possibly leading to a disciplinary hearing, criminal prosecution or civil action. The key issue will be whether containment/restraint was reasonable in all circumstances of the case, whether the school's policy has been followed, and whether the action was needed to prevent injury, damage or disruption.

Action in self- defence or an emergency:

Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 does not cover all the situations in which it might be reasonable for someone to use a degree of force. For example, everyone has the right to defend themselves against an attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so. Similarly, in an emergency, for example if a pupil was at an immediate risk of injury or on the point of inflicting injury on someone else, any member of staff would be entitled to intervene. The purpose of section 550A is to make it clear that teachers and other authorised staff, are also entitled to intervene in other, less extreme, situations.

Physical contact with pupils in circumstances not covered by Section 550A: There are situations, other than those covered in in Section 550A, where physical contact with a pupil may be appropriate or necessary – for example in PE lessons, sports, coaching or DT, or if a member of staff has to administer first aid. Also, young children or those with SEN may need physical prompts or help. Touching may be appropriate to comfort a child in distress. However, there may be some children where touching is particularly unwelcome perhaps because of their cultural background or because they have been abused - all staff must be aware of this.

Staff training

New staff will not be authorised to contain or restrain a child until they have completed Team Teach Training.

All the St Bartholomew’s Teaching and TA team are trained in Team Teach and relevant updates are arranged as necessary.

Staff are trained in Team Teach techniques and they are reaccredited every 3 years.

More information on Thrive can be found at www.thriveftc.com

Reviewed and amended September 2015 .

Ratified by Governors of the Pastoral Committee 8.10.15

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Safe Touch Policy

I have read the revised Safe Touch Policy and acknowledge the differences within it from the previous Care and Control policy.

SignedDate