

# Henleaze Junior School



## Positive Handling Policy

Including use of reasonable force and positive touch

### Review

Review Cycle	Last reviewed:	Next review:
Annually	Term 4, 2024	Term 4, 2025

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## Equalities Statement

We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children and families’ diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face. With regards to safeguarding, we will consider our duties under the Equalities Act 2010 in relation to making reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and our Public Sector Equality Duty.

## Safeguarding statement

Henleaze Junior School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment, in accordance with the school’s [Safeguarding Policy](#).

## Rationale

This policy outlines the school’s philosophy and practice in the use of positive handling to promote pupil welfare and manage challenging behaviour. Its purpose is to ensure that school operates within the law and expectations of best practice.

## Aims

To ensure:

- behaviour is understood as communication.
- positive touch is recognised as part of establishing and maintaining good relationships.
- when behaviours are challenging the principal aim remains to understand what is driving them and find more appropriate expressions in language and/or behaviour although in the immediate term the priority is de-escalation through defusion or distraction.
- physical intervention is only used as a last resort and on the principle of minimum force for minimum time.
- physical interventions are delivered safely, humanely and in ways that maximise dignity for pupils and adults.
- physical interventions are necessary, reasonable, proportionate and in the pupil’s best interest.
- incidents are recorded, reviewed, monitored and evaluated.
- records lead to the drafting and reviewing of Positive Handling Plans (PHPs), in which pupils are included.

- staff are confident in their rights and responsibilities in all forms of physical contact, including touch.
- there is a clear, consistent and correct vocabulary for reporting and reviewing incidents
- staff model self-awareness, regulation, impulse-control and reflection.
- pupil resilience and regulation are developed.

## Legislation

This policy is based on [‘Behaviour and discipline: Advice for headteachers and school staff’](#) which in turn is based extensively on [‘Use of reasonable force: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies’](#). These, and the legislation which they reflect, acknowledge that the school’s duty of care will sometimes mean using force to act in a pupil’s best interest.

The use of force can be justified if it is to prevent:

- Harm to self or others (e.g. separating two pupils who are about to fight).
- Significant damage to property (e.g. preventing a pupil from smashing a window).
- An offence being committed (e.g. preventing a pupil from stealing).
- Disruption of good order and discipline (e.g. escorting a pupil from class who has refused to leave following reasonable requests and is disrupting learning).

It must be:

- Necessary (i.e. to prevent one or more of the above).
- Reasonable (i.e. other trained staff would consider using the same intervention).
- Proportionate (i.e. the degree of force used is proportionate to the hazard in the situation).
- In the pupil’s best interest (including reasonable adjustment for any Special Educational Need and Disability).

It must not be used as punishment.

All staff are legally authorised to use reasonable force however only trained staff will do so as part of planned interventions. The use of reasonable force is always the choice of the individual. In a crisis the member of staff should record how her/his actions were designed to reduce risk whether force was used or not. It is possible that the failure to use reasonable force in some circumstances can be seen as a breach of the duty of care e.g. allowing a pupil to run into the road. If there is a physical or emotional reason, short or long term, why a member of staff should not undertake certain or any physical interventions it is her/his responsibility to make her/his line manager aware. This should be noted and reflected in planning support for pupils in that staff member’s class.

## Vocabulary

The lowest level of physical contact is **positive touch** where there is no element of force at all (see below). A **prompt** is where there is minimal resistance e.g. a hand just above the elbow to get a pupil to move. A **guide** is where there is more resistance but not significant e.g. a hand just above both elbows is used. An **escort** is where significant resistance is offered so a greater degree of force is used e.g. the 2-person single elbow technique within Team Teach. A **restraint** is where the pupil offers total resistance and so is effectively overpowered. A **disengagement** is where a proportionate degree of force is used to remove self or other from a potentially harmful situation e.g. biting, hair pulling. Technically all interventions using any degree of force (i.e. all the above except **positive touch**) are called **Restrictive**

**Physical Interventions (RPIs)** but in this policy and in school are covered by the collective term **physical intervention**. This vocabulary will be used in planning support and reviewing/reporting incidents.

## School background

Henleaze Junior school prioritises understanding (and helping pupils understand) behaviour and promoting regulation as a prerequisite to learning. This is reflected in the importance given to PSHE within the curriculum and the creation of attuned relationships with familiar adults. The Team Teach and Thrive approaches are central in supporting this. These are complementary in:

- Seeing beyond the immediate presenting behaviours.
- Using current understanding from neuroscience to understand and review behaviour.
- Promoting a sense of safety for pupils.
- Linking emotion and behaviour.
- Seeing relationship and review as key in changing behaviour over time.
- Highlighting the role of staff in setting the emotional tone.

Promoting resilience and regulation is central to the school's mission. Consistency and clear boundaries on behaviour are necessary for this but unlikely to be sufficient given the nature of the pupils' needs. Additionality is provided by:

- Repetition of positive experiences – this is necessary for establishing new neural pathways.
- Access to calming areas within and outside class.
- Promoting empathic and attuned relationships.
- Staff modelling regulation of stress and impulse.
- Reflection and review of incidents to highlight learning.
- Unconditional acceptance of the pupil.

## Where positive handling sits in relation to the school's behaviour policy

At Henleaze Junior School, we recognise and value our role in enabling children to become responsible and empowered members of their community. We strive to treat all members of our school community with unconditional respect and we aim to help everyone learn to manage their emotions, develop relationship skills and make positive behaviour choices. At HJS, we believe that:

- children learn best when they feel understood and where there are clear and consistent boundaries around behaviour.
- behaviour is a form of communication and it can be a person's unconscious response to their emotional state.
- negative behaviour can signal a need for support which we will provide in a way that builds on the school's values and expectations.
- managing emotions and making positive behaviour choices can be actively taught and need to be modelled.

Some children may find it more difficult to manage their emotions, reactions and choices and will need additional support to enable them to develop self-regulation skills over time. When this is the case, the Inclusion Team will become involved and an Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP) can be co-constructed with the child and their family. It is important for staff and parents/carers to focus on what the child may be communicating through their behaviour. We recognise that individual children respond differently to different strategies and that it may be necessary to explore a variety of interventions

before finding successful ones. An IBP will be reviewed on a regular basis and the aim will be to modify behaviour patterns to the point where the plan can be withdrawn.

There may be times when a child puts themselves or others at risk of harm and staff may need to intervene physically to keep children safe. The restrictive physical management of pupils should only be used in extreme situations and as a last resort. Every effort must be made to find effective non-physical ways of working with pupils. The use of restrictive physical interventions must take account of the pupil's own best interests, sensitivities and sensibilities, his/her own likely perceptions of situations, his/her emotional state and levels of understanding. Restrictive physical intervention should never be used as a punishment and must only be used in line with agreed criteria and procedures.

## Team Teach

We use Team Teach training in positive handling which is internationally recognised and accredited by the Institute of Conflict Management (ICM). The training emphasises that 95% of positive handling is non-physical (de-escalation), that physical intervention is only ever used as a last resort and that all incidents are reviewed to learn for next time. Identified Henleaze Junior School staff are trained and retain certification at the level of foundation (6hr) initial training.

When physical intervention is used it is:

- because no alternative is possible.
- on the basis of as little force as necessary for as short a time as possible.
- delivered using only recognised Team Teach techniques which are designed to prevent injury, pain and distress.
- delivered in ways to minimise indignity e.g. removing audience, adjusting clothing.
- in the spirit of 'I care enough about you not to let you be out of control'.
- with at least two members of staff involved as quickly as possible.

Key message from the Team Teach approach include:

- All crises have triggers even if they are not immediately apparent.
- Spotting anxiety early and de-escalation is a priority.
- Once in a crisis the priority becomes safety and calming.
- Following a crisis, time for recovery is necessary before incidents can be reviewed.

Team-Teach techniques seek to avoid injury to the pupil, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally, and these are not to be seen necessarily as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent "side-effect" of ensuring that the pupil remains safe.

When supporting children who are in a state of dysregulation, we are guided by Dr Bruce Perry's "Three R's for reaching the learning brain": first we must help the child regulate their emotional state, then we need to relate to them, and only then we can reason with them.

## Positive Touch

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. This is positive touch.

Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school.
- When comforting a distressed pupil.
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised.
- To demonstrate how to use a equipment e.g. a music instrument or handwriting pen.
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.
- To promote regulation (e.g. therapeutic touch)
- To give first aid.
- Guiding a pupil supportively where they need to go.

However, some pupils are averse to any form of touch while others may need deep pressure touch (e.g. weighted blankets) but cannot stand light pressure touch. Yet others may have used challenging behaviour as a means of securing touch in the form of physical intervention. This is kept in mind when planning for individual pupils.

## Positive Handling Plans (PHPs)

Following a major (or near major) incident, one where a level of escorting or above has or could have been necessary, a PHP is completed involving as many parties as possible including class staff and parents/carers. Priorities here are to:

- Identify early signs of rising anxiety and effective defusion/de-escalation strategies (pp42 – 50 of the Team Teach workbook is a good place to start with this)
- Identify helpful and unhelpful responses in a crisis.

If a PHP already exists then it is revised following a major incident. The pupil is included in the drafting and reviewing of his/her PHP before it is completed at a stage appropriate to his/her emotional maturity.

Where a PHP exists, interventions used are as outlined in the plan. Any deviation from the plan is included in the record of the incident.

## Risk Assessments

Any pupil that requires a Positive Handling Plan must also have a risk assessment which considers the identification of any activities or environments that are associated with risk, establish the likelihood of risk for an individual pupil or pupils, estimate the consequences of a negative outcome and take steps to avoid unreasonable risk. Risk assessment should contain all relevant information and be regularly reviewed and is included within the Positive Handling Plan. In order to preserve the dignity and promote positive community presence of pupils, staff must act to ensure that all reasonable measures are in place to reduce the risk of pupils displaying challenging behaviour in public settings. Staff must carry identification with them when supporting children in community settings and be prepared to explain, or otherwise communicate, the necessity of their actions.

## Recording incidents

All incidents involving physical intervention at the level of escorting and above are recorded using the school's Physical Intervention Record. This, along with records of incident investigations and witness statements, is uploaded to the child's CPOMS record. The Headteacher or a member of the Safeguarding Team must be informed at the earliest opportunity. Parents/carers are also informed of the incident.

## Staff Regulation

Current research highlights the importance of adults setting the emotional tone in potentially stressful environments. A key message of Team Teach is that seeking and accepting support from colleagues is a sign of professional strength. Staff are trained to offer support discreetly, so as not to potentially escalate a situation, by saying 'Help is available'.

If a member of staff feels that a colleague is struggling to manage a situation effectively, there is also the 'more help' protocol for taking over. This involves using the statement 'More help is available' as an instruction to the struggling professional to step away so that their colleague can take over. The expectation is that this will be used and accepted by all staff, irrespective of position within the school, and that no shame or criticism is associated with its use. Following a significant physical intervention, staff too need a period of recovery and debrief. (See 'Agreed Scripts' in Appendix A.)

## Appendix A – Stages of a crisis - early stages of rising anxiety

In the early stages, de-escalation is the priority. Possible techniques include:

- Calm stance
- Recognised scripts
- Using 'WINGS' to vocalise what may be going on for children: I wonder... I imagine,... I notice... I guess... I sense..."
- Identifying and validating emotions
- Verbal advice and support
- Reassurance
- Giving space
- Humour
- Negotiation
- Limited choices
- Negotiation
- 'The look'
- Reminding of consequences
- Planned ignoring
- Take up time
- Time out
- Positive touch
- Change face (involve another adult)
- Reminder of past success
- Simple listening
- Apologising
- Partial agreement
- 'When' ....'then'

## Stages of a crisis - the crisis

During a crisis, safety is the priority. Staff closely monitor the pupil's breathing as the body's need for oxygen increases in crisis. Possible actions include:

- Making the environment safer (e.g. removing objects that might be used as weapons)
- Removing the audience
- Physical intervention
- 'Changing face'

## Stages of a crisis - recovery

Following a crisis recovery is the priority. Possible actions include:

- Give the pupil time and space but continue to monitor
- Offer a drink of water
- Minimal talking
- Offer a regulating activity (e.g. looking at a book, simple sorting tasks, colouring)



- Avoid positive touch
- Insulate from sources of frustration
- Look for signs that the pupil is ready to communicate

## Stages of a crisis - review

In the review stage learning for next time and reparation are the priorities.

All significant incidents are reviewed at an appropriate time with a familiar adult. The clear focus of the review process is to find a better way next time and make any necessary reparation. Knowledge of the individual pupil dictates when and with whom the review takes place but there is no expectation that it must take place on the same day as the incident. How, where and with whom reviews are to take place are included on the PHP.

## Emergencies

In an emergency, any adult in the school does whatever is necessary to keep a child safe. However, certain interventions are known to carry elevated risks so are avoided if at all possible. These include:

- Using clothing or belts to restrict movement.
- Taking a pupil to, or holding a pupil in, a lying position on the floor.
- Anything that may impede airways or breathing.
- Flexing joints or putting pressure on neck, chest, abdomen or groin.
- Forcing a pupil to spend time alone.

The use of any such intervention is reported as soon as possible to a member of SLT and the record of the incident highlights why no other recourse was possible.

## In all stages staff:

- Make a clear distinction between the pupil, who is unconditionally accepted, and the behaviour which may be unacceptable.
- Are aware of their own regulation as revealed in breathing, body language, intonation, language and behaviours.
- Seek and accept support if this is needed, using agreed scripts (see below).
- Act consistently with the message 'I care enough about you not to let you be out of control'.
- Use positive language.
- Avoid rushing.
- Speak quietly other than very briefly to make self heard or 'volume match' and immediately reduce.
- Are sensitive to issues of gender and individual need.

A well-chosen word can sometimes avert an escalating crisis. When pupils are becoming angry, there is no point in getting into an argument. Telling people to calm down can actually cause more anxiety. Pointing out what the pupil has done wrong can make things worse. The only purpose in communicating with an angry person is to prevent further escalation. It is better to say nothing and take time to choose your words carefully than to say the wrong thing and provoke a further escalation.

## Agreed scripts

The expectation is that school staff should support one another. This means that staff offer help and accept it as needed. Help does not always mean taking over. It may mean just staying around in case you are needed, getting somebody else or looking after a group of children.

When offering a support, use the phrase:

“Help is available”.

Response: Tell the colleague if you need assistance or if you feel you are in control of the situation.

If it is necessary to intervene, or take over from the member of staff, use the phrase:

“More help is available”.

Response: Allow the colleague to give advice or take over.

## The Snug

The use of ‘The Snug’ as a reflection room needs to be planned carefully around the needs of the young person. It will be used as a place of safety that allows the pupil to manage their own behaviour in a quiet environment. Staff will be visible and available to the pupil at all times. The use of The Snug for any individual young person is reviewed regularly to ensure that its use does not actually lead to further negative responses but helps the young person manage their own emotions in a safe manner.

## Appendix B – A planned graduated approach to managing challenging behaviour

Interventions that may be identified in the PHP include **proactive strategies, active strategies and reactive strategies.**

**Proactive strategies** are those strategies used within class as part of the daily routine and organisation, such as:-

- Talking to a pupil in a calm and controlled manner, using his name first and a brief instruction.
- ‘First....then.....’ (using visuals).
- Having favoured choice activities available in class.
- If a pupil appears upset, talking calmly to him/her, repeating what is happening now and what he/she will be able to do next.
- Having a member of staff assigned to the pupil.
- Organisation of the classroom, e.g. distracting toys not accessible, positioning of pupils in class.
- Advance warning of change of activity, e.g. count down; use of timer / music.
- Staff modelling appropriate behaviour.
- Praise for appropriate behaviour.
- Use of pupil’s strengths and interests.
- Any person who comes into contact with a pupil, e.g. supply staff, is informed of what can happen and what strategies are in place to de-escalate situations to may occur.

**Active Strategies** are those which are used when a pupil is displaying signs of challenging behaviour and consists of strategies used to defuse or de-escalate situations:-

- Be aware of any warning signs that inappropriate behaviour may occur.
- Divert and distract by adding another activity or topic.
- Display calm body language.
- Talk low, slow and quietly.
- Use appropriate humour.
- Continue to remind of appropriate behaviour.
- Offer alternatives and options.
- Offer clear choices.
- Give clear directions for pupils to stop.
- Remind pupils about rules and likely outcomes.
- Set clear enforcement limits.
- Catch pupils being good and praise.
- Calmly and quietly repeat instructions.
- ‘First....then....’ (using symbols) – first do required activity, and then receive favoured activity as reward.
- Remove pupil away from trigger and remove trigger.
- Remove an audience or take vulnerable pupils to a safer place.
- Use safe defensive measures, guiding the pupil away is he is trying to make physical contact.
- Ensure that colleagues know what is happening and get help.

**Reactive Interventions** are the strategies that will be used if a pupil’s behaviour escalates into a crisis situation, and could include the following:

- Make the environment safe.
- Move furniture.
- Remove objects that can be used as weapons.
- Guide assertively – hold or restrain if absolutely necessary.
- Change member of staff as needed.

- Planned ignoring.
- In a firm tone, repeat instructions.
- Inform pupils of consequences of his actions.
- Remove pupils to a safe area.
- Offer choices.
- Allow pupil time and space to:-
  - process information and respond.
  - physically recover.
  - talk about the incident.