

POLICY ON THE PHYSICAL HANDLING AND RESTRAINT OF CHILDREN

Due to the potential for some children to produce physically challenging behaviour it is essential that a pre-planned strategy is available to all staff so such behaviour may be dealt with appropriately and consistently.

The physical holding/restraint of a child by a member of staff only takes place when the physical/emotional wellbeing of -

- a) The child producing aggressive/violent behaviour; and/or
- b) The other children; and/or
- c) Staff members

- is clearly and immediately threatened by the behaviour of the child.

1. Even under the above conditions, before handling/restraint takes place, the staff concerned must ensure that -

Non-physical methods for reducing the child's behaviour have been attempted; and the member of staff concerned has explained to the child the following -

- a. The inappropriateness of the current behaviour.
- b. The nature of desired behaviour.
- c. The stages by which that desired behaviour can be achieved.
- d. The immediate availability of appropriate support for the child once behavioural expectations are complied with, (e.g. time out, individual support, return to class, etc.); and the relevant sanctions/rewards.)

Each step leading to the handling/restraint of a child must be clearly verbalised to the child within the hearing of another member of staff.

2. On hearing the above at least one member of staff should make it clear to the initial member of staff that they are aware of the situation. They should be prepared to offer direct support as requested by the initial staff member – without disempowering the initial staff member.
3. If a child grows more aggressive and violence becomes more likely, it is better to move children away from the threatening child rather than move the child. If a child is swearing, throwing objects, physically threatening others or consistently damaging others work, then the other children should be moved to another part of the table/room.

4. If a child continues to pose a physical threat to other children, despite their having been moved away, the member of staff must consider whether to remove the other children from the room.

The member of staff may also consider at this time whether it would be more appropriate to remove the threatening child from the room.

Ordinary school sanctions would usually require the child to be sent out of the room for time-out i.e. isolated from peers.

If the other children are to be removed from the room, an additional member of staff must be involved.

5. If the child has been instructed to leave the room and -
 - a) refuses to leave the room; and/or
 - b) continues to physically threaten other children;

The member of staff will need to know that another member of staff witnesses either-

- a) the other children being removed from the room;
- b) the violent child being removed from the room.

In many circumstances (b) may well be the option that allows the other children to settle more easily. It may also be the best way to break an escalating cycle of violent behaviour.

6. If the child is left in the room without other children, then it is possible that damage will be done to the room. A member of staff should not observe the child in such a way as to provide an audience or encourage violent behaviour. However, sufficient time should be spent by staff in the room to verbalise to the child the same expectations and consequences as have been repeated throughout.

The above procedures deal predominantly with the handling of children who pose a serious threat of violence, but who are as yet producing only highly aggressive behaviours.

HANDLING / RESTRAINT

No child should be handled / restrained without a second adult present as a witness.

Verbalisations of expectations and consequences should continue so as to ensure other children and staff understand what is taking place and the violent child always has an 'escape route'.

Levels of handling / restraint may be viewed on a continuum –

1. Removing a child from a room before he/she has produced overtly violent behaviour is likely to involve at least holding the child's arm and leading the child out. Verbal requests/instructions to leave would already have been given as part of the standard school behaviour policy.
2. Preventing a child from attacking children/staff and /or removing a child from a room who does not want to leave is likely to involve at least the above. The level of physical firmness required under this circumstance will reflect the fact that controlling a child at this level is more like restraint than simply handling.
3. If the child continues to refuse to leave the room and/or continues to physically threaten/attack other children/staff, the member of staff concerned has two options -
 - a. Remove the other children from the room (if not already done), leaving the violent child in the room.
 - b) Ensure a staff witness is present and remove the violent child from the room.

The option taken will depend on circumstances in the whole school pertaining at the time and the therapeutic value of their option for all the children attending.

4. If the child has to be removed from the room, and/or continues to attack children and staff and/or attempts to follow the other children into another room and/or seeks to physically damage him/herself, then physical restraint will be needed to control the child.

It should always be borne in mind that isolating the child where he/she is, is preferable to moving them, if whole school circumstances allow for this option.

Restraining a child under these circumstances is best done from behind, by holding his/her arms down. Two members of staff make this procedure far easier to carry out.

5. Once the child is where staff want him/her to be, the child may calm or may continue to act violently. Once physical restraint has been used it should not cease until the child has calmed.

The verbalisation of the inappropriate behaviour, desired behaviour, steps to desired behaviour and provision of subsequently appropriate support should continue throughout.

The child must know exactly what he/she has to do for handling/restraint to cease.

It should be borne in mind that at this time many children may choose to retain the adult restraining them as it represents security at a time of great confusion and emotional threat.

If the child does not calm -

- a. At least one other member of staff should be actively monitoring the restraint, making support available if necessary.
- b. If possible the child should be kept as low as possible (sat on a chair or the floor) with the member of staff behind them, so as to have the child on their lap whilst holding the child's arms down. (A bear hug may work best.)

IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT IF A CHILD IS ACTIVELY SEEKING TO ATTACK THE MEMBER OF STAFF, SITTING IN THIS POSITION ALLOWS THE CHILD TO HEAD BUTT WITH THE BACK OF THE HEAD. IF THIS IS THE CASE THEN TWO MEMBERS OF STAFF SHOULD HOLD THE CHILD'S ARMS AT EITHER SIDE OF THE CHAIR, OR THE CHILD SHOULD BE HELD ON THE FLOOR.

6. If the member of staff concerned wishes to hand over to other staff, the children must all perceive that to be an instruction, so the member of staff is seen to retain control.
7. It may take a long time for the child to calm sufficiently for restraint to cease. During this time staff should take care to support each other as much as to support and calm the other children.

AFTERWARDS

1. If holding/restraint has been necessary at level (4) or above, the child's parents should be contacted before the child returns home.

If there is any doubt about the child travelling in a taxi that day, either -
 - a) Contact parents to collect child from school, or
 - b) Two school staff (one teacher) take the child home.

If the child attends school the following day, the school should be informed beforehand.
2. The whole sequence of events should be concisely and objectively recorded in a 'Major Incident report' (Appendix 5). This will involve at least the initial member of staff concerned and one staff witness and will be signed by the Headteacher. Staff may write an opinion as to causes, etc. after the objective account.
3. If practical and appropriate, the child should talk through the events with a member of school staff on the same day they occurred. If this is not possible, it should happen on the next school day.
4. If a child or member of staff was injured during the events the appropriate documentation should be completed.
5. Circle time/group meeting on the day the events took place must discuss the events. The other children need to know -
 - a) The staff are in control.
 - b) The school is safe and secure.
 - c) They (the children) are safe and secure.
 - d) The initial member of staff concerned has remained in control.
 - e) The known causes and consequences of the child's physical behaviour.
 - f) That the child concerned is subject to standard school expectations sanctions and rewards.
 - g) That the child concerned is safe, secure and cared for.
6. A staff meeting should take place once the children have left to -
 - a) Run through events of the day.
 - b) Plan subsequent strategies.
 - c) Talk through the emotional/physical consequences of such events for staff and pupils.
 - d) Consider alterations to IPM/PSP in light of the day's events.

7. When the child returns to school -

- a) There may be a need for the initial member of staff involved and/or a senior member of staff to talk through the current situation with the child.
- b) The school's Learning Mentor will allocate time when she can work with the child, helping to facilitate a smooth reintegration into school.
- c) The child must re-enter a positive and welcoming atmosphere.
- d) Staff must be aware of potential difficulties for the child and its peer group, and pre-empt them.

Signed (HT):

Date agreed: March 2016

Signed (Chair of GB):

Review date: March 2019