Micklands Primary School

Positive Handling and Safe Touch Policy

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Statement of intent

We believe that it is important to establish a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. In order to achieve this, the school recognises that, in certain circumstances, managing challenging behaviour through restraint may be necessary.

This policy acknowledges that situations will arise in which staff members will be required to use touch, positive handling and, in some cases, reasonable force in order to comfort, support and manage conflict when other measures have failed to do so.

All pupils are entitled to receive an education in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected. The school is dedicated to ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or disrespected in terms of physical contact between themselves or a member of staff.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that actions such as touch, positive handling and reasonable force are used in an appropriate and safe manner, which is in accordance with the relevant legislation and national guidance.

1. Legal framework

This policy complies with the following legislation, including, but not limited to:

- The Education Act 2011
- The Children Act 1989
- The Equality Act 2010

This policy will also have due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE 2026 'Restrictive interventions (including use of reasonable force in schools)
- DfE 2026 'Working together to safeguard children'
- DfE 2026 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026'

The school will implement this policy in conjunction with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety Policy and Behaviour Policy.

2. Roles and responsibilities

- All members of staff at our school have a duty of care towards pupils and will be aware of the boundaries involving physical contact.
- The DSL is responsible for conducting regular safeguarding training for members of staff and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities, in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that all staff engage appropriately safely in restraint and safe touch with pupils.
- All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or unsafe at our school as a result of touch or physical intervention.
- All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that no pupil feels threatened or unsafe at our school as a result of touch or physical intervention.
- All members of staff have a responsibility to report any instances of inappropriate physical contact to the DSL.
- The headteacher is responsible for communicating this policy with parents.
- The school has a responsibility for ensuring that it creates and promotes a culture in which pupils' wishes and feelings are respected.

3. Training of staff

- The DSL will conduct regular safeguarding training for all members of staff in relation to safe touch, including use of reasonable force.
- All staff will be regularly reminded of the methods of positive handling and safe touch employed by our school and will communicate these to the pupils they are in contact with.
- Key members of staff will be given Team Teach training which focusses on the most effective positive handling strategies and use of reasonable force techniques.
- Staff will be made aware of subsequent risks of their actions and fully understand when it is appropriate and necessary to use such actions.

4. Positive Handling and Reasonable Force

What is positive handling?

- For the purpose of this policy, 'positive handling' refers to **the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force**, where necessary to prevent harm. This aligns with current statutory guidance on restrictive interventions;
- The legal framework and national guidance often refers to the 'use of force'. For the purpose of this policy, we use the term 'positive handling' whenever possible;
- Positive handling is used in the school in order to:
    - Restrain a pupil who has lost emotional self-control until the situation is diffused;

- Limit the amount of harm that the pupil involved can do to their self or others;
- Demonstrate to pupils that they are within a safe environment in which adults can support their wellbeing;
- Protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.

- Positive handling will be limited to emergency situations and used only as a measure of last resort. Any use of force must be:
  - **Necessary** – to prevent immediate risk of harm;
  - **Reasonable** – appropriate to the circumstances;
  - **Proportionate** – the minimum force used;
  - **Time-limited** – stopped as soon as the risk reduces.
- Where positive handling is required, the school will abide to the following guidance:
  - Initial intervention will always be without force;
  - Any physical intervention will follow other appropriate actions;
  - Staff will take a calm and measured approach in all situations;
  - Restrictive interventions will never be used as a punishment, sanction, or to enforce compliance.

What is reasonable force?

- There is no statutory definition of reasonable force; it will always depend on the circumstance of the case.
- Reasonable force may only be used where it is necessary, reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances and where its use is permitted by law. The minimum amount of force necessary will be used for the shortest possible time.
- 'Control' is in regards to either passive physical contacts, such as blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm.
- Restraint refers to physically bringing a pupil under control, such as holding them back. This is typically used in more extreme circumstances, such as to separate two pupils fighting.
- The degree of force which is used will depend on the situation and child involved.
- Staff members will always use actions which are appropriate and in proportion to the circumstances of the incidents.
- All incidents which involve the use of reasonable force will be reported to the headteacher, recorded in writing in the bound and numbered book and communicated to the pupil's parents/carers.

The school is able to use reasonable force in situations when:

- Children with disruptive behaviour must be removed from the classroom, and have previously refused to leave;
- Members of staff need to keep pupils safe from challenging behaviour on school trips, or similar;
- Members of staff must prevent a pupil from leaving the site when doing so would lead to a risk to their safety;
- A pupil is physically aggressive towards a member of staff or another pupil;
- A pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves and a member of staff must intervene to prevent this.

Physical intervention will never be used as a substitute for good behavioural management in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Prevention and Planning
The school prioritises de-escalation and preventative approaches at all times.

Where there is a foreseeable risk of restrictive intervention:

- A risk assessment and/or Therapeutic Plan will be in place;
- Staff will follow agreed strategies;
- The focus will be on reducing the need for restrictive interventions over time.

Use of positive handling and reasonable force

- All members of staff are allowed to use positive handling where they believe it to be appropriate, as long as all necessary precautions are taken.
- The power to positively handle pupils also applies to any individual whom the headteacher has identified as temporarily in charge.
- The decision to physically intervene during a situation is down to the professional judgement of the member of staff and always depends on the circumstances.
- Staff will always calmly communicate the reasons for their actions to the pupil and explain why it was necessary in a non-threatening manner.
- Staff will never give the impression that they are acting out of anger or are punishing the child.
- All teachers will develop strategies and techniques for supporting difficult situations and challenging behaviour, which they will use to diffuse and calm a situation.
- In non-urgent situations, staff will always try and deal with a situation through other strategies before using force.
- Staff members will always avoid acting in a way that could cause injury; however, dependant on the circumstances, this may not always be possible.
- Where a member of staff believes that they are at risk, such as where an injury is likely to occur, they will not intervene in an incident without help and assistance of another staff member.
- Emergency intervention is necessary when there is a high risk of pupils being injured or property being damaged.
- If emergency intervention is required, a member of staff will use other methods of defusing the situation, without physically intervening, until assistance arrives.
- Following the event, the pupil involved may be subject to separate disciplinary procedures, in which strategies should be formed to help avoid reoccurrence of such incidents.
- Where necessary, external agencies, such as the LA or the police if a crime has been committed, will be informed of the incident.

Seclusion
Seclusion is defined as **preventing a pupil from leaving a space**, for example by:

- Locking a door;
- Physically blocking an exit;
- Creating a situation where the pupil believes they cannot leave.

Seclusion is a **high-risk restrictive intervention** and:

- Will **not be used as a behaviour management strategy**, punishment, or for staff convenience;
- Will only be used in **exceptional circumstances** to prevent immediate risk of harm;
- Will be **continuously supervised** by a member of staff;
- Will take place in a **safe and appropriate environment**;
- Will be **ended as soon as it is safe to do so**.

The school's expectation is that the use of seclusion is **minimised and reduced over time**.

Reporting incidents

- All incidents involving restrictive interventions must be recorded in detail, including:
  - What happened before, during and after
  - The reason the intervention was necessary
  - The type and duration of the intervention
  - Any injuries or distress caused
  - The outcome
- Immediately following an incident, the member(s) of staff involved will verbally report the incident to the headteacher and provide a comprehensive written record of the situation as soon as possible.
- The written report of the incident must be thorough, including as much detail as possible as to what had happened before, during and after the incident, and describing any injuries incurred due to the event.
- Parents/carers will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable following any significant incident involving restrictive intervention.
- If a member of staff witnesses or suspects the use of positive handling or reasonable force, where another member of staff is actively involved in physical intervention, they will report this to the headteacher immediately.
- Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the school's Allegations Against Staff Policy.
- The headteacher will establish the basic facts necessary to determine the appropriate next steps. Where a concern or allegation may meet the harm threshold, the school will follow the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy and seek advice from the LADO before undertaking any investigation that could prejudice subsequent enquiries.
- The DSL will review records of positive handling to identify any patterns that may indicate wider safeguarding or training needs, and ensure appropriate follow-up actions are taken.

Complaints

- All members of staff will be made fully aware of the consequences and legal retributions that can occur following the use of positive handling and force.
- All complaints regarding the use of positive handling or force will be investigated in a thorough and speedy manner.
- The person making the complaint is responsible to prove that their allegations are true, and therefore, it is not for the member of staff to prove that their actions were made reasonably.
- In extreme circumstances, parents/carers may take civil action or pursue a criminal prosecution.
- In the case where a member of staff has acted within the law, this will provide a defence to any civil or criminal prosecution.
- Members of staff accused of using excessive force will not be automatically suspended as a response to the allegations.
- Careful consideration will be given to whether the case warrants a person being suspended until the allegation is resolved.
- The governing body will always take into account whether a staff member has acted within the law when considering whether or not to take disciplinary action against a staff member involved in an incident.
- Where a member of staff is suspended, the school will ensure that the staff member has access to a named contact that can provide support and guidance.
- The school will provide pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation.

Staff training

- All staff will be regularly reminded of the positive handling techniques employed by the school, and will communicate these to the pupils they are in contact with.
- Where appropriate, staff will receive training in the safe use of restrictive interventions, alongside de-escalation, SEND awareness and trauma-informed practice.
- Only techniques and strategies which have been previously discussed with the headteacher and safely demonstrated will be used.
- All temporary, supply and agency staff will be made aware of the school's expectations regarding physical contact and safe handling before commencing work with children.

5. Safe Touch

What is safe touch?

- For the purpose of this policy, "safe touch" is defined as physical contact that, if otherwise avoided, would be inhumane, unkind and potentially emotionally or physically damaging for the pupil.
- Safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.
- The school understands that the following examples are instances of safe touch which may occur between staff and pupils:
    - Comforting an upset or distressed pupil
    - Congratulating or praising a pupil
    - Holding the hand of a pupil to guide them, such as when crossing a road or walking to assembly
    - Giving first aid to a pupil
    - Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons
    - Administering medicine and/or intimate care (see intimate care policy)
    - Using musical instruments

Types of safe touch

- The school understands that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate, such as carrying (unless in an emergency), front-on hugging and lap-sitting.
- The school recognises that the safest places to touch pupils, if necessary, are on the shoulders, arms and back.
- Kissing of any kind and touching of intimate areas is strictly prohibited and should be reported to the Headteacher immediately.
- The school places the following restrictions on hugging:
    - We encourage staff using touch for reward or comfort to use the 'school-hug', rather than an embrace;
    - The school-hug is a sideways hug whereby the member of staff places their hands on the pupil's shoulders;
    - This type of hug prevents the pupil from turning themselves towards the member of staff and thus engaging in a 'front' embrace, which the school deems as inappropriate.
    - This should always be instigated by the child rather than the adult.
- The school places the following restrictions on holding hands:
    - We understand that there are times when a member of staff will need to hold a pupil's hand, either to support them, guide them or to prevent them from being physically harmed;
    - We have employed a 'school-hand-hold' in order to prevent any inappropriate exchange between staff and pupils;
    - The school-hand-hold involves the member of staff holding their arm out and the pupil wrapping their hand around the staff's lower arm. If required, the member of staff can then place their free hand on top of the pupil's for extra security.

- The school places the following restrictions on separating children from parents:
    - We understand that there are times when a child will be reluctant to leave their parent, often at the start of the day;
    - Where this is the case, and should it be required, it should be the parent that uses any force needed to separate from the child. The parent should then leave;
    - Once separated, it may be appropriate to comfort the child using a school hug or hand hold if the child consents to this;
    - If the child cannot be separated, or there is a risk that the child may attempt to follow the parent out of school once separated, the parent should be asked to escort the child into the main school building so that they can be safely supervised by a member of staff;
    - It is good practice to contact the parent to let them know that their child is settled and content, once possible, to help limit their concern and anxiety.
- The school recognises that all instances of lap-sitting are inappropriate and therefore we prohibit this interaction between members of staff and pupils.
- The school recognises that carrying a child is unsafe and inappropriate and therefore we prohibit this interaction between members of staff and pupil unless in an emergency situation (e.g. if a child refuses to leave a building during a fire or other emergency)
- The school understands that pupils are not always aware of the boundaries between staff and pupils and thus may try to engage in physical contact such as lap-sitting or inappropriate hand-holding and hugging.
- Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff will explain to the pupil why it is unacceptable and encourage them to engage in the school-hug or school-hand-hold instead.
- If a member of staff attempts to use one of the safe methods of touch and a pupil is unhappy with this, particularly with regards to those with SEND, the member of staff will retract immediately in order to respect the pupil's wishes.
- Appropriate touch involving pupils with SEND will be in line with their EHC plan or IEP.

Reporting inappropriate touch

- If a pupil attempts to engage in any inappropriate touching, the member of staff involved will report this immediately to the headteacher, in order to prevent any allegations of inappropriate physical contact. The headteacher will inform the DSL as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- If another member of staff suspects or witnesses inappropriate physical contact, whereby the member of staff is willingly involved, they will report this to the Headteacher immediately.
- If the allegation is against the Headteacher then the report should be made to the Chair of Governors.
- The headteacher will keep a written record of all instances of reported inappropriate touch.
- Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the school's Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.
- **The headteacher will review reported concerns about the conduct of staff in accordance with the school's Low-Level Safeguarding Concerns Policy and Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy. Where there is any doubt about whether the harm threshold has been met, advice will be sought from the LADO.**

6. Monitoring and review

The headteacher will review records of the use of positive handling and reasonable force on a termly basis, in order to analyse the frequency of occurrence and determine what further measures could be taken to prevent these situations from reoccurring.

This policy will be reviewed on a three-year basis by the headteacher, who will consider any necessary changes and communicate the findings of the review to all members of staff.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **31st August 2029**.