

Positive Handling Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

All staff must read and be fully conversant with this policy. It shall be distributed to all staff as part of the Induction Pack and opportunities for discussion with their assigned mentor made available. This policy forms part of the Behaviour Policy, which is reviewed annually and should be retained alongside a copy of that policy.

There is a threefold purpose in producing this policy and guidance:

- To protect the interests and well being of children for whom staff have a shared responsibility
- To protect staff in the fulfilment of their responsibilities to children
- To protect the company who ultimately has the responsibility for the actions of its staff

This policy and guidance provides all staff charged with responsibility for the care and control of children and young people with the legal framework in which they must operate. It also provides practical considerations of the circumstances in which staff will have to work and suggested strategies for successfully managing out of control behaviour.

It is important to remember that the majority of young people in school behave very well and conform to the expectations of the school and community. The school has a responsibility to ensure that good behaviour is valued and that circumstances within the school are geared to enhancing each individual's own sense of value and worth. It is only in these circumstances that children and young people will learn to value and respect others.

It is vitally important to acknowledge that the vast majority of behaviour that does not meet the school's expectations is responded to through management strategies that do not rely on any form of physical intervention.

The Education Act 1997 [Section 4] clarified the use of physical force by teachers and others authorised by the Headteacher of the school, to control or restrain pupils. The clarification was achieved through the addition of Section 550A to the Education Act 1996. This section became operational on 1st September 1998 and applies to all schools.

Section 550A restates principles derived from statute which have in the past been misinterpreted and build upon the clarification of physical contact between staff and young people made by Sir Herbert Lamming in his letter to Directors of Social Services in 1997. Essentially the guidance derived from section 550A clarifies the common misperception that physical contact with a child is

in some way unlawful. It states clearly that where necessary force can and should be used to control and restrain children and young people.

This policy sets out to define the circumstances in which staff may judge it necessary and appropriate to use the application of force to control and or restrain a child or young person.

SCHOOL ETHOS

The ethos of the school is vital to the way in which children and young people perceive themselves as part of the school community. It will determine the extent to which pupils feel they belong to the community and as a result impact on all aspects of behaviour. Schools achieve a positive, calm and facilitative environment in which children and young people can develop and learn through a wide range of measures.

A key factor in successful schools is the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum appropriately differentiated to stimulate and engage all pupils. Where this is achieved in conjunction with the provision of an effective personal and social education curriculum it is more likely that a calm and orderly learning environment will exist.

It is widely recognised that a reward based rather than a punishment-orientated ethos, which rewards good behaviour and attitudes and avoids whole group sanctions, is more likely to bring about desired behaviour. Similarly the use of any form of force as a punishment as well as being unlawful is unlikely to induce positive attitudes and behaviour in children and young people.

Such an environment will be one where rewards and personal affirmation are more frequent than sanctions and disapproval. It will also be one where sanctions are applied flexibly and in the context of the individual needs of the child or young person.

Where such circumstances exist it is likely also that the school will expect and value high levels of pupil involvement in the life of the school. Similarly all achievements will be celebrated.

Staff will develop relationships with pupils based on mutual trust and respect. Such relationships will be the firm foundation for communicating expectations regarding individual learning targets as well as managing all behaviours.

A supportive ethos within a school will also be determined by the extent to which staff feel safe and supported in carrying out their duties. There is recognition that all staff may experience verbal and physical assault whilst working with children and young people. It must be made clear to all staff that they should not expect or accept such abuse. Similarly it must be made clear to all staff what course of action is open to them when abuse occurs. All staff work within the context of the Risk Assessment for Individual Procedures contained within the Health and Safety Policy.

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

The school will have a supporting Behaviour Policy.

Every member of staff should be aware of what is expected of them, their contribution to the ethos of the school as well as their contribution to the management of pupils' behaviour

All staff will from the point of Induction through to regular training opportunities be provided to augment existing awareness, knowledge and understanding and competencies relating to the management of behaviour.

All staff will access TEAM-TEACH training on a regular basis.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Discipline helps children stay within reasonable behavioural limitations and enhances self-esteem by helping the child meet expectations. Punishment is usually to alleviate adult frustration.

Every child and young person needs security, stable and caring relationships and a dependable and predictable environment in order to develop self-discipline and control.

Behaviour management is the educational process that involves the use of authority to bring about change. Children and young people are guided through their participation in this process towards social acceptable, self-controlled and responsible behaviour.

Where staff are sure that a pupil has the ability to understand what is required and the skills necessary to behave in a desired way, behavioural approaches are most relevant. Change and enhancing social competency is much more than developing a strategy of regarding actions to increase motivation towards desired behaviour.

Challenging behaviour is neither a new phenomenon nor restricted to a chosen few. It is a developmental right of passage that impacts on individual children and young people at different times and with differing levels of intensity. Testing boundaries should therefore be viewed as natural.

Each incident needs to be considered and understood in context i.e. the total picture of the young person including their life experiences to date. Interventions or responses to behaviour should be made following serious attempts at involving the young person in the behaviour management process.

St. John's should develop a positive culture in which incidents of poor behaviour may be viewed as learning opportunities for all concerned. Sanctions will always be brief, clear and to the point. Disapproval will always be of the behaviour and not the person.

SCHOOL POLICY

All members of staff who may have to intervene physically to manage the behaviour of the children or young people must understand the options and strategies open to them. They must now and understand what is acceptable and what is not. The governing body, parents and pupils need to have a similar understanding.

The school has a very comprehensive behaviour policy, which underpins everything we do. Staff need to frequently revisit and read this policy.

DEFINITIONS

In considering the use of reasonable force to control or restrain children or young people it is essential that there is clarity about the terms that are used to describe physical interventions when they occur.

- Escorting. Accompanying for protection or guidance. The level of compliance for the child being escorted and the degree of physical force being used by the staff will determine whether this act should be considered as a restraint i.e. was the child being overpowered in order to be escorted.
- Holding. To assert authoritatively. The degree of force used in relation to the level of co-operation and compliance being displayed by the child that determines when holding becomes restraining. The higher the level of force the more likely the action will be deemed restraint.
- Restraint. Physical control as defined by the application of force with the intention of over-powering the child to prevent them from harming themselves or others or damaging property.

The impact of section 550A on the action teachers and other staff authorised by the Headteacher to have control or charge of pupils is that they are expected to use reasonable force to prevent a child from doing or contributing 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.

The provision applies when an authorised person is on school premises and when he has lawful control of the children concerned elsewhere.

Section 550A does not specifically detail what action staff should take to protect themselves from attack. However, everyone has the right to defend themselves against attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so.

Where the aim of physically intervention is to maintain good order it is essential that staff take into consideration the extent to which any such action might exacerbate the situation. Physical intervention should not be used to replace good behavioural management.

AUTHORISED STAFF

Section 550A confers the responsibility for all teachers to use reasonable force to control and / or restrain children. It also sets out the conditions that must be met for other staff in the school. At St. John's all staff are authorised to use physical intervention. Such staff includes teaching assistants, care staff, maintenance staff and ancillary staff. All staff however, must be appropriately trained in the use of physical intervention strategies. The HR Manager will maintain an up to date and accurate record of those staff that have received training.

The accepted method adopted by St. John's School and College is Team -Teach.

RISK ASSESSMENT

All children and young people attending St. John's will have an up to date Risk Assessment. Copies are kept on pupil files and staff should ensure that they are aware of the content of these assessments for those children with whom they have regular contact.

Behaviour management plans may be generated should the result of a Risk Assessment indicate the need.

RECORDING AND REPORTING

It is vital that a contemporaneous written record of any occasion of when use of force has been made is established. Physical Intervention Incident Recording Books are kept with:

- Head of School
- The Head of College
- Head of Care
- Head of School
- Care Manager (College)
- Staff Rooms
- Care Offices (both School and College)

The following must be adhered to

- All incidents involving physical handling of children must be recorded in full.
- All pages must be completed including the body map.
- Any sections not completed must carry staff signature to indicate that you have given thought to that section.
- Hand the completed report to either the Head of Education or Care for your site within 24 hours for them to countersign your report.
- Never tear out any pages from this book.
- Initial any mistakes or alterations.
- This document serves to protect you as well as the child.
- Completed books will be held centrally in a secure place for a minimum of 5 years.
- Should you suffer any injury in the course of the physical intervention you must report this to the nursing staff and complete an accident form.
- Failure to comply with this procedure puts you at risk.

REPAIR

The incident record should be used to assist all concerned with planning to avoid repetition of the incident that caused use of force. The record should be used to analyse what worked well and how it might be replicated as part of a planned response in the future.

Staff involved in an incident will be provided with support. They may need time to reflect on their involvement in the incident and calm themselves before continuing with their duties. Similarly, pupils involved will need time to calm down and reflect upon their part in it. It is only when pupils are provided with the opportunity to consider alternatives to the behaviour that caused the incident that any learning will take place.

Don Kent
Principal / Chief Executive

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