

Veritas Multi Academy Trust

Positive Handling Policy

Date Prepared:	Term 5 2019
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Date ratified (where relevant)	22.5.19
Review date:	Term 5 2020
Date Published on Trust website:	7.6.19

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Trust Board, Regional Governing Body and leadership of each school within Veritas MAT recognise the serious implications for all concerned when the use of physical intervention becomes necessary.

This policy has been formulated to ensure that children and young people, parents and staff are fully aware of the context for the school's response to behaviour that requires physical intervention. Further it is designed to provide detailed guidance for all concerned regarding the use of holding, escorting and restraint, including when it is appropriate to physically intervene and what strategies must be used in so doing.

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils who may need to be positively handled.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and pupils specifically the Behaviour for Learning Policy for each school within the trust.

2. Purpose of the policy

It is recognised that good behaviour must be acknowledged and celebrated as a matter of course and that this in itself is a primary tool in managing behaviour. Additionally the management of behaviour at school is based on the belief that children and young people have the right to learn from their experiences of life. This will at times involve testing the clearly defined boundaries established by the behaviour management system used in the school.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff:

- Clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where positive handling is necessary,
- Are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur.

The application of any form of positive handling places staff in a vulnerable situation. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for positive handling.

Positive handling will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed or when pupils, staff or property are at immediate risk.

3. Definitions

- **Physical contact**

Situations in which proper physical contact takes place between staff and pupils, e.g. in games/PE or to comfort pupils.

- **Physical intervention**

This may be used to divert a pupil from destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force.

- **Positive Handling**

This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is a risk to pupils, staff or property or if good order is seriously prejudiced. All such incidents will be recorded.

4. POSITIVE HANDLING

Positive handling should only be used when all other strategies have been tried and found to be unsuccessful. In the first instance staff should always attempt to defuse the situation by;

- appropriate use of voice in terms of pace, volume and tone
- adjustment of body position to ensure minimum threat to the young person and maximum safety for staff; generally a sideways stance
- facial expression eye contact is positive and calming
- appropriate use of humour
- making clear the expectations of all concerned in the incident and the likely consequences if behaviour deteriorates further
- seeking help from other staff to defuse the situation

5. Training

Positive Handling training will be made available to designated staff and will be the responsibility of the headteacher. No member of staff will be expected to undertake positive handling without appropriate training.

6. Escalating Situations

The 1996 Education Act (Section 550A) stipulates that reasonable physical intervention may be used to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do any of the following:

- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial in maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils; whether the behaviour occurs in a classroom, during a teaching session or elsewhere (this includes authorised out-of-school activities)
- self-injuring or placing themselves at risk
- injuring others
- causing damage to property, including that of their own
- committing a criminal offence (even if the pupil is below the age of criminal responsibility)

7. Acceptable measures of Physical Intervention.

Positive handling can only be deemed reasonable if:

- it is warranted by the particular circumstances of the incident
- it is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident
- it is carried out as the minimum to achieve the desired result
- the age, understanding and the gender of the pupil are taken into account
- it is likely to achieve the desired result

Wherever possible, assistance will be sought from another member of staff before intervention.

The form of physical intervention may involve the staff doing the following:

- physically intervening by placing themselves between pupils
- blocking a pupil's path
- escorting a pupil
- shepherding a pupil away
- the minimum amount of force with the maximum amount of caring as the underlying principle, and it must not develop into a test of strength. It must be undertaken as an act of care and control, not as a punishment.
- if a hold is used it will gradually be relaxed as soon as it is safe and the young person has begun to regain some self-control.
- whenever positive handling is used, staff will keep talking to the child.

8. Recording

Where positive handling has been used, a record of the incident **always** needs to be kept. All recording needs to be completed on the day of the incident using the positive handling log. The log must be completed with the school's designated lead for positive handling (usually the headteacher or deputy headteacher).

The following details need to be included:

- name of the pupil
- date, time and place of incident
- a brief description of the incident and actions taken
- attempts made to calm the situation and names of positive handling holds used
- names of people who witnessed the situation – in particular the critical friend
- any damage/harm to persons or property
- signature of key personnel involved

If the incident is the first time the pupil has been positively handled, a Positive Handling form will be completed and shared and signed by the child's family, class teacher and senior member of staff.

9. Action after an incident

The headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further if required. If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure.

10. Complaints

The availability of a clear policy regarding Positive Handling and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them. Any complaints will be pursued through the trust's complaints procedures.

11. Positive handling – Some dos and don'ts

Do

- be aware of any feelings of anger
- summon help
- continue to talk to the pupil in a calm way
- provide a soft surface if possible
- be aware of any accessories worn by you or the child
- use only the positive handling shown in training (*single elbow, double elbow, caring c's and cuddle wrap*)

Don't

- try to manage on your own
- relax your hold the moment the struggle ceases
- stop talking even if the pupil does not reply
- straddle the pupil
- push arms up the back
- touch the pupil near the throat or head
- put pressure on the joints