

## **Harrop Fold Policy for Positive Handling**

At Harrop Fold, we are committed to a positive Attitude to Learning policy which encourages students to make positive choices. We do however recognise that students sometimes make the wrong choices. On rare occasions this may result in a situation that requires some form of positive handling of a student by staff. Our policy for positive handling is based upon the following principles: -

- Positive handling should be used only as a last resort when other appropriate strategies have failed
- Any physical contact should be only the minimum required
- Positive handling must be used in ways that maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned
- Incidents must be recorded and reported to the Head teacher or person designated as such in his absence, as soon as possible
- Parent/carers will be informed of each incident

### **1. The Legal Framework**

Section 93 of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 allows 'teachers and other persons who are authorised by the Head teacher who have control or charge of students to use such force as is reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent a student from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following: -

- causing injury to him/herself or others
- committing an offence
- damaging property
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order & discipline'

### **2. Our approach**

At Harrop Fold we aim to avoid the need for positive handling and regard this as a last resort in a small minority of situations. We always aim to deal with incidents using a positive approach and therefore this policy should be read in connection with our Attitude to Learning Policy.

De-escalation techniques are most successful when used early, before the child becomes physically aggressive. To do this, it is necessary to be aware of and spot early signs of agitation such as:

- balled fists
- fidgeting
- shaking
- 'eye-balling' another child
- head thrust forward
- clenched jaw
- speech becoming more rapid or high-pitched
- pacing

All teachers are aware of strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult students and the steps they can take to diffuse and calm a situation. These include:

- Moving calmly and confidently
- Making simple, clear statements
- Intervening early
- Maintaining a neutral expression
- Removing audience from the immediate vicinity

Further de-escalation techniques include:

- Distraction and diversion
- Giving choices
- Acknowledging the child's feelings; for example, 'It must be really difficult for you ... thank you for letting me know'
- Use words and phrases to encourage de-escalation e.g. 'I wonder if...' 'would you mind if...?'
- Change of adult

Sometimes, no matter how carefully and skilfully you try to de-escalate a situation, it may still reach crisis point.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which positive handling would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the School's policy on Attitude to Learning.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of students during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in *loco parentis* and have a duty of care to all students they are in charge of. They must, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure all students' safety and well being.

Staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

### **3. Use of positive handling**

Positive handling should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the student to regain self-control. It should not take a form, which could be seen as punishment.

Staff are authorised to use reasonable force in applying positive handling, although there is no absolute definition of this. What constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the student to whom it is being applied. However, as a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent danger should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below.

When positive handling becomes necessary:

#### **DO**

- Tell the student what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the student what s/he must do for you to remove the hold (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow
- Relax your restraint in response to the student's compliance

## **DON'T**

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the student
- Involve other students in the hold
- Touch or hold the student in a way that could be viewed as sexually inappropriate conduct
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the student in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the student
- Use positive handling as a punishment

## **4. Actions after an incident**

Positive handling often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the student. The Head teacher, or person designated as such in his absence, should be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the student involved, the student should be offered support and their parent/carers informed. A member of the leadership team will contact parent/carers as soon as possible after an incident, normally on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss the incident.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of an Individual Support Plan, which may include an anger management programme, or other strategies agreed by the Student Development Team and senior staff. The student may require additional support from other services, for example the Secondary Inclusion Service or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. In these circumstances a Family Assessment may be appropriate to help identify and assess the additional needs for the student.

It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

***All incidents should be recorded immediately in the bound Positive Handling Book. This is kept in S9 and is maintained by Mrs Rathmell (SENCO). In the event of any future complaint or allegation this record will provide essential and accurate information. Details should include:***

- Name of student(s)
- Staff member(s) involved
- Factors necessitating physical intervention
- The strategies which were employed prior to using physical intervention
- How physical intervention was effected
- The outcome of restraint
- Any other action taken in the management of the incident
- Details of any injury to any person

***A note of the incident should also be recorded in the student's record held by the SDT to inform support plans and risk assessments.***

## **5. Risk Assessments and Individual Support Plans**

If we become aware that a student is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- Strategies to be used prior to intervention
- Ways of avoiding 'triggers' if these are known
- Involvement of parent/carers to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate
- The school's duty of care to all students and staff

## **6. Complaints and Allegations**

A clear positive handling policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parent/carers, should help to avoid complaints from parent/carers. Any complaints about positive handling should be directed to the Head teacher.

It is our intention to inform all staff, students, parent/carers and governors about these procedures and the context in which they apply.

We will review this policy on a yearly basis.

Policy adopted by the Governing Body

Date:

Date for Review: