SUTTON VALENCE SCHOOL
SINCE 1576

Positive Handling Policy

(Senior School)

Author: Mr Will Walker
Policy Date: September 2025
Approval Date by Governors: November 2025
Review Date: September 2026

This document has regard to:

i. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
ii. The NMS for Boarding Schools 2022
iii. The Sutton Valence School Child Protection Policy
iv. The Sutton Valence School Anti-Bullying Policy
v. The Sutton Valence School Positive Behaviour Policy
vi. The Sutton Valence School Parents Handbook
vii. The Sutton Valence School Staff Handbook
viii. 'Use of reasonable force' non–statutory advice for Schools from the Department of Education July 2013

Wherever possible physical contact with pupils should be avoided.

Before intervening physically, a teacher should, whenever practicable, tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop, and what the sanction will be if s/he does not. The teacher should attempt to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident and should make it clear that physical restraint or contact will stop once it ceases to be necessary. A calm and measured approach is needed and the teachers should never give the impression that they have lost their temper, or are acting out of anger or frustration, or to punish the pupil.

Sometimes a teacher should not intervene in an incident without help (unless it is an emergency). For example, when dealing with an older pupil, or a physically large, or more than one pupil, or if the teacher believes they may be at risk of injury

In these circumstances, the teacher should remove other pupils who might be at risk and summon assistance from a colleague or colleagues, or where necessary, telephone the Police. The teacher should inform the pupil(s) that they have sent for help. Until assistance arrives, the teacher should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

Planning for incidents

As is made clear in Part Two KCSIE 2024, where the School is aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a way which may require physical control or restraint, an individual plan or risk assessment may be drawn up. It will address:

a) Managing the pupil (e.g. discussing with them reactive strategies to defuse a conflict, holds to be used);
b) Involving the parents to ensure that they are clear about what specific action the School might need to take;

c) Briefing staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training);
d) Ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate;
e) In some cases, the School may seek medical advice from the School doctor and nurse, about the safest way to hold pupils with specific health needs.

Action in self-defence or in an emergency

Everyone has the right to defend himself or herself against an unprovoked attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so.

In an emergency where a pupil is at immediate risk of injury or on the point of inflicting injury on someone else, any member of staff would be entitled to intervene.

Type of incidents

The wide variety of situations in which reasonable force might be appropriate, fall into three broad categories:

1. Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury. Some examples of situations which fall within this category might be:

    - A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil;
    - Pupils are fighting;
    - A pupil is engaged in or is on the verge of committing deliberate damage or vandalism to property;
    - A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing injury or damage by accident, by rough play or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects;
    - A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way which they might have or cause an accident likely to injure him or herself or others;
    - A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave the School.

2. Where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property.

3. Where a pupil is behaving in a way which is compromising good order and discipline.

    Examples of situations that fall within this category:

    - A pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom;
    - A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson .

In all these circumstances, physical intervention 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 diffuse the situation by:

- Appropriate use of voice in terms of pace 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 and 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 diffuse the situation.

If these techniques have been unsuccessful, it may be necessary to use physical intervention. There are three categories of physical intervention:

1. Escorting – the intention is to move a pupil away from a particular area;
2. Holding – the intention is to keep a pupil in a particular area;
3. Restraint – the intention is to overpower the pupil because they have lost all control and are a danger to themselves and/or others or property.

What is reasonable force?

The definition of 'reasonable' force will always depend on all the circumstances of the case. The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Therefore, physical force could not be justified to prevent a pupil committing a trivial misdemeanour, or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force. Also, the degree of force involved must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is trying to prevent. Different children will need different handling. Any force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.

Whether it is reasonable to use force, and the degree of force that could reasonably be employed, might also depend on the age, understanding and sex of the pupil.

Application of force

Physical intervention can take several forms. It might involve staff:

- Physically interposing between pupils;
- Blocking a pupil's path;
- Holding;
- Pushing;
- Pulling;
- Leading a pupil by hand or arm;
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back, or, *in extremis*, using more restrictive holds.

Staff must not act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- Holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way which might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe;
- Slapping, punching or kicking a pupil;
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- Tripping up a pupil;
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear;
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground.

Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

Teachers should always try to deal with a situation through other strategies before using force. This is particularly appropriate where the aim is to maintain good order and discipline and there is no direct risk to people or property.

As the key issue is establishing good order, any action which could exacerbate the situation needs to be avoided. The possible consequences of intervening physically need to be carefully evaluated.

The age and level of understanding of the pupil is also very relevant in those circumstances. Physical intervention to enforce compliance with staff instructions is likely to be increasingly inappropriate with older pupils.

It should never be used as a substitute for good behavioural management.

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times. Staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by pupils or onlookers.

Examples to avoid:

- Unwarranted or unwanted touching of a pupil personally or with objects (e.g. pencil, book, ruler etc);
- Corporal punishment (physical discipline, pushing, shoving, smacking);
- Initiating, permitting or requesting inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact with a pupil (hugs, kisses, tickling, play fighting) or facilitating situations which unnecessarily result in close physical contact.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority.

If a pupil is emotionally distressed, staff should always inform another member of staff before offering care. The best appropriate member of staff to provide care should always be considered, with factors such as immediacy, availability and gender all to be considered. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development and gender. Staff should use their professional judgement at all times. A good 'rule of thumb' is to ask the child whether the contact might be permitted; for example, if the child was presented as extremely distressed a teacher could ask "Would you like a hug?". This gives the child autonomy and decision making. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be reported to the DSL who will record it and, if appropriate, place a copy on the child's file.

Recording incidents

It is important that there is a detailed, written report of any occasion where force is used.
It may help prevent any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the incident, and it will be helpful should there be a complaint.

An up-to-date record of all such incidents must be kept in the Incident Book (see Appendix A at the end of this Policy). Immediately following any such incident, the member of staff concerned should inform the Head of Senior School and the Designated Safeguarding Lead or in their absence, the Safeguarding Advisor of the School. The Head of Senior School will require a written report within 24 hours. This report should include:

- The name(s) of the pupil(s) involved and when and where the incident took place;
- The names of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident;
- The reason that force was necessary (e.g. to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or a member of staff);
- How the incident began and progressed, including details of the pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long;
- The pupil's response and the outcome of the incident;

- Details of any injury suffered by the pupil, another pupil, or a member of staff and of any damage to property.

The Head of Senior School will decide when and by whom parents will be informed of an incident involving their child. Parents will normally be invited into School to discuss the matter.

A referral to the local Safeguarding Board and or police may ensue following Child Protection procedures.

Complaints

It is possible that parents may make a complaint about the use of force by a member of staff, which may lead to an investigation by the School but also by outside agencies. Their aim would be to establish if the use of and degree of force was reasonable in the circumstances. It would be likely to take account of the School's policy on restraint, whether that had been followed, and the need to prevent injury, damage or disruption in considering the circumstances of the case.

Code of Conduct for Staff
Extract from the Staff Handbook (*Refer to Section D, Relations with Pupils)*

Relations with Pupils

All staff have a responsibility to behave in a manner appropriate to their status as a role model to young people. It should also reflect their ability to safeguard the welfare of the children in their care. They should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the respect and confidence of parents, pupils and colleagues.

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for Staff to have physical contact with pupils, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. Physical contact may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- when a pupil needs to get comfort or reassurance e.g. following an accident or personal crisis;
- when a pupil needs encouragement to attempt a new challenge e.g. to climb on to a piece of apparatus; or
- when there is a need to take urgent action to avoid an incident or injury.

You should use your professional judgement at all times. Physical contact must be appropriate for the age, understanding and sex of the child and must never threaten or be sexually inappropriate. You must also be sensitive to an individual's cultural background and any special educational needs or disabilities.

The appropriateness of any deliberate touch will vary depending upon the age of the child, as well as to some extent upon the individual circumstances. For instance, children in the Nursery may be lifted and cuddled when upset, whilst children in Pre-Prep may appreciate a sideways cuddle instead. The youngest of our learners might sit on knees when reading books or look for other forms of physical contact due to myriad reasons. These types of touch will not be appropriate for older children.

You should not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by pupils or onlookers.

If a pupil is emotionally distressed, staff should always inform another member of staff before offering care. The best appropriate member of staff to provide care should always be considered, with factors such as immediacy, availability and gender all to be considered. When physical contact is made with pupils this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate given their age, stage of development and gender. Staff should use their professional judgement at all times. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and

circumstances should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will record it and, if appropriate, place a copy on the child's file.

Staff should never be party to gossip about colleagues or pupils.

Pupils must be dealt with impartiality; there should be no favouritism and disparaging remarks of any sort should be avoided. Staff should be aware of and respect the anti-bullying stance of the School.

Staff must be aware of their responsibility to provide positive role models for the pupils. They must also respect the pupils' dignity and foster their self-worth.

In no circumstance may any member of staff strike a pupil. Staff, in extremis, may have to use physical restraint by reasonable or non-injurious means. Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort to avoid injury to a person or property. Striking or inappropriate use of restraint will lead to an immediate investigation. Subsequent disciplinary procedure could result in dismissal.

Teaching and learning styles

Styles which provide opportunities for pupils to involve themselves in discussions in an atmosphere of trust, acceptance and tolerance are encouraged. We must be ready to adapt our teaching styles to different pupils' needs.

Environment

All members of staff should strive to create an environment where all pupils in the School feel valued. Pupils should be encouraged to articulate their feelings and wishes and they should be listened to**.**

As adults we should try to ensure that we:

- Rarely show anger;
- Do not shout;
- Be more often positive than negative;
- Admit our mistakes and apologise for them;
- Value what children have to say;
- Listen to all parties in a dispute;
- Praise and delight in a child when appropriate;
- Post any incident, start afresh;
- Model behaviour when dealing with children and/or parents;
- Expect good behaviour and be surprised by bad behaviour;
- All aspects of our discipline must be consistent.

Appendix A

Reporting Incidents
It is **important** that there is a detailed written report of any occasion where force is used.

Name of the pupil involved .....

When and where the incident took place -

The reason that force was necessary (e.g.to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or a member of staff) -

How the incident began and progressed, including details of the pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long -

The pupil's response and outcome of the incident -

Details of any injury suffered by the pupil, another pupil, or a member of staff and of any damage to property -

Signed ..... Name ..... Date .....