

St. Monica's Catholic Primary School Positive Handling Policy



‘Let Trust, Respect and Love live here.’

Approved: Autumn 2023
Review Due: Autumn 2025

Philosophy

Every child is a unique gift from God, with his or her own unique gifts.

“At St. Monica’s, we strive to ensure that all children are offered the opportunity to develop to their full potential in individual, educational, moral, social, intellectual and spiritual needs.”

“Our school aims to be a living community of work and prayer.”

We promote a ‘Help, not Harm’ philosophy amongst all children and staff.

We believe in supporting all staff, teaching and non-teaching, in meeting their individual needs and developing the staff as a team.

Introduction

It is recognised that the vast majority of pupils in our school respond positively to the Restorative Practices Philosophy we share at St Monica’s, where we consistently strive to maintain the relationships of all members within our school community. At St Monica’s we live by three Rights and we believe that everyone in our school community has equal entitlement to these three rights:

- The Right to be Safe
- The Right to Learn
- The Right to be Respected

Where one or more of these rights are challenged we have clear behaviour management strategies to implement as an appropriate response (see Policy for Enhancing Community Relationships and Learning). However, it is acknowledged that in **exceptional circumstances**, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of positive handling may be required. 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. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Head Teacher and Governing Body.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in this school clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where positive handling is necessary and are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations.

Key Principles

All staff members at St Monica’s understand and follow the key principles underlining 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 risk.
- We do not support the routine use of positive handling.

- We cannot and do not use positive handling as a punishment; it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.
- Positive handling uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming themselves, others or property.
- The scale and nature of any physical intervention within positive handling must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause.

Defining positive handling

At St Monica's we prefer to use the term "positive handling", to describe the physical intervention used as a last resort in exceptional circumstances. However, no legal definition of this exists. As a result, for the purpose of this policy we consider the term "reasonable force" and the clarification provided in the DfE guidance document 'Use of reasonable force', 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>

What is reasonable force?

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances, such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- 'Reasonable' in the circumstance means using no more force than is needed.
- As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact, such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.
- Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
- School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury. It is acknowledged that in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injury as an accidental consequence of the intervention.

Different types of physical contact with pupils

1. Physical Contact – Situations in which proper physical contact occurs between staff and pupil. Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary: holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when together around the school; when comforting a distressed pupil; when a pupil is being congratulated or praised; to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument; to demonstrate exercise or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and to give first aid.

2. Physical Intervention - This may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the arm or shoulder where the pupil is compliant.

3. Physical Control/Restraint - This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or property. It is important to note that the use of "reasonable force" should be seen as a last resort. All such incidents must be recorded and be stored in

an accessible way. More than one member of staff should be present if physical restraint is necessitated. The level of compliance from the pupil determines whether or not the interaction is an intervention or a control/restraint.

Using Positive Handling

In line with the St Monica's Behaviour Policy, all staff members consistently use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order throughout the school day. Every effort is made to resolve conflicts positively, therefore if a situation calls for the use of positive handling, all staff members involved will be able to justify that strategies other than 'force' have been attempted and proved ineffective or would have been impractical.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. (Section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2006). 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 to 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 himself or herself at risk
- injuring others
- causing damage to property, including that of the pupil himself or herself
- committing a criminal offence (even if the pupil is below the age of criminal responsibility)

Types of Incidents

Incidents described above fall into 3 broad categories:

- Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury
- Where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property
- Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order or discipline

Examples of situations which fall within one of the first two categories are:

- a pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil
- pupils are fighting
- a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing injury, damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of materials or objects
- a pupil is running in a corridor or in a way which he or she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him or herself
- a pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave the school

Examples of behaviour which fall into the third category are:

- a pupil persistently refusing to do as requested.
- a pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

Positive handling should only be used if it is reasonable to do so. 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 and the consequences which it is desired to prevent
- ✓ 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

Staff at St Monica's recognise that restraint is only a small part of a wider spectrum of positive behaviour management strategies that may include: use of space, safe environments, diversions, calm stances and postures, nonthreatening facial expressions, low tone, volume and pace in communication, careful use of words, and physical reassurance and prompts. Consideration of these strategies should be maintained during and after the need for physical contact. As soon as it is safe, any hold or restraint should be gradually relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control. The pupil should be informed about what will happen next and be offered reassurance and encouragement to remain calm. In this way the pupil will be more likely to see the restraint as an act of care.

The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the adult concerned. Whether the force used is reasonable will always depend on the particular circumstances of the case. The use of force is reasonable if it is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent. This means the degree of force used should be no more than is needed to achieve the desired result. (DfE guidance document 'Use of reasonable force', 2013)

Physical interventions and restraints used

At St Monica's a number of staff members have been trained by the School Staff Safety Training in 'Positive Handling.' We use only the minimum force that is needed to restore safety or appropriate behaviour and we take account of the age, understanding and gender of the pupil. We understand that an uncaring attitude is likely to provoke pupils.

'Positive handling is also known as physical restraint. It is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the individual from harming themselves or others or seriously damaging any surrounding property.' (Positive Handling in Schools, course handbook 2021.)

Acceptable forms of intervention in this school include all stipulated by Positive Handling: Prompting, escorting/ guiding escorting, holding, cupped fist hold, straight arm immobilisation techniques, disengaging from a seated position, kneeling positions.

Restraints not to be used

A panel of experts (Physical Control in care Medical Panel 2008) identified that certain restraint techniques presented an **unacceptable risk** when used on children and young people. The techniques in question are:

- the 'seated double embrace' which involves two members of staff forcing a person into a sitting position and leaning them forward, while a third monitors breathing;
- the 'double basket-hold' which involves holding a person's arms across their chest;
- the 'nose distraction technique' which involves a sharp upward jab under the nose.

Authorised Staff

Authorised staff Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 permits adults who have lawful charge or control of children to use reasonable force to control or restrain them. These include:

- teachers
- family support workers
- teaching assistants
- representatives from outside agencies
- other adults who may be working with children either on school premises or accompanying them on out of school activities, e.g. during field trips or on school journeys.

Wherever possible physical restraint should only be used by those with appropriate training. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible and physical restraint may be used as an emergency measure by someone without appropriate training to ensure the safety of children in their care. Any physical intervention should be conducted making reasonable adjustment for students with SEN or disabilities. In this instance, someone with appropriate training should be called for immediately.

At St Monica's, staff members attend the Positive Handling training course if/when deemed necessary, depending on the needs and challenges of the cohort.

Recording

We keep a record of all incidents where physical intervention involving the use of force against resistance from a child has been necessary (see Appendix 1). The record should be completed by the end of the working day on which the incident took place. A member of the Leadership Team will be told at the earliest possible time after an incident. The adult involved may seek guidance from a senior colleague and/or their trade union representative before filling in their report. A member of the Leadership Team will discuss the incident with any children or staff who were present and, where appropriate, collect a written account from them. A Designated Safeguarding Lead should also be informed and read the record made.

In line with our commitment to working with parents, we aim to maintain an open discussion during any relevant procedure which may follow an incident.

School will regularly review the number and type of incidents in which physical intervention and/or restraint has been necessary. This will be used to ensure that there is adherence to this policy and to identify improvement needed in other policies and procedures of the school.

Positive Handling Plan

When a child is identified that presents behaviour that may necessitate positive handling strategies, a Behaviour Support Plan, Positive Handling Plan and Risk Assessment is put in place at the earliest opportunity.

A Behaviour Support Plan is a school-based document designed to assist individuals who have experienced harm, are at risk of harm, or have caused harm to others. This may include pupils who have been diagnosed with behaviour disorders, pupils who have bullied others, pupils who have been bullied, pupils who require additional assistance because they display difficult, challenging or disruptive behaviours, as well as pupils who can benefit from additional wellbeing support. A Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) can help ensure that children and staff feel safe, valued and connected to their school community. An effective BSP contributes to building respectful relationships, resilience, and well-adjusted pupils who are able to learn effectively. The plan itself lists the targets the child is working towards surrounding their behavioural needs and records the provision in place to support the child.

A Positive Handling Plan is used to establish the 'stages of crisis' relating to behaviour that may require physical intervention or restraint. These plans enable all staff members to recognise potential triggers in order to prevent challenging behaviour escalating to the point of physical intervention being required. At St Monica's we entitle this plan 'Child's Name Traffic Light Strategy' and use colours to label the child's stages of behaviour that may/may not escalate to require positive handling. Colour coding the Positive Handling Plan using this format is a very useful way of clarifying the child's different stages of the behaviour and helps all staff members and parents/guardians use consistent strategies within each stage. Using the traffic signal analogy, an individual's behaviour moves from 'typical behaviour' (**green**), to a level that indicates that problems are about to occur (**amber**) prior to the occurrence of the behaviour itself (**red**). After the behaviour (**blue**) care must be taken to ensure that the person returns to the green phase. This format enables us to more easily identify when an adult could intervene to prevent behaviour escalating into an episode of challenging behaviour.

The Positive Handling Plan (Traffic Light Strategy) will outline the following:

-Proactive strategies - The **Green** Stage aims to support the child to stay happy and calm. Proactive Strategies are designed to meet the person's needs without them needing to rely on challenging behaviour. This part of the plan should include any strategies that are aimed at reducing the chances that the behaviour will happen, and should focus on *all* aspects of the child's life.

-Early Warning Signs – The **Amber** Stage describes what to do in response to the early warning signs, to help the adults intervene as early as possible, before the child resorts to challenging behaviour. These signals may be subtle, but will often include observable signs such as increased pacing, changes in vocalisations, facial expressions or body language. By clearly defining the behaviours seen at the amber stage, staff members and parents can be cued in to the need to take immediate action, and thereby avoid moving on to 'red'. Many episodes of challenging behaviour occur because the early warning signs are not recognised or because we fail to change our own behaviour once the signs become evident.

At this stage the person may be starting to feel anxious or distressed and there is a chance that he/she may challenge you in some way. Here we need to take quick action to support the person to return to the Green "Proactive" phase as quickly as possible to prevent behavioural escalation. Things that can help:

- Take away the trigger
- Not responding to, or 'ignoring' the behaviour
- Giving in – giving the person what they want

- Humour – sing something, dance on the table! – use your imagination
- Redirecting/distracting
- Asking what is wrong (look at the context of the time of day, where the person is etc.)

-Reactive Strategies- The Red Stage describes what staff members and/or parents/guardians should do or how they should react in response to challenging behaviour. It will detail the type of physical intervention to be used and which adults are authorised to use this intervention. Reactive strategies are a way to manage behaviour as safely and quickly as possible, to keep the person and those around them safe. Ideally a reactive plan should include advice on how to reduce the chance that the challenging behaviour will escalate and put people at risk. It should be guided by the principle of implementing the least intrusive and least restrictive intervention first. More restrictive interventions (such as physical restraint) should be a last resort.

At this stage the challenging behaviour occurs and we need to do something quickly to achieve safe and rapid control over the situation to prevent unnecessary distress and injury. We must:

- Appear calm
- Use low arousal approaches – talk in a calm, monotone voice
- Do not make prolonged eye contact
- Be aware of your own body language
- Do not make any demands of the person or keep talking to them
- Distraction and redirection (e.g. using a technique such as a guided walk to remove the person from the room to keep them and others safe)

-Post Incident Support – The Blue Stage – This stage specifies the procedures to be followed after an incident for both the child and adults involved. For the child, this section should specify any immediate behavioural actions that need to be implemented following incidents for example: giving the person more space, engaging in an activity, procedures for ensuring their physical and emotional safety (e.g. via physical checks and supportive counselling/reassurance giving). Procedures for adults in terms of any immediate medical checks and emotional support. This is where the incident is over and the child is starting to recover and become calm and relaxed again. We still need to be careful here as there is a risk of behaviour escalating again quickly. We must make no demands, help the person to recover and/or move to a different environment if appropriate.

The Positive Handling Plan (Traffic Light Strategy) is shared with parents/guardians who sign the document in agreement with the planned intervention to support their child during behavioural episodes. It is also shared with the Head teacher who provides authorisation for the plan to be implemented. Fundamentally it is shared with the child and the traffic light colours are used to support the child to learn to refer to the colours to develop self-help strategies for managing their own behaviour (e.g. using thermometer cards/feeling pictures for children to show how they are feeling as part of their own de-escalation). The way in which the plan is shared with the child is dependent on the age of the child concerned. Please see Appendix 2 for an example of a Positive Handling Plan (Traffic Light Strategy).

When positive handling is a planned response for a pupil, a risk assessment must also be carried out using the format in Appendix 3.

Sharing of information

All members of the school community should know of the existence of this policy and should be aware of any child who has a BSP and Traffic Light Strategy in order to respond appropriately to displayed behaviours.

In principle, as few people as possible should know of any specific incident and staff should maintain confidentiality to the greatest possible extent. This is to enable governors and staff involved in any consequence or complaint to do so without having acquired hearsay knowledge.

Monitoring

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use positive handling, this will always be recorded and documented. Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Head Teacher to the needs of any pupil(s) whose behaviour can only be contained using positive handling. This process will address patterns of incidents and evaluate trends which may be emerging. Governors may also monitor incidents where physical restraint is used.

Careful monitoring of incidents will support the Head Teacher to:

- Identify any patterns of behaviour resulting in the use of physical intervention.
- Review the levels of staff awareness of and compliance with the school policy.
- Inform staff training needs.
- Explore the relationship between the use of physical intervention and behaviour in school.

Action after an Incident that has resulted in Positive Handling

The Head Teacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed, investigated and recorded as stated above. If further action is required, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedures which may include: Child Protection Policy, Dealing with Allegations against Staff Policy, Behaviour and Attitudes Policy, Local Authority Exclusion Procedure.

Complaints

The availability of a clear policy about positive handling ('reasonable force') and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them. Complaints following a dispute about the use of physical intervention by an adult should be pursued in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

Appendix 1: Reporting an Incident where Positive Handling has been used

St Monica's Catholic Primary School

Positive Handling Incident Recording Form		
Name of Child:	Date of incident:	
DOB:	Time of incident:	
Ethnicity:	Location:	
Gender:	Name(s) of staff involved:	
Class:	Name(s) of witnesses:	
Reason for intervention (e.g. Injury to a person, Damage to property, Criminal offence, Serious disruption, Absconding)	External agencies informed: (circle where appropriate) • Medical staff • Parent/guardian • Social worker • Police • Other _____	
Describe events leading up to the incident including what was said by the parties involved:		
✓ Behaviours that occurred by the child:		
Verbal abuse	Slapping	Punching
Biting	Pinching	Spitting
Kicking	Hair grab	Neck grab
Clothing grab	Body holds	Arm grab
Weapons	Head butting	Self-harm (please detail)
Pushing	Disruption	Damage to property
Other (please detail)		
Who was at risk?		
Describe the steps taken to diffuse/calm down the situation:		
✓ Diversions, Distractions and De-escalation strategies attempted:		
Verbal advice	Limited choice	Clear directions
Distraction	Negotiations	Planned ignoring
Take up time	Consequences	Time out
Humour	Fresh face (change of staff)	Success reminders
Reflective zone	Setting change	When...then...
Other (please detail)		
✓ Positive Handling – Physical interventions used and duration of restraints		
Help hug	Sitting wrap	Other:

Standing double elbow	Standing wrap	
Sitting double elbow	One person/Two person escort	
Why was this in the best interest of the child?		
Detail any medical intervention that may have been actioned as a result of the incident:		
Injury to child:	Action taken:	
Injury to staff:	Action taken:	
Injury to others:	Action taken:	
✓ Action following the event:		
Designated person for safeguarding has checked this record		
Parent/guardian informed		
Risk assessment to be carried out/reviewed		
Positive Handling plan to be completed/reviewed		
Procedural change		
Child support:		
Staff support:		
Completed by:	Role:	

Appendix 2 – Example of a Positive Handling Plan – Traffic Light Strategies

Positive Handling Plan – Traffic Light Strategies	
Name of Child:	Class:
DOB:	
Medical Information (that need taking into account before physically intervening) :	
SEN Status: MONITOR SEN 1 SEN 2 EHCP	

_____’s Green Strategy Green = calm & relaxed	
Support Strategies The things that we can do or say to keep Name in the green for as much time as possible.	Behaviour What Name does, says and looks like that gives us clues that he is calm and relaxed.
• Use of language: Name, in Hedgehog class we...; This is the hedgehog way... • Thank you at the end of an instruction – not please. • When.....Then..... e.g. When you have written your name then you can put your pen in the pot. • Lanyard flash cards. • Velcro timetable for Name to physically move to next step. • Consistently praise him verbally/with dojo points to encourage him to keep showing calm and relaxed behaviours. • Allow him time to play with the special truck when he has had a good lesson. • Have a 1-1 discussion about how happy we are with his behaviour – he responds well to the praise. • Provide routine, structure and visual support. • Smartie Party/Class Star	• He wants to be helpful and help with jobs/tidying around the classroom. • He is chatty with his friends and wants to play games with them. • He plays outside and joins in games with other children.

_____’s Amber Strategy Amber = anxious, aroused or distressed	
Support Strategies The things that we can do or say to stop the situation from escalating further and return Name to the proactive phase as soon as possible.	Behaviour What Name does, says and looks like that gives us clues that he is becoming anxious or aroused.
- Change of setting – - Quick reflection zone – ‘Special job’ take a pencil to Mrs Cosstick’s room. - Name to go to Mrs Murphy’s to sing a song/watch a very short clip (less than 5 minutes) on the laptop. - Fresh face approach - Zone 1,2,3 approach - Use smartboard game/programme - I need you to... - Give two very clear choices - Take up time with sand timer - Tactical/Planned Ignoring - Rule reminder (Name, remember that Hedgehogs do it this way)	- He does not follow instructions - He argues with peer/adults - He misplaces items i.e putting his coat on someone else’s peg - He rushes to do another child’s job - He will not move from his workplace when asked - Shouts out in class - Needs attention

_____’s Red Strategy Red = Incident!	
Support Strategies The things that we can do or say to quickly manage the situation and to prevent unnecessary distress, injury and destruction.	Behaviour What Name does, says and looks like when he is challenging.
- Remove Name from the situation/environment to prevent unnecessary distress to himself and other children - Remove other children if necessary - Send for fresh face i.e. SENCO - Distraction - Less talk - As a last resort if required, use Positive Handling, ‘reasonable force’ as defined in the DFe to...	- Name shows a range of behaviours such as: - Disobeying instructions - Refusal - Becoming aggressive/violent e.g. shouting/hitting/kicking/spitting/throwing things/disrupting the classroom/bad language/moving furniture - Shouting/Crying

- Prevent name leaving the classroom where allowing him to leave would risk his safety.
- Prevent name from attacking a member of staff or another pupil.
- Restrain name if he is at risk of harming himself through physical outbursts. (DFe, July 2013)

Positive Handling Techniques (Describe preferred holds, standing, sitting, stating numbers and names of preferred staff):

_____’s Blue Strategy Blue = calming down - but still need to be careful	
Support Strategies The things that we can do or say to support Name to become more calm again and return to the proactive phase.	Behaviour What Name does, says and looks like that tells us that he is becoming more calm
• Countdown from 10-0 using marble run then follow the instruction that has been given – explaining that he has the control to make the right choice. • Time out with fish tank calming music video • Sit with him to reassure him • Praise/ignore what just happened – do not remind him of his behaviour or what just happened.	• Begins to respond to instructions and follow them. • Frown disappears • Smile reappears

Plan agreed by...
Name (child):
Signature:
Name (parent/carer):
Signature:
Name (staff):
Signature:
DATE:

Appendix 3 – Risk Assessment Format when Positive Handling is a planned strategy for an individual

St Monica's Catholic Primary School Risk Assessment for Positive Handling		
Risk Assessment completed by:		
Name of Child:		
DOB:	Gender:	
Class:	Ethnicity:	
Identification of Risk		
Describe the foreseeable risks:		
Is the risk...	potential	occurring
Assessment of Risk		
In which situations does the risk usually occur?		
How likely is it that the risk will occur? (unlikely, possible, probable, likely)		
If the risk arises, who is likely to be injured or hurt?		
What kinds of injuries or harm are likely to occur?		
How serious are the adverse outcomes? (severe, substantial, minor, minimal)		

Risk Reduction Options

What actions are being taken to minimise the level of risk? (Consider changes to environment, awareness of triggers, de-escalation strategies, varying staff deployment, varying teaching group/size, access to quiet area)

Any immediate actions to be taken, by whom and when?

Signed:	Role:
Date:	Copy to: