

Crosby Primary School
Safe Handling Policy
Last reviewed Autumn 2023
Next review Autumn 2024



Introduction

This document attempts to provide a means of ensuring that staff have a safe, supportive, carefully managed and monitored environment, and that children's needs, safety and rights are respected and nurtured.

It is important that all staff who may have to intervene physically with pupils, clearly understand the options and strategies open to them. They must know what is acceptable and what is not. This information is also available to parents and pupils.

Most staff have received training on Safe Handling approaches: care and control and positive handling strategies in schools. The local authority is committed to supporting staff who are seen to be working within agreed policies and procedures and are acting in good faith when using reasonable force.

The Headteacher and Governors have a responsibility to monitor ongoing training needs of staff in respect of necessary skills in dealing with pupils and to make arrangements for such advice, training and support to be available.

Philosophy and Principles

Care and control within schools requires specific guidance for supporting children who present challenging behaviours. The purpose of physical intervention should be to provide the minimum necessary external controls to ensure the safety of children, adults and property.

It is important to specify the following:

- The circumstances when it is acceptable to use physical interventions
- The types of interventions that are acceptable
- The alternatives that should be used, when possible, before physically intervening
- The recording and reporting structures that will be used following a physical intervention
- The "post incident" support structure that will be used following an incident for both staff and children
- The training and monitoring of staff performance
- The structure for evaluating and reviewing all physical interventions

These seven areas are outlined below.

The circumstances when it is acceptable to use physical interventions

Physical control is permissible in circumstances where staff are attempting:

- To avert danger or risk to the child or another individual
- To avoid danger to property
- To prevent serious disruption which would impede the entitlement to education of the other children

- Where any other course of action has previously failed
- Where an offence is about to be committed

It is accepted that physical control may be necessary on some occasions. The degree of force should be that which is considered reasonable and required to control the behaviour and it should be applied in a manner that attempts to reduce rather than provoke aggressive action.

Although a child, particularly a small one, may frequently be held for a number of reasons not directly concerned with children's safety, there are occasions when control can be maintained by holding a child in a manner which does not constitute physical restraint. For example, an adult may insist on holding a child's hand to ensure that they are controlled and safe when crossing a road. A child may be successfully diverted away from disruptive or destructive behaviour through a variety of prompts and guides as per Safe Handling guidance. For example, children engaged in the early stages of an argument or scuffle may be successfully separated using a prompt or guide, but staff should not forget to always use verbal and non-verbal signals before any physical intervention. This also applies to very young children who may be less likely to respond to verbal influence alone.

Staff should adopt the following principles when dealing with children in this way:

- The member of staff chosen to intervene in this way should, whenever possible, have an established relationship with the child and should explain to the child what they are doing and why
- Holding should not arouse sexual expectations or feelings
- When the risk has passed physical contact should cease

The types of interventions that are acceptable

The proper use of physical restraint requires skill and judgement, as well as knowledge of non-harmful methods of control, and it should be one of last resort. The onus is on the member of staff to determine when this position has been reached, and the degree of restraint which is appropriate. Restraint should always involve a minimum of 2 trained members of staff whenever possible.

Unless in an emergency, types of physical intervention should be identified on a child's Personal Handling Plan.

It is impossible to predict every possible incident and therefore discretion and good judgement must be applied at the time. If there is a likelihood of restraint being required, staff should plan ahead.

To be judged lawful, the use of force, if applied, will need to be in proportion to consequences it is intended to prevent. This will mean that:

- There is a clear or perceived risk of injury to the person or others
- Staff have considered all the possible alternatives and the age and competence of the pupil
- The action taken is the least detrimental alternative
- The pupil is restrained for as short a time as possible until the pupil has calmed down
- The incidents of the use of restraint are recorded

Staff should act in good faith, in a reasonable and responsible way. There should be no question of physical abuse or ill-treatment. Where possible, authorised members of staff should have received Safe Handling training, although it is acknowledged that on rare occasions, an untrained staff member or volunteer may need to intervene physically to protect a child (e.g. to prevent a child from running into a busy road).

Restriction of liberty

A child may insist on leaving the school in circumstances where there is concern that this may not be in their or other persons' best interests. In these circumstances it is reasonable for teachers not to let them go without challenge, and to stand in their way if they attempt to leave the building. If the child resists physically then, unless there is risk, the teacher should desist and allow him/her to go, so that the incident should not escalate into one requiring physical restraint. In such circumstances consideration should be given to the need to alert others, including the police, to the possibility of criminal activity taking place.

In the case of a younger child similarly demonstrating their intention to run away into possible danger, it may be necessary to hold or closely supervise them for a minimum time to keep them from the real possibility of danger if they were to run off. The same would apply in the case of a young person with special educational needs.

In extreme cases when it is clear that the child is acutely and seriously distressed and there is an immediate threat of the child harming themselves or others, it would be reasonable to use physical restraint to prevent the child leaving. However, this will only deal with the immediate problem and careful follow-up work will be necessary, probably with additional professional advice, to bring about longer term stability and prevent repeated use of physical restraint upon the child.

If a child does not recognise or understand the risks, then it is the duty of staff to keep them safe. This consideration has to be paramount. It may be necessary to restrict a child's access to certain rooms or parts of the building, and to lock a door which gives access to an unsafe environment. However, any such practice must be considered to be absolutely essential in order to maintain children's safety.

Crosby Primary School sometimes uses a formal time-out procedure with some children.

The alternatives that should be used, when possible, before physically intervening

Children need clear boundaries within which they can feel secure and be able to relate freely. Without this sense of security, aggressive and destructive behaviour can totally divert the direction of a school's work. Many problems can be avoided if staff make clear from the beginning that there are limits to tolerance of misbehaviour.

The number of expectations are as few as is reasonably feasible. They are explicit, and are presented in a positive light wherever possible. Only expectations which can be carried through and upheld are adopted.

Incidents that are potentially aggressive should be headed off by distracting the individual or the group of children. If the peer group leader or leaders are aggressive, staff must be seen to be trying to control and contain them.

The recording and reporting structures that will be used following a physical intervention

All incidents involving restraint must be formally recorded on the school form and passed to the Headteacher as soon as possible after the event as stated above. A copy is sent to parents and the original placed on file.

The “post incident” support structure that will be used following an incident for both staff and children

Violent situations involve stress for all parties involved. With children, a calming down period followed by reparation should be considered. It is unrealistic to expect an immediate return to normal. There is a danger that support offered is immediate but short-lived. Consideration has to be given to the effect as staff and colleagues in school should ensure that support is provided in the short-term to cover teaching duties until the person concerned can resume duties. It is important to remember that human anxieties tend to surface over a number of days and, accordingly, support must be on-going.

All those involved should be aware of their right to invoke a complaints procedure and know how to do so. Crosby Primary School has a clear complaints procedure. Neither staff nor children should be discouraged from exercising their right to involve the police if they believe they have been physically assaulted.

Assaults and Allegations of Assault

It may happen that a child or parent physically assaults a member of staff or that an allegation of assault may be made against a member of staff. In these circumstances it will be carefully investigated by an independent person. Any formal complaint made by a parent or parents will be dealt with by the agreed procedure for investigating complaints.

In the case of an assault on a member of staff the appropriate online Incident Report Form should be completed with Louise Smith, School Business Manager, within 3 working days.

Reports need to be completed as soon as possible after the incident. However, information needs to be objective, so adults should be composed.

Where there is an allegation of abuse child protection procedures are followed. The local authority reserves the right to investigate any assaults on pupils or staff.

The training and monitoring of staff performance

Crosby Primary School has a whole school Behaviour Policy which creates a positive ethos within the school. Regular staff meetings explore the feelings of staff with regard to children’s behaviour and restraint. Children are involved in pre-emptive work discussing the issues of behaviour and consequences. The needs of staff are identified through the appraisal process.

Training is given to staff as part of their on-going professional development. It is specific to the needs of Crosby Primary School and is given with the aim of building staff confidence. Safe Handling training includes information on the legal and ethical issues of positive handling and includes strategies for de-escalation from a restraint.

Safe Handling training on the use and techniques of positive handling strategies including physical restraint is only given as part of a programme which puts its use within the full context of care and control. This programme includes:

- Creating a positive ethos within the school in line with the school's Behaviour Policy
- Advice and training in de-escalation and behaviour management
- Positive handling strategies including restraint
- Training on area Child Protection procedures including referral procedures

The structure for evaluating and reviewing all physical interventions

Incidents are logged and the frequency with which physical means of control are employed are examined in relation to the children and staff involved. This information informs policy, practice and training programmes. Incidents of both restraint and assault are reported to the governing body termly.

Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored and reviewed by the governing body. Last review Autumn 2023.