

Weston Schools Federation

Positive Handling Policy 2025 - 2027

POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

Introduction

It is the philosophy of Weston Park Primary School and Weston Shore Infant School that it holds, as its first priority, the needs of the students in its care.

Rationale

The purpose of this Positive Handling Policy is to describe the ethos, culture and values within a framework for relating positively to students and improving their ability to manage their behaviour. This approach requires an environment with clear, predictable and consistent structures that also operates in such a way as to maintain the naturalness and flexibility of school life. This positive view of students and our work underpins and drives our culture and ethos, creating a firm foundation for the positive management of behaviour.

The policy and practice seeks to demonstrate:

- A whole establishment approach conducive to quality physical and emotional care, and therapeutic intervention which incorporates effective teaching and learning in an innovative and sensitive way
- Arrangements and practices which are known to students, staff, parents/carers and placing authorities that effectively convey the culture of the schools
- A sense of home, community and shared values
- Mutual respect
- The promotion of positive relationships
- A commitment to proactivity rather than crisis driven approaches
- The encouragement of self-worth, self-confidence and self-discipline
- An emphasis on positive effort and achievement
- The encouragement and generalisation of good behaviour to the community
- An appropriateness to off-site experiences and environments as well as on-site
- An active partnership with parents/carers
- That restorative approaches are embedded as a response to inappropriate behaviour that impacts on others
- That any use of sanction is considered, fair and consistent

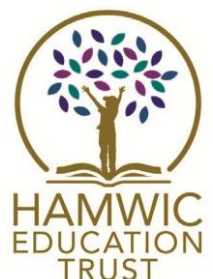
Background

We define Positive Handling as follows :

Positive Handling is when a member of staff uses force intentionally to restrict a child's movement against his or her will.

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All staff within this setting aim to help children take responsibility for their own behaviour. We do this through a combination of approaches, which include:

- positive role modelling
- teaching an interesting and challenging curriculum
- setting and enforcing appropriate boundaries and expectations
- providing supportive feedback.

More details about this and our general approach to promoting positive behaviour can be found in our behaviour for learning policy.

There are times when children's behaviour presents particular challenges that may require Positive Handling. This policy sets out our expectations for the use of such intervention. It is not intended to refer to the general use of physical contact which might be appropriate in a range of situations, such as:

- giving physical guidance to children (for example in practical activities and PE)
- providing emotional support when a child is distressed
- providing physical care (such as first aid or toileting).

This policy is consistent with our Child Protection and Equal Opportunities policies, and with national and local guidance for schools on safeguarding children. We exercise appropriate care when using physical contact (there is further guidance in our Child Protection policy); there are some children for whom physical contact would be inappropriate (such as those with a history of physical or sexual abuse, or those from certain cultural/religious groups). We pay careful attention to issues of gender and privacy, and to any specific requirements of certain cultural/religious groups.

Principles for the use of Positive Handling

In the context of positive approaches

We only use Positive Handling where the risks involved in using force are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force. It is not our preferred way of managing children's behaviour. Positive Handling may be used only in the context of a well-established and well implemented positive behaviour management framework with the exception of emergency situations. We describe our approach to promoting positive behaviour in our Positive Behaviour Policy. We aim to do all we can in order to avoid using Positive Handling. We would only use Positive Handling where we judge that there is no reasonably practicable less intrusive alternative.

However, there may be rare situations of such concern where we judge that we would need to use Positive Handling immediately. We would use Positive Handling at the same time as using other approaches, such as saying, "Stop!" and giving a warning of what might happen next. Safety is always a paramount concern and staff are not advised to use Positive Handling if it is likely to put themselves at risk. We will make parents/guardians aware of our Positive Handling policy alongside other policies when their child joins our schools.

Duty of care

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We all have a duty of care towards the children in our Schools. This duty of care applies as much to what we don't do as what we do do. When children are in danger of hurting themselves or others, or of causing significant damage to property, we have a responsibility to intervene. In most cases, this involves an attempt to divert the child to another activity or a simple instruction to "Stop!" along with a warning of what might happen next. However, if we judge that it is necessary, we may use Positive Handling.

Reasonable force

When we need to use Positive Handling, we use it within the principle of reasonable force. This means using an amount of force in proportion to the circumstances. We use as little force as is necessary in order to maintain safety, and we use this for as short a period as possible.

When Positive Handling may be used

The use of Positive Handling may be justified where a pupil is:

- committing an offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil)
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself); or
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the schools or among any pupils receiving education at the schools, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Positive Handling may also be appropriate where, although none of the above have yet happened, they are judged as highly likely to be about to happen.

We are very cautious about using Positive Handling where there are no immediate concerns about possible injury or exceptional damage to property. Positive Handling would only be used in exceptional circumstances, with staff that know the student well and who are able to make informed judgements about the relative risks of using, or not using, Positive Handling; for example stopping a younger child leaving the school site.

The main aim of Positive Handling is usually to maintain or restore safety. We acknowledge that there may be times when Positive Handling may be justified as a reasonable and proportional response to prevent damage to property or to maintain good order and discipline at the schools. However, we would be particularly careful to consider all other options available before using Positive Handling to achieve either of these goals. In all cases, we remember that, even if the aim is to re-establish good order, Positive Handling may actually escalate the difficulty.

Our duty of care means that we might use a Positive Handling if a child is trying to leave our site and we judged that they would be at unacceptable risk. This duty of care also extends beyond our site boundaries: there may also be situations where we need to use Positive Handling when we have control or charge of children off site (e.g. on trips).

We never use Positive Handling out of anger or as a punishment.

Who can use Positive Handling?

If the use of Positive Handling is appropriate, and is part of a positive behaviour management framework, a member of staff who knows the child well should be involved, and where possible, trained through an accredited provider in the use of Positive Handling. However, in an emergency, any of the following may be able to use reasonable force in the circumstances set out in Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act (2006):

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- any teacher who works at either school, and
- any other person whom the Headteacher has authorised to have control or charge of pupils, including:

(a) support staff whose job normally includes supervising pupils such as teaching assistants, learning support assistants, learning mentors and lunchtime supervisors; and

(b) people to whom the Headteacher has given temporary authorisation to have control or charge of pupils such as paid members of staff whose job does not normally involve supervising pupils (for example catering or premises-related staff) and unpaid volunteers (for example parents accompanying pupils on school-organised visits).

Training

Where the school has to meet the needs of specific pupils where there is a known need for physical intervention, nominated staff will be given bespoke training.

Planning around an individual and risk assessment

In an emergency, staff do their best, using reasonable force within their duty of care.

Where an individual child has an individual positive behaviour management plan, which includes the use of Positive Handling, we ensure that such staff receive appropriate training and support in behaviour management as well as Positive Handling. We consider staff and children's physical and emotional health when we make these plans and consult with the child's parents/guardians.

In most situations, our use of Positive Handling is in the context of a prior risk assessment which considers:

- What the risks are
- Who is at risk and how
- What we can do to manage the risk (this may include the possible use of Positive Handling)

We use this risk assessment to inform the individual behaviour plan that we develop to support the child. If this behaviour plan includes Positive Handling it will be as just one part of a whole approach to supporting the child's behaviour. The behaviour plan outlines:

- Our understanding of what the child is trying to achieve or communicate through his/her behaviour.
- How we adapt our environment to better meet the child's needs.
- How we teach and encourage the child to use new, more appropriate behaviours.
- How we reward the child when he or she makes progress.
- How we respond when the child's behaviour is challenging (responsive strategies)

We pay particular attention to responsive strategies. We use a range of approaches (including humour, distraction, relocation, and offering choices) as direct alternatives to using Positive Handling. We choose these responsive strategies in the light of our risk assessment. We draw from as many different viewpoints as possible when we anticipate that an individual child's behaviour may require some form of Positive Handling. Where appropriate we include the child's perspective. We also involve the child's parents (or

those with parental responsibility), staff from our schools who work with the child, and any visiting support staff (such as Educational Psychologists, Behaviour Support Team workers, Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers and colleagues from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). We record the outcome from these planning meetings and seek parental signature to confirm their knowledge of our planned approach. We review these plans at least once every four to six months, or more frequently if there are any concerns about the nature or frequency of the use of Positive Handling or where there are any major changes to the child's circumstances.

We recognise that there may be some children within our schools who find physical contact in general particularly unwelcome as a consequence of their culture/religious group or disability. There may be others for whom such contact is troubling as a result of their personal history, in particular of abuse. We have systems to alert staff discreetly to such issues so that we can plan accordingly to meet individual children's needs.

What type of Positive Handling can be used?

Any use of Positive Handling by our staff should be consistent with the principle of reasonable force. In all cases, staff should be guided in their choices of action by the principles above. Staff should not act in ways that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- holding a child around the neck or collar or in any other way that might restrict the child's ability to breathe
- slapping, punching or kicking a child
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- tripping a child
- holding a child by the hair or ear.

Such actions would normally be considered potentially inappropriate.

We do not plan for and do not allow, except in emergency situations, staff to use seclusion. Seclusion is where a young person is forced to spend time alone in a confined space against their will. We may, however, use withdrawal or time-out in a planned way. We define these as follows:

Withdrawal involves taking a young person, with their agreement, away from a situation that has caused anxiety or distress, to a place where they can be observed continuously and supported until they are ready to resume their usual activities.

Time-out is where a response to a young person's inappropriate behaviour includes a specific period of time with no positive reinforcement as part of an overall intervention plan.

Where staff need specific training in the use of Positive Handling, we arrange that they should receive MAYBO training, through Southampton Educational Psychologist Service (as part of the Local Authority). We ensure that staff have access to appropriate refresher training.

Further, we actively work to ensure general training is accessed by our staff in the following areas:

- relating to legal issues policy and risk assessment
- in addition to behaviour management strategies such as positive approaches to behaviour management

- de-escalation techniques and managing.

A record of such training is kept and monitored.

Recording and reporting

We record any use of Positive Handling using the Hamwic Trust on-line recording tool. We do this as soon as possible after an event, ideally within 24 hours. According to the nature of the incident, we may also note it in other records, such as the accident book, violent incident records or child tracking sheets which are also kept in the school offices and shared with appropriate Children's Services Department, e.g. Health and Safety. Further, the Hamwic Board/governing body ensures that procedures are in place for recording significant incidents and then reporting these incidents as soon as possible to pupil's parents.

After using Positive Handling, we ensure that the Headteacher is informed as soon as possible. We also inform parents by phone (or by letter or note home with the child if this is not possible).

In rare cases, we might need to inform the police, such as in incidents that involve the possession of weapons. This would be in line with our general practice, informed by the DfE Guidance Screening, Searching and Confiscation – Advice for Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies (2014) and Section 45 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006.

Supporting and reviewing

We recognise that it is distressing to be involved in a physical intervention, whether as the child being held, the person doing the holding, or someone observing or hearing about what has happened.

After a Positive Handling, we give support to the child so that they can understand why it was necessary. Where we can, we record how the child felt about this. Where it is appropriate, we have the same sort of conversations with other children who observed what happened. In all cases, we will wait until the child has calmed down enough to be able to talk productively and learn from this conversation. If necessary, the child will be asked whether he or she has been injured so that appropriate first aid can be given. This also gives the child an opportunity to say whether anything inappropriate has happened in connection with the incident.

We also support adults who were involved, either actively or as observers, by giving them the chance to talk through what has happened with the most appropriate person from the staff team.

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A key aim of our after-incident support is to repair any potential strain to the relationship between the child and the people that were involved in the Positive Handling.

After a Positive Handling, we consider whether the individual behaviour plan needs to be reviewed so that we can reduce the risk of needing to use Positive Handling again.

Monitoring

We monitor the use of Positive Handling in our schools. Senior Leadership team and the Assistant Headteacher (SENCO) are responsible for reviewing the records on a termly basis, and more often if the need arises, so that appropriate action can be taken. The information is also used by the Hamwic Board/governing body when this policy and related policies are reviewed.

Our analysis considers equalities issues such as age, gender, disability, culture and religion issues in order to make sure that there is no potential discrimination; we also consider potential child protection issues. We look for any trends in the relative use of Positive Handling across different staff members and across different times of day or settings. Our aims are to protect children, to avoid discrimination and to develop our ability to meet the needs of children without using Positive Handling. We report this analysis back to the governing body so that appropriate further action can be taken and monitored.

Concerns and complaints

The use of Positive Handling is distressing to all involved and can lead to concerns, allegations or complaints of inappropriate or excessive use. In particular, a child might complain about the use of Positive Handling in the heat of the moment but on further reflection might better understand why it happened. In other situations, further reflection might lead the child to feel strongly that the use of Positive Handling was inappropriate. This is why we are careful to ensure all children have a chance to review the incident after they have calmed down.

If a child or parent has a concern about the way Positive Handling has been used, our school's complaints procedure explains how to take the matter further and how long we will take to respond to these concerns.

Where there is an allegation of assault or abusive behaviour, we ensure that the Headteacher is immediately informed. We would also follow our child protection procedures. In the absence of the Headteacher, in relation to Positive Handling, we ensure that one of the Deputy Headteachers is informed. If the concern, complaint or allegation concerns the Headteacher, we ensure that the Hamwic Board/Chair of Governors is informed.

Our staff will always seek to avoid injury to the pupil, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally. This is not to be seen as necessarily a failure of professional technique but a regrettable and infrequent side effect of making sure the service user remain safe.

If parents/carers are not satisfied with the way the complaint has been handled, they have the right to take the matter further as set out in our complaints procedure.

The results and procedures used in dealing with complaints are monitored by the Hamwic Board/governing body.

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other school policies; in particular Equal Opportunities, Positive Behaviour and SEND.

Policy date: May 2025

Review date: May 2027



Signed Chair of Governing Body:

[date]

Signed Headteacher:

[date]

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