



St. Peter's Catholic Primary School

Safe Touch and Positive Handling Policy

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to share the same commitment. We follow Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership. For more information go to <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gscp/>

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Incorporating Child Protection Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Ratified: 25th October 2023
Review Date: October 2026



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1. Introduction

ST PETER'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL values the contribution that every child and young person can make and welcomes diversity of culture and intellectual style. The school seeks to raise the achievement, remove barriers to learning and increase physical and curricular access for all.

2. Policy Statement

Staff at this school are trained to look after the pupils in their care. Staff have a duty to intervene in order to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others. There may also be situations in which a child seriously disrupts good order in the school or causes damage to property. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically they will follow the school's Safe Touch and Positive Handling Policy. Any parents wishing to view this policy may do so on request.

3. Context

- 3.1 Our policy on Safe Touch and Positive Handling has been developed in the context of the local authorities' Safeguarding Procedures and Policies and Government guidance. It takes into account the extensive neurobiological research and other empirical studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, emotional regulation, mental health and the development of pro-social skills. This policy also includes specific guidance relating to the use of force and physical intervention where it is used in emergency and planned situations (known as positive handling).
- 3.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with 'Use of reasonable force Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies July 2013' (DFE), 'Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention' June 2019 (DFE) and the school's Safeguarding including Child Protection policy, Anti-Bullying And Hate policy and Behaviour policy.
- 3.3 We have a policy on safe touch and positive handling in order to protect pupils and school staff from allegations. Under Safeguarding procedures many schools, education authorities and academies have adopted 'No Touch' policies. St. Peter's Catholic Primary School is adopting an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch in special cases as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy emotional growth and learning.
- 3.4 This policy applies to all staff at St. Peter's Catholic Primary School and to all activities, on or off-site and at all times.

"Who can use reasonable force? • All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force • This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit."



Page 4 'Use of reasonable force Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies July 2013' (DFE)

3.5 Named members of staff have also received 'Positive Handling' training through 'Team Teach' and have received two-day training and know how and when to hold pupils in safe ways within governmental guidelines both for therapeutic purposes and in emergency situations.

3.6 Thrive Licensed Practitioners are also then trained by Thrive staff to combine their practice with the ThriveApproach™ so they can identify and use safe touch as a developmental intervention.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and related procedures lies with the Headteacher and the governors. They will approve and review this policy every three years.

4.2 The pupil's teacher will be the first point of contact for any member of staff, parent/carer who wishes to discuss any concerns relating to the behaviour of a child. The teacher should inform the headteacher, inclusion manager or pastoral leader if a positive handling plan is required.

4.3 The Headteacher will be the named member of staff responsible for ensuring that all School staff are aware of this policy and any related procedures.

4.4 The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that all staff supporting pupils who may require 'safe touch' have appropriate training. A record of this training will be held in the school office.

4.5 The Headteacher will be responsible for the monitoring of all individual positive handling plans (PHPs) and risk assessing any activities/individual pupils as necessary.

4.6 The school will ensure that suitably trained staff are available whenever pupils with significant SEMH needs and or those who may require a PHP are engaged in school activities.

4.7 The school will ensure that all new staff/students receive induction in appropriate touch when they begin work with pupils.

5. The Developmentally Necessary Experience of Safe Touch

5.1 Pupils learn who they are and how the world is 'in relationship to others'. The quality of the child's relationships with significant adults is key to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Touch is recognised as being a physical way of soothing, calming and containing distress. Berne identified touch as a human 'hunger' necessary for survival and well-being. Many research studies have indicated the necessity of human contact and touch in the healthy development of pupils. It is a factor in pupils who experience neglect and 'fail to thrive'.



- 5.2 If 'safe touch' is to be used as an intervention, it must be done with the full knowledge and consent of parents/carers, by trained and supervised staff in carefully monitored situations where its therapeutic use has been agreed because it addresses an identified developmental need on the part of the child.
- 5.3 The use of 'safe touch' by designated adults needs to be supervised, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, as indeed does the policy, to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of pupils, parents/carers and staff.
- 5.4 Research shows clearly that healthy pro-social brain development requires access to 'safe touch' as one of the means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, sad or angry child. It is essential for all pupils to learn the difference between safe and unsafe touch and to experience having their strongest emotions contained, validated, accepted and soothed by a significant adult.
- 5.5 'Safe touch' used to calm, soothe and regulate a child's emotions is a needed developmental experience. The brain does not develop self-soothing neuronal pathways unless and until this safe emotional regulation has been experienced within a positive relationship with a significant adult. Where pupils have had insufficient experience of 'safe touch' and calming regulation this may be a priority to help the brain to develop access to thinking, judging and evaluating mechanisms.
- 5.6 'Safe touch' is one of the key ways of regulating pupils' emotions, but it is a strategy that fully trained staff will use only under supervision and in line with a whole school THRIVE approach.

Other means of calming, soothing and containing pupils' strong emotions include:

- Slowing one's pace
- Lowering the voice
- Breathing more deeply
- Initially matching the pitch and volume of the child's emotional display (shout, cry etc) and then regulating it down
- Talking slowly firmly and quietly in an unhurried way
- Providing clear predictable consistently held boundaries

- 5.7 The developmentally appropriate (and therapeutic) use of 'safe touch' is defined by situations in which abstinence would actually be inhumane, unkind and potentially psychologically or neuro-biologically damaging. Examples include the beneficial use of touch in the comforting of a child who is in an acute state of distress and/or out of control.

Not to reach out to the child in such circumstances could be re-traumatising and neurobiologically damaging as well as confirming or inviting anti-social behaviour patterns. Moreover, gentle safe holding is appropriate if a child:

- is hurting himself/herself or others (or is likely to hurt)
- is damaging school property
- is severely disrupting the learning of others (where it is not possible to move others out of the way)



5.8 This is in line with The 1996 Education Act (Section 550A) that stipulates that reasonable physical intervention may be used to prevent a pupil from significant harm to self or others, damage to property, or committing a criminal offence. Any staff member undertaking safe touch or a restraint of any kind should never do this without at least one witness. The 'help' protocol will be followed and all necessary staff will receive appropriate and timely training in line with team teach guidance.

5.9 Government guidance also specifies other examples 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 walking 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 exercises or techniques during physical education (PE) lessons or sports coaching
- To give first aid or assist with intimate care

5.10 It is important that the age and stage of development of every child informs how adults are with that child. Any member of staff who is concerned about appropriate touch should discuss this with their line manager.

5.11 If pupils are behaving in unacceptable, threatening, dangerous, aggressive or out of control ways, they have not yet learned how their strongest emotional reactions can be contained, channelled and communicated safely. In recognition of this, under special, agreed and supervised conditions, staff will consider using safe touch and positive handling as one of the means available to them for example to calm a distressed child, to contain an angry or wild child and/or encourage or affirm an anxious child or to support a child with low self-esteem.

6. De-Escalation as the preferred method

6.1 At the initial stages of a pupil's decision to not conform with the standard school behaviour policy show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason. The 'Team Teach' recommendations are to talk with the pupil during an episode of noncompliance as follows:

- Use the pupils name
- Recognise their difficulty
- Tell them you're here to help; 'can you help me by...'
- Direct to talk and say you'll listen.
- Defuse the behaviour by making an alternative suggestion 'How about if I..... but I will catch up with you later.....'
- Offer support e.g. 'I care enough about you to not let you get out of control'

7. Further Alternatives to Physical Controls

7.1 A member of staff who chooses not to make a physical intervention can still take effective action to reduce risk. They can:



- Give clear directions for pupils to stop.
- Remind them about rules and likely outcomes.
- Remove an audience or take vulnerable pupils to a safer place.
- Make the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons.
- Use positive touch (caring c's) to guide or escort pupils to somewhere less pressured.

8. Help Protocols

8.1 The expectation at this school is that all staff should support one another. This means that staff always offer help and always accept it. Help does not always mean taking over. It may mean just staying around in case you are needed, getting somebody else or looking after somebody else's group. Supporting a colleague does not only mean agreeing with their suggestions and offering sympathy when things go wrong. Real support sometimes means acting as a critical friend to help colleagues become aware of possible alternative strategies. Good communication is necessary so that colleagues avoid confusion when help is offered and accepted. They need to agree scripts so that all parties understand what sort of assistance is required and what is available.

9. The Last Resort Principal

9.1 At this school we only use physical restraint when there is no realistic alternative. This does not mean that we always expect people to methodically work their way through a series of failing strategies, before attempting an intervention in which they have some confidence. Nor does it mean always waiting until the danger is imminent, by which time the prospect of safely managing it may be significantly reduced. National guidance is clear on this point.

"If necessary staff have the authority to take immediate action to prevent harm occurring even if the harm is expected to happen some time in the predictable future."
Para 10 Page 4 Department of Health – 1997 – "The Control of Children in the Public Care: Interpretation of the Children Act 1989" – London: H M S O

9.2 It does mean that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative. It also means that we expect staff to experiment and think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective.

10. Proactive Physical Interventions

10.1 As a general rule no one has the right to touch, move, hold or contain another person. However, people with a duty of care sometimes necessary when in the best interests of the individual. It is sometimes reasonable to use physical controls to prevent extreme behaviour from becoming dangerous provided that it is an agreed part of the Positive Handling Plan. Examples of this are where a pupil has shown ritual patterns of behaviour, which in the past have led to the child becoming more distressed and violent. In such circumstances it may be reasonable to withdraw the child to a safer place when the pattern of behaviour begins, rather than wait until the child is distressed and out of control. The paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the child and that it reduces, rather than increases, risk.

11. Reasonable and Proportionate



11.1 Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate. People should not react in anger. If they feel they are becoming angry they should consider withdrawing to allow someone else to deal with the situation. Where staff act in good faith, and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported.

11.2 When physical controls are considered staff should think about the answers to the following questions:

- How is this in the best interest of the pupil?
- Why is a less intrusive intervention not preferable?
- Why do we have to act now?
- Why am I the best person to be doing this?
- Why is this absolutely necessary?

11.3 If staff can answer these questions it is more likely that a physical intervention will be judged to be reasonable and proportionate.

12. Unreasonable use of Force

12.1 It is not reasonable to use force simply to enforce compliance in circumstances where there is no risk. Nor is it reasonable to use any more force than is necessary to achieve a reduction in risk. Under no circumstances should pain be deliberately inflicted or should pupils be deliberately subjected to undignified or humiliating treatment (this should not be confused with the unavoidable discomfort associated with some approved techniques for disengaging from assaults such as bites and grabs). Other than as a one-off emergency measure to protect health and safety, force should never be used to keep a pupil secluded. Seclusion is only lawful by specific court order and cannot become part of a planned strategy at this school.

13. Recording and Reporting

13.1 Where an adult has held a child using a Team Teach restrictive physical intervention, this will be recorded in the child's file. A copy of the entry and the most recent behaviour policy will be included on the child's file.

13.2 Any child who has significant SEMH needs will have a positive handling plan completed with teaching staff and shared with parents/carers. Any plan will be reviewed at least annually and discontinued as necessary.

13.3 The school will ensure that "significant incidents" (where a member of staff has used a physical intervention on a pupil) are recorded and reported to parents and all agencies involved with the child as appropriate.

13.4 If it is likely that reporting the incident will result in significant harm to the pupil, then the incident will be reported to GCSB in line with our child protection and safeguarding policy.

13.5 Parents/ carers will be informed by a member of the senior leadership team of any significant incident when a restraint has been used, ideally by telephone and as soon as possible after the incident.



14. Post-incident Support

14.1 Members of staff who have been assaulted may wish to report the incident to the police and/or seek advice and support from their trade union representative.

14.2 If staff or pupils have been injured, immediate first aid will be provided and medical help accessed, if necessary. Staff and pupils will also receive emotional support. Letters to parents informing them about the use of restraint may be used to engage in discussion regarding future course of action. A positive handling plan may be necessary to prevent and deal with any further recurrence of behaviour that could lead to the use of restraint.

14.3 If necessary the school will also inform local authority pupils' services (Youth Offending Team; Educational Psychology Service; CYPS; Staff will aim to help the pupil to develop strategies to avoid repeating the difficult behaviour.

14.4 The school will provide ongoing support for staff and pupils as long as necessary in respect of: physical consequences, emotional stress/loss of confidence, opportunities to analyse, reflect and learn from the incident.

15. Complaints

15.1 All school users and stakeholders have a right to complain about actions taken by school staff including use of force. If a specific allegation is made against a member of staff, then the school will follow the related policy and procedures.

15.2 Other complaints will be dealt with via the school's complaints procedure.