



The Whiteoak Academies of Hannah More Infants and Grove Juniors

“Planting dreams. Nurturing hearts. Growing minds.”

Using Team Teach – Positive Handling and Safe Touch Policy

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1. Rationale

At the Whiteoak Academies we are committed to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff, whilst supporting children with a variety of Special Educational Needs. As part of that support, on occasion, it may be necessary for an adult to touch a pupil to be able to support them, comfort them and to meet their needs and keep them safe in a given moment.

In our family of schools we create a calm environment to minimise incidents that may require any physical intervention. We de-escalate incidents when they do arise. We only use physical interventions when the risks involved of doing so are outweighed by the risks of not doing so.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Behaviour
- Safeguarding & Child Protection
- SEND
- Intimate Care

This policy details how we will implement guidance provided by DfE, Team Teach and other relevant advice.

The Whiteoak Academies is a member of the Lighthouse Schools Partnership (LSP). The LSP support the TEAM TEACH approach to supporting pupils in school and have a long term plan to have TEAM TEACH trained staff in all of the Trust Schools.



2. Aims

The term 'positive handling' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. A clear and consistent positive handling policy supports all students, including those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, within an ethos of mutual respect, care and safety.

Staff have a duty to intervene in order to:

- prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others – keeping everyone safe,
- prevent or reduce damage to property,
- maintain good order and discipline,

Furthermore, the school takes seriously its duty of care to students, employees and visitors to the school.

- The first and paramount consideration is the welfare of the children in our care.
- The second is the welfare and protection of the adults who look after them.

Staff will be trained to look after students in their care and aim to focus on de-escalation techniques wherever possible. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically they will follow this policy, alongside our School Behaviour Policy.

3. Legislation and Guidance

- The DfE non-statutory guidance document [‘Use of reasonable force’](#) (dated July 2013- reviewed 2015) provides advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies.
- Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the Act) enables school staff to use such force as is reasonable. There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force. DfE guidance on the use of reasonable force in schools (2013) also states that in addition to the general power to use reasonable force, headteachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for “prohibited items”. Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules.
- In March 2019 the Equality and Human Rights Commission published the guidance document, [‘Human rights framework for restraint’](#). This guidance sets out key principles of articles 3, 8 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), incorporated into domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998, which govern the use of restraint across all settings.
- [The Equality Act 2010](#).

DfE guidance and the Act make it clear that school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. However, wherever possible, only staff trained in the pre-emptive and responsive positive handling strategy techniques of Team Teach will use physical intervention techniques with children, and only when necessary. Although **any** member of staff may be required to physically intervene with a student who is endangering themselves or others, damaging property or to maintain good order and discipline, we would expect accredited staff to take over as soon as possible. (See Appendix 1 for current list.)

4. What is Team Teach?

‘Team Teach’ is accredited through ICM (Institute of Conflict Management). Staff undergo a 6 hour or 12 hour course (depending upon the needs of the children they are working with) led by two qualified trainers with a refresher course undertaken every three years. Further details of the Team Teach approach can be found on the [Team Teach website](#). School staff trained in Team Teach techniques meet together 3 times a year to share their experiences and practice their techniques, in order to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. The school will keep a list of staff qualified to use Team Teach. (See Appendix 1 for current list.)

“The positive behaviour management strategies that Team Teach develops and promotes emphasise team building, personal safety, communication, and verbal and non-verbal de-escalation techniques for dealing with challenging behaviour which reduce the need for physical intervention. As a last resort, we also teach positive handling techniques to resolve conflicts in ways that are safe, and which provide opportunities for repair and reflection for everyone involved.

We enable services to develop acceptable and authorised responses to disruptive, disturbing, angry and aggressive behaviours in a manner that maintains positive relationships and provides safety for all, helping reduce the number of serious incidents involving physical controls, and raising the awareness of the importance of recording, reporting, monitoring and evaluating all incidents involving positive handling.

We see positive handling as just one part of a whole-setting approach to behaviour management. As such, our framework is entirely compatible with Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) approaches for people with learning disabilities”

Team Teach: <https://www.teamteach.co.uk/about-us/>

5. Before using physical interventions

We take effective action to de-escalate and reduce risk by:

- Showing care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiating and reasoning.
- Giving clear directions for students to stop.
- Reminding the student about rules and likely outcomes.
- Removing an audience or taking vulnerable students to a safe place.
- Making the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons.
- Using positive guidance to escort students to somewhere less pressured.
- Ensuring that colleagues know what is happening and call for help.

Whilst or before intervention, staff should speak calmly as a way of reassurance e.g. *“I am doing this to keep you safe.”*

The decision to use physical intervention will be taken in the context of the level of risk presented by the behaviour, the seriousness of the incident and the relative risks of the use of physical intervention compared with any available alternative. The use of physical intervention will take into account the characteristics of the pupil, including their age, gender, SEN, physical needs or disability, developmental level or cultural issues.

At The Whiteoak Academies we pro-actively foster positive relationships and only use reasonable force when there is no realistic alternative. This means that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative. We expect staff to think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective.

There might be some situations in which the need for positive handling is immediate and where there are no equal effective alternatives (a child is about to run in the road). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives such as the use of assertiveness skills:

- Use a distracter such as a whistle or loud bell / noise to interrupt the behaviour long enough for other methods of verbal control
- Withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened
- Other techniques designed to defuse a situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour, in which case the incident could be dealt with later when emotions are running less high
- The employment of other sanctions consistent with The Whiteoak Academies policy on behaviour

Where physical interventions are needed to prevent injury to the student, other students or staff, or to prevent serious damage, these should be for the minimum length of time possible and using the least possible force. All staff must consider whether they are using reasonable force. In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate and effective positive handling should be a last resort. If positive handling becomes necessary:

DO

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

DON'T

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Attempt to reason with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck, lying face down or pulling arms across the child's chest

6. Dynamic Risk Assessments - Responding to unforeseen emergencies

Even the best planning system cannot cover every eventuality and the school recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet.

An unforeseen event may require an emergency response with a dynamic risk assessment. After that event, staff have a duty to plan ahead and prepare a risk assessment detailed in their individual student plan which could be the Student Education Plan or Pupil Passport.

7. Individual Risk Assessments and Crisis Plans

Risk assessments are required for students who exhibit challenging behaviour. Responsible staff should think ahead to anticipate what might go wrong. Parents will be consulted on the content of the risk assessment and review. Risk Assessments will be amended and updated after an incident of behaviour to ensure steps are taken to prevent or avoid that behaviour happening again.

When considering a student's behaviour, staff and parents will think about the following:

- Can we anticipate a Health and Safety risk related to this student's behaviour?
- Have we got all the information we need to conduct the risk assessment?
- Have we provided a written crisis plan?
- What further steps can we take to prevent dangerous behaviour from reoccurring?
- Staff may also need to make an individual risk assessment where it is known that force is more likely to be necessary to restrain a particular student, such as a student who is considered to be at greatest risk of needing positive handling interventions due to their Special Educational Need (SEN) or disability. Plans should be compatible with a student's EHCP and properly documented in the school records.
- An individual risk assessment is essential for students whose SEND are associated with:
 - Communication impairments that make them less responsive to verbal communication
 - Physical disabilities and/or sensory impairments
 - Conditions that make them fragile, such as haemophilia, brittle bone syndrome or epilepsy
 - Dependence on equipment such as wheelchairs, breathing or feeding tubes.

Risk management is regarded as an integral part of behaviour management planning. All students who have been identified as presenting a risk, should have a Crisis Plan. The plan details strategies which have been found to be effective for that individual, along with any particular responses which are to be avoided. Any particular physical techniques which have been found to be effective should be named, along with any alerts to any which have proved to be ineffective or which have caused problems in the past. Crisis Plans should be considered along with the child's EHCP or any other planning document relevant to the student such as an Individual Health Care Plan or One Page Profile. The Crisis Plan should take account of the age, sex, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special needs and social context. Parents will be consulted on the content of each Crisis Plan and review.

8. Post Incident Debrief

After any incident a full debrief should take place so that learning can inform practice.

Following an incident, it is the policy of the school to offer support to all involved. This is an opportunity for learning, and time needs to be given for following up incidents so that students and staff have an opportunity to express their feelings, suggest alternative courses of action for the future and appreciate another person's perspective.

It is difficult to devise a framework of support that meets the needs of all. As individuals we all vary in how much support we need after an unpleasant incident. Generally, a member of senior staff would expect to talk to staff and children involved in any incidents involving any intervention. If the staff or students need time to rest or compose themselves, then the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher will make arrangements for this to happen. Following an incident, consideration will be given to conducting a further risk assessment, reviewing the current risk assessment. Any further action in relation to a member of staff or student will follow the appropriate procedures.

9. Recording

Within our recording strategies, all details must be recorded within 24 hours of the incident and signed by the teacher involved and the DSL.

Parents will receive a full account of incident and a copy of the report.

All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record which should be completed before the colleague leaves site that day or, in the event that is not physically possible, at the latest within 24 hours of the event occurring.

All records will be kept for 25 years from the Date of Birth of the student with their student record.

Any injury/harm to staff or children involved in an incident must be reported on CPOMs our Safeguarding Reporting system.

10. Monitoring

The Headteacher and DSL will ensure that each incident is reviewed and instigate further actions as required. This information will be shared with the Safeguarding Governors.

Paragraph F2 of the Human rights framework for restraint states *'To know whether discrimination is occurring, public bodies should collect and analyse data on their use of restraint, to identify if restraint is being used disproportionately against people with particular protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, or who share other identifiable group characteristics, for example, women, ethnic minorities, or people with particular impairments such as learning disabilities.'*

The Headteacher will regularly review the use of intervention to avoid unintended discrimination.

11. Complaints

If there is a complaint, parents are encouraged to with the Executive Headteacher to discuss their concerns. If necessary a formal complaint can be made to the Governors. Reference should be made to the complaints policy.

12. Other physical contact with students (DfE Use of reasonable force 2013)

It is not illegal to touch a student. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a student is proper and necessary. This is form of touch regarded as "Safe Touch".

Examples of where safely touching a student might be proper and necessary:

- When comforting a distressed student
- When a student is being congratulated or praised
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- To give first aid
- To provide intimate care, when a pupil has an intimate care plan in place.

This list is not exhaustive, but provides some examples of situations where physical contact is proper and necessary.

13. Equality Statement

The Whiteoak Academies are committed to considering the impact of this policy – **Using Team Teach – Positive Handling and Safe Touch** on equality and the possible implications for pupils and staff with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

14. Conclusion

At the heart of the Whiteoak Academies is a continuous cycle of planning, teaching and assessing which takes account of the wide range of abilities, aptitudes, interests and needs of our children. Our person-centred approach to learning provides pupils with the best opportunity to develop their full potential: *"Planting dreams. Nurturing hearts. Growing minds."*

This document should be read in conjunction with the following policies which can be found on our Federation website. This list includes but is not limited to:

- Accessibility Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Educational Visits
- Safeguarding and child protection
- SEN Information report
- Single Equality Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs
- Intimate Care

Date adopted by Governing Body: 5th February 2024

Date to be reviewed by the Governing Body: February 2025

Appendix 1 Team Teach Trained Staff

Appendix 2 Blank Risk Assessment

Appendix 3 Contact details for further information on Team Teach.