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| <b>Signed by:</b> <i>A Hibbert</i>                     |
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## Burton CE Primary School

### Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy

**Updated: June 2026**

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#### Introduction

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils who may require physical contact, physical intervention or positive handling.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding policies. It reflects the Department for Education guidance: **"Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools" (effective from 1 April 2026).**

The school recognises that restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, can have a significant impact on pupils, staff and families. The school's approach prioritises:

- prevention
  - de-escalation
  - relational practice
  - safeguarding and pupil wellbeing
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#### Purpose of the Policy

As a Church of England school, we expect our core Christian values of Compassion, Friendship and Reverence to underpin all interactions.

The vast majority of pupils respond positively to relational and behaviour management strategies. However, in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to use physical intervention or positive handling.

All staff will:

1. Understand this policy and their responsibilities
2. Use preventative and relational strategies wherever possible
3. Only use physical intervention or positive handling when necessary and proportionate

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## Key Principles

- The use of physical intervention and positive handling must always be **lawful, necessary, proportionate and reasonable**
  - Positive handling is **never used as punishment**
  - Staff will always aim to **minimise the need for restrictive interventions**
  - The **safety, dignity and wellbeing of the pupil is paramount**
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## Definitions

### Physical Contact (Relational/Supportive)

Appropriate, non-restrictive contact that forms part of normal care, support and professional relationships. (e.g. leading, comforting, reassurance; regulation or in PE / sport).

### Physical Intervention

Any intentional physical contact used to influence a pupil's movement or behaviour, including:

- guiding
- escorting
- blocking

This involves little or no force.

### Positive Handling (Use of Reasonable Force)

Positive handling refers to the use of **reasonable force** as part of a restrictive intervention to:

- prevent injury
- prevent serious damage
- prevent serious disorder

It must:

- use the **minimum force necessary**
- be applied for the **shortest time possible**
- be **proportionate** to the risk
- **reasonable** in the circumstance

### Restrictive Intervention

Any action that prevents or restricts a pupil's movement, including both physical and non-physical approaches.

## Seclusion

Seclusion (DfE Guidance 2026) is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent. Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment. The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave. All incidents of seclusion must be recorded.

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## Underpinning Values

Everyone attending or working at Burton CE Primary School has the right to:

- a recognition of their unique identity
- be treated with respect and dignity
- learn and work in a safe environment
- be protected from harm

Pupils attending this school and their parents have a right to:

- individual consideration of pupils needs by staff that has responsibility for their care and protection
- expect staff to undertake duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies
- be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in the school
- be informed about the school's complaint procedure

The school will ensure that all pupils understand the need for, and respond to, clearly defined limits which govern behaviour in the school.

Parents should have committed themselves through the Home-School Agreement to ensure the good behaviour of their child and that the child understands and follows the School's Behaviour Policy.

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## Appropriate Physical Contact (No "No Contact" Policy)

In line with DfE guidance (April 2026, page 7), the school recognises that:

“Schools should not have a ‘no contact’ policy.”

Appropriate physical contact:

- is necessary for safeguarding, care and development
- supports communication and emotional regulation
- forms part of positive, trusting relationships between staff and pupils

Staff are expected to use professional judgement to determine what is appropriate, taking into account:

- age and understanding
  - individual needs (including SEND)
  - context and environment
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## Relational Physical Intervention

The school recognises the importance of safe **relational and supportive physical contact** in promoting emotional regulation and wellbeing.

Examples include:

- gently guiding or supporting a child into school or between spaces
- holding a hand or light touch for reassurance or to prompt movement
- a side hug, or appropriate comfort when a child is distressed
- a brief appropriate back rub or reassuring touch to support emotional regulation
- Supporting a pupil to remain safe without restriction

This type of interaction:

- is not positive handling (force)
- is part of effective pastoral care
- must always be appropriate, respectful and proportionate and consensual (where possible).

Staff will always consider pupil preferences, boundaries and vulnerabilities. They should avoid contact that could be misinterpreted and record any concerns that arise using CPOMS.

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## Graduated Response to Behaviour

Staff will follow a graduated approach:

### 1. Relational approaches

reassurance, connection, co-regulation

### 2. De-escalation strategies

verbal support, space, negotiation

### 3. Physical intervention (low-level)

guiding, escorting, blocking

### 4. Positive handling (reasonable force)

only where there is a risk of harm or serious disorder

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## SEND Considerations

The school recognises that pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may:

- experience heightened sensory, emotional or communication needs
- be more vulnerable to distress during restrictive interventions

Staff will:

- follow individual behaviour plans or EHCP strategies
- prioritise **predictable routines and relational approaches**
- use **reasonable adjustments** in line with the Equality Act 2010
- avoid triggers where known
- consider alternative approaches before any physical intervention

Where positive handling is used with pupils with SEND:

- this will be clearly documented
  - agreed strategies will be regularly reviewed
  - parents/carers will be actively involved
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## When Positive Handling May Be Used

All members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or others
- committing a criminal offence
- damaging property
- causing serious disorder

Positive handling will:

- only be used where necessary to prevent harm or serious disruption
- follow attempts at prevention, de-escalation where safe, and relational approaches unless immediate risk makes this unsafe
- stop as soon as the risk reduces

Positive handling techniques must always use the **minimum necessary force**.

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## Unacceptable Practice

The following are not permitted:

- use of force as punishment
  - excessive or disproportionate force
  - techniques that restrict breathing or circulation
  - actions that cause pain or humiliation
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## Recording and Reporting

All incidents of positive handling must be recorded on CPOMS on the same day.

Records must include:

- pupil name
- date, time and location
- reason for intervention
- actions taken
- attempts to de-escalate
- any injury or damage
- staff involved

Parents must be informed on the same day unless doing so would place a pupil at risk. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

A report of the incident made to parents should include the following details as a minimum:

- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
  - brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
  - brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
  - details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
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Where it is known a child may require the use of supportive physical intervention (e.g a pupil experiencing anxiety coming into school) or positive handling, it is good practice to ensure this is part of a positive behaviour plan, discussed and agreed with parents. This should outline strategies that will be adopted by both parents and staff to reduce or prevent the need for physical intervention.

Even where intervention is part of a plan, any use of positive handling (reasonable force) will need to be recorded on CPOMS.

## Model Staff Language During Intervention

Staff should use calm, clear and supportive language throughout any intervention:

**Before physical intervention:**

- “I can see you’re upset. I’m here to help.”
- “Let’s move to a safer space together.”
- “If you can stop, we won’t need to use physical support.”

**During Positive Handling or restrictive intervention:**

- “I am helping to keep you safe.”
- “I will let go as soon as it is safe.”
- “Take some calm breaths with me.”

**Whenever positive handling is used, staff will keep talking to the pupil; unless it is deemed that the pupil requires some quiet and space to calm and regulate.**

**After intervention:**

- “You are safe now.”
- “Let’s talk about what happened.”
- “How can we help this feel easier next time?”

Tone should always be calm, respectful and non-threatening.

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## Training

Staff will receive training appropriate to their role, including:

- behaviour management
- de-escalation strategies
- relational practice
- safe use of physical intervention
- positive handling – where they are working with a child for whom this is part of their positive behaviour plan

Specific training will be made available to designated staff when deemed appropriate through a pupil’s behaviour plan or EHCP and will be the responsibility of the Headteacher and SENDCO to arrange. No member of staff will be expected to undertake positive handling without appropriate training. Prior to the provision of training, guidance will be given on action to be taken.

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## Monitoring

All incidents are monitored by the Headteacher to:

- identify patterns

- ensure policy compliance
- support staff and pupils

The Headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further as required. If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure:

- Child Protection Procedure
- Staff Facing Allegations of Abuse Procedure
- Staff or Pupil Disciplinary Procedure
- School Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Procedure

Members of staff will be kept informed of any action taken.

In case of any action concerning a member of staff, he/she will be advised to seek advice from his/her professional association/union.

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## Complaints

Any complaints will be managed in line with the school's Complaints Procedure and Safeguarding policies.

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## Conclusion

This policy ensures that Burton CE Primary School provides a safe, supportive and respectful environment where physical intervention and positive handling are used only when necessary, and always in the best interests of the child.

## Appendix A: Quick-Reference Flowchart for Staff

### Step 1: Observe

Is there a risk of harm or serious disruption?



### Step 2: Relational Approach

Connect, reassure, co-regulate



### Step 3: De-escalate

Give space, verbal support, clear choices



#### **Step 4: Physical Intervention (Low-level)**

Guide, block or escort if needed



#### **Step 5: Positive Handling (Reasonable Force)**

ONLY if necessary to prevent harm



#### **Step 6: Release and Recover**

Stop as soon as safe, support regulation



#### **Step 7: Record and Report**

Record on CPOMS and inform parents

### **Strategies for Dealing with Challenging Behaviour**

Staff consistently use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order in line with the School Behaviour Policy. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively. Where a child has a positive behaviour plan this will be followed. Where a pupil has SEMH or SEND needs which are known there will usually be agreed strategies in place. Where at all possible, to avoid the need for seclusion, a pupil who is dysregulated will be given the opportunity to identify a safe space to regulate or will be monitored where they are and other children removed from the immediate environment if necessary.

Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and discipline and provokes intervention, some or all of the following approaches will be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

**a)** Verbal acknowledgment of unacceptable behaviour with request for the pupil to refrain; this includes negotiation, care and concern and use of emotion coaching strategies where appropriate.

**b)** Further verbal guidance stating:

- this is the second request for compliance
- an explanation of why observed behaviour is unacceptable
- an explanation of what will happen if the unacceptable behaviour continues.

**c)** Warning of potential need to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies. If possible summon assistance.

**d) Physical intervention.** Reasonable physical intervention using the minimum degree of contact to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property.

### **Escalating Situations**

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

**Acceptable measures of Physical Intervention.**

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

**Wherever possible, assistance will be sought from another member of staff before intervention.**

The form of physical intervention may involve staff doing the following:

- physically interposing themselves between pupils
- blocking a pupil's path
- escorting a pupil
- herding a pupil away

Any such measures will be most effective in the context of the overall ethos of the school, the way in which staff exercise their responsibilities and the behaviour management strategies used.

**Whenever positive handling is used, staff will keep talking to the pupil; unless it is deemed that the pupil requires some quiet and space to calm and regulate.**