Willoughton Primary School

The Cliff Federation
Positive Handling Policy

Policy Information			
Status:	Statutory	**Reviewed by:**	Full Governors
Cycle of Review:	Annual	**Policy Ratified:**	January 2026
Signed as accepted:			

This policy, and the linked policies as listed below, are in line with the Governors' Written Statement on Behaviour.

Linked Policies:
Relationship and Behaviour
Anti-Bullying
SEND/Inclusion
Safeguarding/ Child Protection

Aims
At The Cliff Federation, we are committed to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. This policy has close links with the Behaviour Policy. It is written to explain our procedures in line with:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006
- British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) Code of Practice
- DfCS Guidance "Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils" November 2007
- Joint DfES/DH guidance issued July 2002, "The use of restrictive physical interventions for staff working with children and adults who display extreme behaviour in association with learning disability and/or autistic spectrum disorder"
- DfE Use of reasonable force: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies (updated September 2025)
- pastoral support plan / physical handling plan (for individual pupils)
- Schools' Behaviour Policy and Practice.

School Expectations
In our school 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.

Positive Behaviour Management

All staff and volunteers adopt a positive approach to improving behaviour in order to reward effort and application, and to build self-esteem, and promote a safe environment for students and staff. All staff work in partnership with those who know the child to help those concerned:

- Find out why this child behaves as he or she does
- Understand the factors that influence this child's behaviour
- Identify early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours are developing

This approach helps to ensure that early and preventative intervention is the norm. It reduces the incidence of extreme behaviours and makes sure that the use of physical intervention is rare.

What is physical intervention ('reasonable force')?

Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.

The use of force is illegal if the physical circumstances do not warrant it. The force used should always be the minimum needed to regain and ensure safety and control for everyone involved or present. The Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy should therefore be read in conjunction with our Relationships and Behaviour and Child protection/Safeguarding Policies.

Restrictive physical interventions may include:

 Bodily contact - where the physical presence of one or more people is used to control a pupil, e.g physically interposing between pupils; blocking a pupil's path; holding or 'shepherding' a pupil; using agreed, approved restricted holds

 Environmental – where a change is applied within the environment for example shutting a door or the use of locks or key pads to prevent access to a particular area. Seclusion should only be used as a safety measure when a pupil is in acute distress – not as punishment – and requires permanent supervision in a safe, non-intimidating space

In what circumstances can physical intervention be used?

- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- prevent a pupil leaving the classroom /learning space where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground;
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves or others through physical outbursts.
- To prevent a pupil committing deliberate serious damage or vandalism.
- To prevent behaviour which is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline.

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.

The Last Resort Principle

At The Cliff Federation, we pro-actively foster positive relationships and only use reasonable force when there is no realistic 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:

- Distraction
- Withdrawal of attention(audience).
- 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 lees high
- The employment of other sanctions consistent with our schools' behaviour policies.

Where physical interventions are needed, 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. When positive handling becomes necessary:

DO

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why. Use reassuring language e.g. I am here to help, I can see you are upset.
- 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
- Record the intervention in the physical intervention logbook.
- Inform SLT. Post incident review will take place.
- Inform parents.

Positive Handling Plans

Risk management is regarded as an integral part of behaviour management planning. If physical intervention is required several times for one child, a Positive Handling Plan will be written and where possible agreed / shared with parents / carers. These plans detail unwanted behaviours (using our knowledge of the child) and how to respond.

Staff Training

At The Cliff Federation, physical intervention will only be used by staff trained by our accredited provider.

General Advice for Staff

- Be sure that you are aware of and comply with the school policy for relationships and behaviour aswell as positive handling procedures.
- It is better to defuse situations wherever possible, as this prevents them from escalating to a level where force is necessary
- Send for the assistance of another member of staff as soon as possible.

Responding to Unforeseen Emergencies

Even the best planning systems cannot cover every eventuality and the school recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet. It is not enough to thoughtlessly apply rules without thinking through the likely consequences. The key principles are that any physical intervention should be:

- In the best interest of the child
- Reasonable and proportionate
- Intended to reduce risk
- The least intrusive and restrictive of those options available which are likely to be effective.

Recording

Whenever overpowering force is used the incident **must** be recorded using the approved forms. The Incident book is kept in the ~~staffroom~~ main school office. All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record which should be completed within 24 hours. The details recorded on the form are kept confidentially. Parents / carers must be notified as soon as practicable.

- Inform a member of SLT as soon as possible
- Complete the school recording form carefully
- Take time to think about what actually happened and try to explain it clearly
- Complete all names in full
- Sign and date all forms

Post-Incident Support

Incidents that require use of restrictive physical interventions can be upsetting to all concerned and could result in injuries to the child or staff. After incidents have subsided, it is important to ensure that staff and children are given emotional support and basic first aid treatment for any injuries. Immediate action should, of course, be taken to ensure that medical help is accessed for any injuries that require other than basic first aid. All injuries should be reported and recorded in accordance with school procedures.

Post Incident Review

Focus on actions and behaviours:

- Who did what, when, why, how?
- What was the outcome?
- What does it tell us about what we already know about the young person?
- What have we learnt and what or how does this inform our practice?

Responding to complaints

The use of restrictive physical intervention can lead to allegations of inappropriate or excessive use. In the event of a complaint being received by a school in relation to use of force by staff, the matter should be dealt with in accordance with LA guidelines and agreed procedures for handling allegations against members of staff (see Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and Other Staff).