

Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

Positive Handling Policy

Mission Statement

WeST holds a deep-seated belief in education and lifelong learning. Effective collaboration, mutual support and professional challenge will underpin our quest to ensure that all of the students and adults we serve are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed in life.

Person(s) responsible for updating the policy:	Richard Woodland, Director of Inclusion
Date Approved:	December 2022
Date of next review:	December 2025
Status:	Guidance

WeST Core Values

WeST holds four core values which underpin the engagement, motivation and retention of employees, no matter what their role in the organisation.

- **Collaboration**
Creating a shared vision and working effectively across boundaries in an equitable and inclusive way to skillfully influence and engage others. Building and securing value from relationships, developing self and others to achieve positive outcomes.
- **Aspiration**
Having high expectations, modelling the delivery of high quality outcomes. Showing passion, persistence and resilience in seeking creative solutions to strive for continuous improvement and excellence.
- **Integrity**
Acting always with the interests of children and young people at our heart, and with a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles. Communicating with transparency and respect, creating a working environment based on trust and honesty.
- **Compassion**
Recognising need in others and acting with positive intention to promote well-being and improve outcomes.

Providing Accessible Formats

If you are unable to use this document and require it in a different format, please contact the Director of Inclusion.

Rationale

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils who may need to be positively handled.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and pupils and other guidance. Specifically:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- DfE Guidance "[Use of Reasonable Force in Schools](#)"

Responsibilities

The Headteacher/Principal will ensure that staff are familiar with and correctly apply the policy. This policy will be reviewed every three years

Policy Statement

Good professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in WeST schools respond positively to the school's Behaviour Policy followed by staff. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances staff may need to take action in situations where the use of positive handling may be required. Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff at WeST schools:

- clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where positive handling is necessary and;
- are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur. The application of any form of positive handling places staff in a vulnerable situation. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for positive handling.

Positive handling will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed; when pupils or staff are at risk, or there is a risk of significant damage to property.

Definitions:

- **Physical contact situations:** in which appropriate physical contact takes place between staff and pupils, e.g. in games/PE or to comfort pupils.
- **Physical intervention:** this may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force.
- **Positive handling:** this will involve the use of reasonable force when there is a risk to pupils, staff or of significant damage to property. All such incidents will be recorded on the CPOMs system using the category, "Behaviour: Restraint Used"

Underpinning Values

Everyone attending or working at WeST 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 WeST schools 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

WeST schools will ensure that 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.

Training

All school staff who are authorised to be in charge of pupils are automatically authorised to use reasonable force where necessary, as described in [DfE Guidance](#). WeST recognises that adults have a duty of care to act in the best interests of the children. Staff should use their own judgement and assess the risks before acting. Staff should take care to avoid injury to themselves. Positive Handling training will be made available to designated staff and this will be the responsibility of the Headteacher. Prior to the provision of training, guidance will be given on action to be taken.

Strategies for dealing with behaviour that challenges others

Staff should understand that children with special educational needs, or other vulnerabilities, may exhibit behaviours that are a manifestation of an unmet need. Staff should ask themselves, "*What is this behaviour communicating?*" when dealing with dysregulated pupils. WeST recognises its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, and those in respect of safeguarding and supporting pupils with special educational needs. As a trust, we are keen to ensure that we do not discriminate through the application of our school behaviour policies, against pupils whose apparent inappropriate behaviour may be a function of SEND needs or other protected characteristics.

Staff should consistently use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively. Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and provokes intervention, some or all of the following approaches will be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

- Verbal acknowledgment of unacceptable behaviour with request for the pupil to refrain and, if appropriate, move to a designated safe space; this involves negotiation, care and concern.
- Further verbal warning stating:
 - this is the second request for compliance
 - an explanation of why observed behaviour is unacceptable
 - an explanation of the consequences and what will happen if the unacceptable behaviour continues
- Warning of potential need to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies.
- If possible summon assistance. It must be remembered that the restraint is a safeguard, not a sanction and the child should be told that the reason for positive handling is to protect them not to punish them. At this point, it may be necessary to remove other children from the scene for their own protection.
- Physical intervention. Reasonable physical intervention using the minimum degree of contact to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property.

WeST recognises that children in a state of dysregulation, especially those who have suffered trauma, may not be able to process the verbal and non-verbal cues from adults during periods of distress. Staff should always act in a calm and consistent manner and verbalise their intentions anyway as this indicates to other staff and pupils what is happening.

Use of Reasonable Force

This section should be read alongside "[Use of Reasonable Force; Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies](#)" (DfE, 2013)

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. Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.

The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. It should be proportionate, legal, accountable, necessary and reasonable.

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 individual needs of the pupil are taken into account
- it is likely to achieve the desired result

If the use of positive handling can be anticipated wherever possible assistance should be sought from another member of staff before intervention.

Following the incident, the child (if possible) will be spoken to, once calm, and encouraged to reflect on their actions.

Recording

Where positive handling has been used a record of the incident always needs to be kept. All recording needs to be completed on the day of incident and needs to include the following:

- name of pupil
- date, time and place of incident
- a brief description of the incident and actions taken
- attempts made to calm the situation
- names of staff using restraint
- nature of physical intervention technique used
- how incident was resolved and any consequences
- effectiveness of the intervention

This should be recorded on the school's CPOMS system using the category, "Behaviour: Restraint Used"

Informing Parents

Parents will always be informed following an incident where positive handling has been used. A discussion will take place involving parents and relevant members of staff (e.g. SLT, SENCO, class teacher) to put appropriate measures in place.

Action after an Incident

The Headteacher (or SLT in their absence) 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:

- Safeguarding Policy
- School Behaviour Policy
- Staff Disciplinary 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.

Complaints

The availability of a clear policy regarding Positive Handling and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them. Any complaints about staff will be dealt with under the WeST Complaints Procedure.

Monitoring of Incidents

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use positive handling, this will always be recorded on the schools CPOMS system using the category, "Behaviour: Restraint Used". The Headteacher/Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead should review the number of incidents requiring positive handling on a termly basis. Where the Headteacher identifies any concerns, this should be raised with the Director of Inclusion or relevant Director of Education.

Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Headteacher to the needs of any pupil(s) whose behaviour has repeatedly required the use of positive handling.

This process should address patterns of incidents and evaluate trends which may be emerging.