



## **Ecclesia Partnership – Reasonable Force & Positive Handling Policy**

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## Contents

Ecclesia Partnership – Reasonable Force & Positive Handling Policy.....	1
1. Introduction and Purpose .....	3
2. Our Ethos and Values.....	3
3. Legal Framework .....	3
4. Definition of Reasonable Force .....	3
5. Appropriate Touch .....	4
6. Preventative and De-escalation Approaches .....	4
7. When Reasonable Force May Be Used .....	5
8. Acceptable and Unacceptable Practices.....	5
9. Positive Handling Plans.....	5
10. Staff Training and Authorisation .....	5
11. Responding to Incidents .....	5
12. Internal Recording and Reporting .....	6
CPOMS Incident Recording Template (Reasonable Force) .....	6
13. Parental Recording and Reporting.....	6
14. Post-Incident Support.....	6
15. Monitoring and Governance .....	7
16. Complaints and Allegations .....	7
17. Links to Other Policies .....	7
18. Review .....	7
Appendix A – Example Positive Handling Plan.....	8
Known Triggers and Early Warning Signs.....	8
Preventative Strategies .....	8
De-escalation Strategies.....	8
Agreed Physical Interventions (if required) .....	8
Interventions to Avoid.....	8
Post-Incident Support .....	8

## 1. Introduction and Purpose

This policy sets out the Ecclesia Partnership's approach to the use of reasonable force, positive handling and restrictive physical intervention across all partnership schools. It ensures a consistent, lawful and values-led approach that prioritises the safety, dignity and wellbeing of pupils and staff.

It applies to all staff, volunteers and visitors working with children across the partnership.

## 2. Our Ethos and Values

Across the Ecclesia Partnership, we are committed to creating calm, safe and nurturing learning environments where children are known, valued and supported to flourish. Behaviour is viewed as communication, and we prioritise prevention, de-escalation and restorative approaches.

The use of reasonable force is always a last resort, used only when necessary to prevent harm and always in a manner that is proportionate, lawful and respectful.

## 3. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 93)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Department for Education statutory guidance on reasonable force
- British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) Code of Practice
- Local Authority guidance

Staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from:

- Hurting themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Causing serious damage to property
- Engaging in behaviour that seriously disrupts good order and discipline

## 4. Definition of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force refers to proportionate physical intervention used to control or restrain a pupil in order to prevent immediate harm. It must:

- Be lawful, necessary and proportionate
- Use the minimum force for the shortest possible time
- Be in the best interests of the child

Force is **never** used as a punishment.

## **5. Appropriate Touch**

All staff are aware of the definition of appropriate touch; noted here as touch that is not invasive, humiliating, inappropriate or causing physical or emotional discomfort. Agreed places for appropriate touch in order to comfort or congratulate a child are: back, arms, shoulders and hands.

The holding of a child's hand, in accordance with a child's request verbally or non-verbally, is a response to an emotional need. As shaking hands is a widely used friendly greeting, and holding hands is a common and appropriate parental response to emotional need, it has been deemed appropriate for use in our school. This particularly applies to younger children seeking comfort, reassurance or guidance when moving safely around the school site.

Where appropriate, and taking account of the age, understanding and wishes of the child, a side hug or brief comforting hug may be used to provide reassurance, comfort or emotional support. This would normally be initiated by the child or clearly welcomed by them, and staff will always use professional judgement, remain mindful of safeguarding expectations, and ensure such contact is age-appropriate, proportionate and in the child's best interests.

There may also be occasions where a child needs to be lifted, guided or carried for reasons of immediate safety, medical need, distress, evacuation, or where a younger child is unable to move safely or independently. In such circumstances, this will be carried out in the safest and least intrusive manner possible, using the minimum level of physical contact necessary, and with regard to the child's dignity and wellbeing. Where practical, another adult should be aware of or present during such incidents. Significant incidents should be recorded in line with school procedures.

We acknowledge the growing culture that believes it is safer to refrain from any touch due to anxieties that allegations of abuse may be made and that, indeed, instances of abuse do occur in the world. Staff are also aware of, and highly skilled in, the use of other methods of comfort, de-escalation, and the control of undesirable behaviour. However, we believe that providing a good quality emotional environment may sometimes require the use of appropriate touch.

Children need to be educated in what constitutes appropriate touch, so that they can recognise the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. This helps each child to respond appropriately to others and to seek help in threatening situations.

## **6. Preventative and De-escalation Approaches**

Across the partnership, behaviour is managed proactively through high-quality teaching, consistent routines and strong relationships. Staff are expected to recognise that behaviour communicates unmet need and to respond with empathy, curiosity and professionalism.

Staff will always seek to reward and praise positive behaviour. De-escalation strategies are always prioritised and may include calm verbal reminders, offering choices, use of distraction, allowing time and space, humour where appropriate, and removing an audience. Adjustments are made for pupils with SEND, trauma-related needs or emotional regulation difficulties, in line with individual plans.

Physical intervention is considered only when these strategies have been unsuccessful or are not appropriate due to an immediate risk of harm.

## **7. When Reasonable Force May Be Used**

Reasonable force may be used to:

- Prevent injury to a pupil or others
- Prevent serious damage to property
- Stop a pupil leaving the premises where this would place them at risk
- Prevent behaviour that poses an immediate danger

Decisions must consider the pupil's age, SEND, physical needs, emotional state and previous risk assessments.

## **8. Acceptable and Unacceptable Practices**

When physical intervention becomes necessary, staff must act calmly and professionally. Pupils should be told what is happening and why, using clear and simple language. Any intervention must use the minimum force required and last for the shortest possible time. Wherever possible, another member of staff should be present, and the intervention must reduce or stop as soon as the level of risk decreases.

Staff must never use physical force as a punishment or act out of anger or frustration. Techniques that restrict breathing, cause pain, place pupils face-down, involve the neck or head, or involve bending joints or pulling hair are strictly prohibited. Physical contact must always preserve the dignity and safety of the child.

## **9. Positive Handling Plans**

Pupils identified as presenting a foreseeable risk must have an individual Positive Handling Plan. These plans:

- Are developed collaboratively with parents and professionals
- Sit alongside Behaviour Plans, PSPs or SEND plans
- Identify triggers, preventative strategies and agreed responses
- Specify any authorised physical interventions

Plans are reviewed regularly and at least annually.

## **10. Staff Training and Authorisation**

- All staff receive regular training in behaviour management and de-escalation
- Only trained staff may use agreed restrictive interventions detailed in Positive Handling Plans
- Training providers and approaches are approved by the partnership
- New staff receive induction on this policy

## **11. Responding to Incidents**

Where reasonable force is used:

- Senior leaders must be informed
- The incident must be recorded within 24 hours
- Parents/carers must be informed

## 12. Internal Recording and Reporting

Any incident involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded promptly and accurately on CPOMS. Records should be factual, clear and completed within 24 hours.

Senior leaders monitor all recorded incidents to ensure consistency, proportionality and to identify patterns that may require additional support or review of provision.

### *CPOMS Incident Recording Template (Reasonable Force)*

**Pupil name(s):**

**Date and time of incident:**

**Location:**

**Antecedents / context:** (What was happening immediately before the incident? Include known triggers or changes to routine.)

**Behaviour presented:** (Describe factually what the pupil did or attempted to do.)

**De-escalation strategies attempted:** (Detail verbal or non-physical strategies used prior to physical intervention.)

**Reason for physical intervention:** (Explain the immediate risk that required reasonable force.)

**Nature of physical intervention used:** (Describe the hold or intervention used, who was involved, and duration.)

**Outcome:** (How the incident ended, pupil response, and any learning restored.)

**Injuries or medical attention required:** (Include body map reference if applicable.)

**Staff involved / witnesses:**

**Parent/carer informed:** Yes / No

**Method and time:**

**Follow-up actions:** (Plan review, support, referrals, adjustments.)

## 13. Parental Recording and Reporting

Any incident involving the use of reasonable force must be reported to parents or carers. Parents or carers must be informed as soon as reasonably practicable. This should be done verbally and then followed up with a letter to the parents on headed paper. The format of this should be the same as what is recorded on CPOMS and include the same information as incidents of this nature are more likely to be a cause of a subject access request.

## 14. Post-Incident Support

Following an incident, the partnership ensures:

- Emotional support for pupils and staff
- Medical attention where required
- Debriefing within 48 hours

- Review of risk assessments and plans

Formal counselling support is available if required.

## **15. Monitoring and Governance**

- Use of reasonable force is reviewed regularly by senior leaders
- Governors receive regular behaviour updates which will include any use of reasonable force
- Trends inform training, support and policy review

## **16. Complaints and Allegations**

Any complaint regarding the use of force will be managed in line with:

- Local Authority procedures
- Safeguarding and allegations management guidance

Staff are supported appropriately throughout any investigation.

## **17. Links to Other Policies**

This policy should be read alongside:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Exclusions Policy

## **18. Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner in response to changes in legislation or guidance.

## **Appendix A – Example Positive Handling Plan**

**Pupil name:**

**Date of birth:**

**Class:**

**Plan start date:**

**Review date:**

### ***Known Triggers and Early Warning Signs***

(Describe situations, environments or demands that may increase distress or dysregulation.)

### ***Preventative Strategies***

(Strategies staff should use to support regulation and prevent escalation, including reasonable adjustments.)

### ***De-escalation Strategies***

(Specific approaches that have been shown to be effective for this pupil.)

### ***Agreed Physical Interventions (if required)***

(Only to be completed if physical intervention may be necessary. Include named techniques and authorised staff.)

### ***Interventions to Avoid***

(Any approaches that are known to escalate behaviour or cause distress.)

### ***Post-Incident Support***

(How the pupil should be supported following an incident, including emotional support and repair.)