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Policy for Physical Intervention with Pupils

Introduction

St. Comán's Wood Primary School recognises that there is a need, reflected in common law, to intervene when there is an obvious risk of safety to its pupils, staff and property.

St. Comán's Wood Primary School is committed to ensuring that all staff and adults with responsibility for children's safety and welfare will deal professionally with all incidents involving aggressive or reckless behaviour, and only use physical intervention as a last resort, in the interest of safety for others and it will be in the context of a respectful, supportive relationship with the pupil. We will always aim to ensure minimal risk of injury to pupils and staff.

This policy applies to all staff who are authorised to use physical intervention.

Our approach to best practice

The best practice regarding physical intervention outlined below should be considered alongside other relevant policies in the school, specifically those policies involving behaviour, bullying and health and safety.

In the following situations staff must judge whether or not physical intervention would be reasonable or appropriate:

- Risk to the safety of staff, pupils or visitors; or
- Where there is a risk of serious damage to property; or
- Where a pupil's behaviour is seriously prejudicial to good order and discipline; or
- Where a pupil is committing a criminal offence.

This judgement will take into account the circumstances of the incident. All staff should be aware that the use of physical intervention in response to a clear or developing danger of injury will always be more justifiable than the use of force to prevent damage or misbehaviour.

Staff will view physical intervention or restraint of pupils as a last resort to maintaining a safe environment. If pupils are behaving disruptively or anti-socially, every effort will be made to manage behaviour positively to prevent a deterioration of the situation.

Staff will understand the importance of listening to and respecting children to create an environment which is generally calm and supportive especially when dealing with pupils who may have emotional and behavioural needs which may increase their despair and aggression.

All staff will understand the importance of responding to the feelings of the child, which lie beneath the behaviour as well as to the behaviour itself.

Our Practice re: specific incidents:

Staff intervening with children will seek assistance from other members of staff at as early a stage as possible since single-handed intervention increases the risks of injury to both parties and does not provide a witness.

All staff who become aware that another member of staff is intervening physically with a pupil will have a responsibility to provide a presence, and to offer support and assistance should this be required.

Before intervening in a non-emergency, consideration will be given to whether or not other staffs are available to assist.

Where possible, staffs who have not been involved in the initial confrontation leading up to an incident, may be in a better position to intervene or restrain the pupil if this proves necessary.

A pupil's behaviour may be adversely affected by the presence of an audience. Wherever possible, the audience will be removed, or if this is not possible, the pupil will be removed from the audience. The pupil and member(s) of staff will withdraw to a quiet, but not completely private, place (e.g. two members of staff should be present or a door left open so that others are aware of the situation).

Staff will be aware of the need to tell the pupil being restrained, in a calm and gentle manner that the reason for the intervention is to keep the pupil and others safe. Staff will explain that as soon as the pupil calms down, she/he will be released.

All staff are aware that we operate a back-up system to enable staff to call for help in emergencies.

Physical Intervention/Restraint Approaches which can be regarded as reasonable in appropriate circumstances

The following approaches are regarded as reasonable in appropriate circumstances:

Holding for security and to reduce anxiety, where there is potential risk, even if the pupil is not yet out of control. This is best used when the pupil is anxious or confused. Its purpose is to defuse or prevent escalation. Staff should take care that their actions should in no way be capable of being interpreted by the pupil as aggression.

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Pushing if restricted to situations where reasonable force is used to resist a pupil's movement, rather than a forceful push that might cause the pupil to fall over
- Pulling
- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- In extreme cases using restrictive holds

Holds to be avoided except for the most extreme circumstances

The following holds should not generally be used other than in the most extreme emergency. This is when emergency action is needed to prevent the risk of serious injury or loss of life (e.g. to prevent a pupil running into a busy road or to stop an extremely violent assault on one pupil by another pupil).

- Holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict a pupil's ability to breathe
- Slapping, punching or kicking a pupil
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping a pupil
- Holding a pupil by the hair or ear
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground

Recording an incident

All incidents that result in non-routine interventions will be recorded in detail.

Contemporaneous notes (i.e. written within 24 hours of the incident's occurrence) will be made by the staff member involved in the original incident.

Similarly, contemporaneous notes will also be made by any other members of staff involved (i.e. as witnesses or additional providers of support). The notes will be signed and dated.

The notes will contain the following information:

- The name(s) and the job title(s) of the member(s) of staff who used reasonable force
- The name(s) of the pupil(s) involved
- When and where the incident took place
- Names of staff and pupils who witnessed the incident
- The reason that force was necessary
- The progress of the incident. Include details of:
 - Behaviour of the pupil which led up to the incident
 - Any attempts to resolve the situation
 - What was said by staff and pupil
 - The degree of force used
 - How it was applied
 - How long it was used for
- The pupil's response and the eventual outcome
- Details of any injuries suffered by either staff or pupils
- Details of any damage to property
- Details of any medical treatment required (an accident form will be completed)
- Details of any follow-up, including contact with the parents/carers of the pupil(s) involved
- Any other relevant details e.g. the involvement of any other agency, e.g. the Police

Pupil witnesses may also be asked to provide a written account if appropriate.

These notes should be kept in the pupil's file and retained until the pupil reaches the age of 21.

Routine incidents of physical intervention, usually for pupils with identified needs as set out in the pupil's Individual Education Plan; Individual Behaviour Plan will need to be recorded as follows:

- Name of child
- Date
- Name of member of staff who intervened
- Name of any witnesses
- Brief description of the reason for intervention
- Brief description of action taken
- Details of any follow up with parents

Debriefing Arrangements

The pupil and the member of staff will be checked for any sign of injury after an incident. First aid will be administered to anyone who requires it.

The pupil will be given time to become calm while staff continue to supervise her/him. When the pupil regains complete composure, a senior member of staff (or her/his nominee) will discuss the incident with the pupil and try to ascertain the reason for its occurrence. The pupil will be given an opportunity to explain things from her/his point of view. All necessary steps will be taken to re-establish the relationship between the pupil and the member(s) of staff involved in the incident.

In cases where it is not possible to speak to the pupil on the same day as the incident occurred, the debrief will take place as soon as possible after the pupil returns to school.

All members of staff involved will be allowed a period to debrief and recover from the incident. This may involve access to external support. A senior member of staff (or her/his nominee) will provide support to the member of staff involved.

The Principal will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity of any incidents where physical intervention or restraint was used. The Principal (or his/her nominee) will initiate the recording process if not already underway and review each incident to ensure that any necessary lessons are learned.

Training Needs of Staff

In cases where it is known that a pupil will require physical intervention on occasions, appropriate training will be provided for relevant staff. Staff involved will identify their training needs in this area.

Authorisation of staff to use physical intervention

We recognise that most of the time physical intervention will be used infrequently, that is, as a last resort to maintaining a safe environment.

All teaching staff is, by the nature of their roles, authorised to use physical intervention as appropriate. Non-teaching staff will require specific authorisation, either temporarily or permanently. This authorisation can only be given by the Principal or someone deputising for the Principal when he is absent.

This policy will next be reviewed and updated in [Insert Date] or sooner if necessary.

Board of Management will be informed of the number of physical interventions via the termly committee meeting.

Arrangements for Informing Parents

Parents will be informed of the school's policy regarding physical intervention in the following ways:

- At the outset of the introduction of this policy, all parents/carers will be informed about the policy
- Staffs who work with particular children who have learning or physical disabilities (and who have Individual Education Plans, Individual Behaviour Plans) may need to use specific techniques routinely to manage challenging behaviour. Such arrangements will be discussed with parents/carers in advance on an individual basis. All interventions will be routinely recorded.
- Parents will be informed after a non-routine incident where physical intervention is used with their child.