



Ardmore House

*Help, Care, Support*

# Positive Handling

Supportive strategies for managing  
challenging behaviour

Ratified by B.O.G:

To be Reviewed:

# Positive Handling

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The term 'Positive Handling' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour and promoting positive behavioural choices. Our related policy on our SBEW provision gives more detail on how we help all our young people by identifying and addressing their needs and helping them recognise and manage their emotions.

Most of the young people attending Ardmore respond positively to the behavioural strategies and techniques used by staff. However, in exceptional circumstances staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required. It is recognised in both statutory and Common Law that there is a need to intervene when there is an obvious risk of safety to pupils, staff and property.

## Rationale

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Ardmore House School is committed to ensuring that all staff and adults with responsibility for pupils' safety and welfare will deal professionally with all incidents involving aggressive or risky behaviour and use physical intervention only as a last resort.

## Objectives

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The key objectives of this policy are to:

- Maintain the safety of pupils, staff and visitors
- Prevent serious damage to property
- Prevent serious breaches of school discipline

## Deciding if the use of restrictive physical intervention is appropriate

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The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, Article 4, outlines the powers a member of school staff can use in restraining pupils. However, schools are reminded that reasonable force/restraint should only be used as a measure of last resort. Staff of a grant-aided school may only use reasonable force/restraint:

- to prevent a pupil from committing an offence;
- to prevent a pupil causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself);
- to prevent a pupil from engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils.

If used at all it will be:

- in the context of a respectful, supportive relationship with the pupil
- be a last resort when all other approaches have been tried and have failed
- be absolutely necessary
- be reasonable and proportional to the circumstances of the incident
- be for the minimal amount of time
- preserve the dignity and respect of all concerned
- never be used as a form of punishment or to make a child behave
- never deliberately cause pain/injury to a pupil

The first and paramount consideration is the welfare of the children at school

The second is the welfare and protection of the adults who look after them.

A positive handling plan for each pupil outlines for staff key classroom management and de-escalation strategies along with simple dos and don'ts that need to be followed before intervention is used. The plan is reviewed on a regular basis and whenever a serious incident has occurred.

Staff should always think ahead to anticipate possible incidents; should a proposed activity or situation involve unacceptable risk, then the correct decision is to do something else.

## Reporting and Recording use of Restrictive Physical Interventions

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Whenever physical intervention/restraint is used the incident must be recorded using the approved incident recording forms. The record of the Use of Reasonable Force will also be logged in a bound and numbered book kept in the main office.

All staff involved in the incident (including witnesses) must contribute to the record and the form must be completed within 24hrs of the incident.

Incidents that require the use of physical interventions/restraints can be very upsetting to all involved and may result in injuries to students or staff. Until an incident has subsided it is essential to reduce risk of re-escalation and to ensure the situation remains calm. Staff should avoid saying or doing anything that might inflame the situation during the recovery phase.

Pupils should be given time and space to calm down after an incident. Staff should also be offered a short break out of the classroom where possible

After an incident it is important to ensure that staff and pupils are given emotional support and basic first aid treatment for any injuries. Immediate action should 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 on an accident form and in the accident log book. The school should take action to report any injuries to staff or pupils in accordance with guidelines.

## Post-incident support

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The school recognises the need to ensure that staff and pupils have appropriate emotional support.

The pupil and the member of staff will be checked for any sign of injury after an incident. Immediate action will be taken to provide first aid for any injuries requiring attention.

The pupil will be given time to become calm whilst staff continue to supervise. When it is deemed that the pupil is composed, a senior member of staff will discuss the incident with the pupil and ascertain the reason for its occurrence. All necessary steps will be taken to re-establish a positive relationship between the pupil and the member of staff involved in the incident.

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

A member of the senior team will engage parents/carers in discussing the incident and for setting out subsequent actions and support.

## TeamTeach

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Team-Teach training is fully accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities and has the following aims:

- To develop an understanding of the causes and signs of aggression and conflict.
- To improve staff self-awareness and self-control whilst managing difficult behaviour
- To understand the typical stages of crisis behaviours and appropriate staff responses.
- To appreciate the importance of recording and reporting including risk assessment and behaviour management plans and the value of a process for monitoring and evaluating.
- To develop a gradual and graded range of personal safety and positive handling techniques, including standing and seated responses.
- To understand their involvement and entitlement to a post Incident support and de-briefing framework for all involved in serious incidents.
- To develop a range of responses: non-verbal, para-verbal and verbal de-escalating and calming strategies, including a Help Script & Help Protocol when faced with challenging behaviour.

Two staff members (Mrs Murray and Mr Monan) have trained and qualified as intermediate TeamTeach tutors. As of December 2021, all staff will be trained to intermediate level and regular in-house training is provided.

## Responding to Unforeseen Emergencies

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The school acknowledges that on occasion staff may find themselves in unforeseen or emergency situations, when they have no option but to use reasonable force to manage a crisis.

However before proceeding with a physical intervention staff should think through the likely consequences and reflect on the following questions.

- Is the intervention in the best interest of the child?
- Is the physical intervention reasonable and proportionate and necessary?
- Is the intervention intended to reduce risk?
- Is the response the least intrusive and restrictive of those options available which are likely to be effective?

Whenever a physical intervention is used there should be a verbal warning. Staff should always attempt to use diversion or diffusion in preference to physical intervention. Staff should only use the techniques and methods approved for use by TeamTeach.

## Risk assessments

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Where a pupil's behaviour has caused an identified risk to self, others or property, a detailed risk assessment and risk management plan using the EA guidance template will be undertaken by the form teacher/mentor in conjunction with the school's health and safety team. The risk assessment identifies the risks involved, their likelihood and their impact, whilst the risk management plan outlines measures and strategies to help manage the risk. All risk assessments and management plans are reviewed on a regular basis, and after each serious incident.

## Seclusion

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Current guidance does not seek to define seclusion or indicate what forms of seclusion, if any, are permissible, and in what circumstances. The issue of seclusion, including Deprivation of Liberty, is being considered as part of the Department's review and, subject to Ministerial approval, guidance will follow once that process has been completed.

Children should never be locked in a room or left unaccompanied and must be able to leave when they want to.

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