Positive Handling Policy

Valid From: September 2026

Next review due: September 2027

Touch and the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention for all Staff working with Children

1. **Introduction**
2.

At The Wharf Nursery School we believe that children need to feel happy, safe and secure and develop good relationships with the adults who work here.

- We promote the personal, emotional, social and physical development of each individual child.
- Children need to have lots of opportunities to move freely, both indoors and out.
- For their emotional development, very young children need physical comfort and contact with others (when appropriate).
- We have a behaviour policy in place, which actively teaches children our codes of behaviour with a strong focus on positive praise (see behaviour policy). This policy works well for the vast majority of our children. However, we may occasionally need to use physical intervention.

Staff need to feel able to manage risk and inappropriate behaviour, and to have an understanding of how challenging behaviours might be communicated. They need to know what options are open to them, and be free of concerns about possible legal action, if they use appropriate physical interventions. Parents need to know that their children are safe with us, and are properly informed, if their child is the subject of a Restrictive Physical Intervention, including the nature of the intervention, and the rationale for its use.

2. Definition of 'restrictive physical intervention'

The Law allows for teachers and other persons authorised by the Headteacher, to use Restrictive Physical Intervention to prevent a child from doing or continuing to do any of the following: -

- injuring themselves or others
- causing serious damage to property
- engaging in any behaviour that is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline

"Restrictive Physical Intervention" is the term used by the DFE to include interventions where bodily contact using force is used. It refers to any instance in which a member of staff

has to, in specific circumstances, use “reasonable force” to control or restrain pupils. There is no legal definition of “reasonable force”. However, there are two relevant considerations:

- the use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of an incident warrant it
- the degree of force must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences, it is should be used only to prevent further harm or damage.

3. When the use of restrictive physical interventions may be appropriate

Restrictive Physical Interventions will be used when all other strategies have failed, and therefore only as a last resort. However, there are other situations when physical management may be necessary, for example in a situation of clear danger or extreme urgency. Certain children may become distressed, agitated, and out of control, and need calming with various strategies which are suited to that child’s needs and situation. Under certain conditions this duty must be an over-riding factor.
All staff are authorised by the Headteacher to have control of children, and **must** be aware of this Policy and its implications. Students and volunteers will not be permitted to use any restrictive physical interventions.
We take the view that staff should not be expected to put themselves in danger, and that removing children and themselves is the right thing to do. We value staff efforts to rectify what can be very difficult situations and in which they exercise their duty of care for the children.
It is our view that each member of staff should take responsibility for their own safety in any situation and will need to take action to ensure their own health and safety needs are met e.g. they should inform their line manager or colleagues of an injury or physical condition that prevents them from handling or supporting a child.

4. Planning for the use of restrictive physical interventions

Staff will use the minimum force needed to restore safety and appropriate behaviour.
The principles relating to the intervention are as follows: -

- Restrictive Physical Intervention is an act of care and control, **not** punishment.
- Staff will only use it when there are good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary and in a child’s and/or other children’s best interests
- Staff will take steps in advance to avoid the need for Restrictive Physical Intervention through dialogue and diversion, at the level of understanding of the child
- Only the minimum force necessary will be used to prevent severe distress, injury, or damage
- Staff will be able to show that the intervention used was in keeping with the incident
- Every effort will be made to secure the presence of other staff, and these staff may act as assistants and/or witnesses
- As soon as it is safe, the Restrictive Physical Intervention will be relaxed to allow the child to regain self-control
- Escalation will be avoided at all costs, especially if it would make the overall situation more destructive and unmanageable
- The needs of the individual child will always be taken into account
- When developing Individual Education/Behaviour Plans, consideration will be given to individual needs.

5. Acceptable forms of intervention

The children in our nursery are aged from the age of 2 – 5 and some have very special needs. Such young children require positive touch and a more hands on approach to support their personal, social and emotional development as well as to support them in other areas of learning. Physical contact is **never** used as a punishment. According to the needs of individual children, we may use physical touch/ intervention:

- to give reassurance to a child
- to comfort a child in distress
- to ensure children have every opportunity to benefit from the nursery curriculum
- to gently direct a child
- to support children in learning life skills such as toileting
- when providing intimate care such as changing nappies
- to provide support within a physical activity such as climbing/movement
- in an emergency to avert danger to the child or others
- in rare circumstances, when Restrictive Physical Intervention is warranted

6. Developing a positive handling plan

If the SENCO or other staff feel that Restrictive Physical Intervention may be needed, then a Positive Handling Plan will be agreed and completed with the parents. This Plan will include strategies to help the child avoid getting into tricky situations, and identify the early warning signs.
The plan will include:

- Involving parents/carers and the child to ensure they are clear about what specific action the staff may take, when and why
- A risk assessment will be written to help ensure staff and others act reasonably, consider the risks, and learn from the outcomes.
- Identifying key staff who know exactly what is expected e.g. the key person or support person
- Identifying training needs

7. Guidance and training for staff
As part of their induction all staff are informed about our behaviour policy and this policy. Relevant staff are given training in manual handling techniques. All staff will receive Team Teach training.

8. Complaints
It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping parents and governors informed we could avoid the need for misunderstandings or complaints. All disputes that arise about the use of force by a member of staff, will be dealt with according to Safeguarding and Complaints policies

Review date: September 2027