

Physical Restraint and Intervention Policy

Introduction

Children need to be safe and aware of how they should behave. Some (generally only a few and very occasionally) lose control and need someone else to supply it. They need to know we are able to control them safely and confidently. Situations in which physical intervention may be needed are, therefore, likely to be relatively few in number.

All our staff need to be safe and confident in how they manage inappropriate behaviour. They have to be clear about the options open to them when all the normal systems have failed or when there is a clear emergency in which, for example, talking calmly to someone in danger is irrelevant. They need to be free of undue worries about the risks of legal action against them if they use appropriate physical interventions, and need to know that the Managers and Local Authority will offer support if they are challenged.

Parents and carers need to know that their child and those who are teaching him or her are safe and free from disruptive influences or danger. They also need to know that they will be properly informed if their child is the subject of physical intervention, and they need to know the nature of the intervention and the rationale for its use.

This policy connects to and is consistent with our other policies, especially those on Positive Behaviour, Health and Safety and Child Protection, to which reference can be made.

Our Approach: Prevention is Better than Cure

Physical intervention is our method of last resort, after all other approaches have been tried or in situations of clear danger or extreme urgency. We utilise only the minimum force required to resolve the situation safely. How we respond always has regard to the circumstances and to the age and understanding of the child.

Where there is a foreseeable risk that a pupil could behave in such a way as to require restrictive physical intervention, we undertake a risk assessment in order to balance the risks to the pupil and to others of intervening or not. Planning is also undertaken to see if trigger situations can be avoided and other positive strategies employed to lessen the likelihood of such incidents occurring.

Who May Use Physical Intervention and When

The law allows “teachers and other persons who are authorised by the Manager to have control or charge of pupils to use such force as is reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- injuring themselves or others
- causing damage to property (including the pupil’s own property)
- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere.”

(Education Act 1996, Section 550A)

At Gan Alon, Pre-School keyworkers are authorised by the Manager to have control of pupils and must be made aware of this policy and its implications. School staff are also, like everyone else, allowed to use reasonable force (the minimum necessary) to defend themselves.

We take the view that staff are not expected to put themselves in danger, and that removing pupils and themselves from a source of danger is a proper thing to do. We appreciate the integrity of our staff and value their efforts to rectify situations that are difficult and in which they exercise their duty of care for their pupils.

We do not, however, require them to go beyond what is reasonable. In particular it is acceptable for any member of staff to decide that they will not use physical intervention for personal reasons.

Acceptable Physical Interventions

Reasonable force is not defined legally in isolation. It must be justified as appropriate by the circumstances. We will use only the minimum force that is needed to restore safety or appropriate behaviour, and we take account of the age, understanding and gender of the pupil.

Acceptable forms of intervention in this school include:

- leading or guiding a pupil by the hand or arm, or shepherding them with a hand in the centre of the back
- holding a pupil who has lost control until they are calm and safe
- physically moving between and separating two pupils
- blocking a pupil's path
- use of reasonable force to remove a weapon or dangerous object from a pupil's grasp
- where there is immediate risk of injury, any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force' – i.e. to prevent a pupil running into a busy road or hitting or hurting someone

Staff may move, defend themselves, lead, restrain or block someone, bearing in mind the whole time their own safety as well as that of others and of the child who is the subject of any restraint or other intervention.

It is unacceptable and likely to be illegal or grounds for disciplinary action for staff to use any physical intervention designed to cause pain or injury, including:

- any form of corporal punishment, slapping, punching or kicking
- holding by the neck or collar, or otherwise restricting the ability to breathe
- holding by the hair or an ear
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- tripping up a pupil or holding an arm out at neck or head height to stop them
- holding a pupil face down on the ground or sitting on them
- shutting or locking a pupil in a room, except in extreme situations whilst summoning support.

Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

Using Physical Intervention

Except in cases where there is immediate danger, we would normally try other ways of resolving or de-escalating a situation. These could include:

- calmly restating the rules and expectations for the situation
- removing other pupils from the situation and thus from danger or from being an audience
- use of physical proximity, but not in a threatening way
- encouraging the pupil to withdraw to a safer and calmer situation
- calling another adult for support or to take over.

If more than minor physical intervention is judged to be necessary, the teacher or adult in charge should:

- send for the assistance of another adult (for support or to take over, and as a witness)
- remove other pupils from the scene if possible
- continue to talk calmly to the pupil explaining what will happen, and under what circumstances the physical intervention will cease (but not in a threatening way)
- use the minimum force necessary and cease the intervention as soon as it is judged safe
- not act punitively in any way verbally or physically.

A full written account of the incident will be made by the member of staff concerned and recorded. The report will contain:

- name(s) of pupil(s) concerned, when and where the incident occurred
- names of staff or pupils who witnessed
- the reason why force was needed
- how the incident began and progressed, who said what, who did what
- what was done to calm things down
- what degree of force was used; what kind of hold, where and for how long
- pupil's response and the outcome of the incident
- details of any injury to any person or damage to property.

The report must be signed and dated by the member of staff and countersigned that it has been read by the Manager who will:

- discuss the incident with the pupil as soon as possible
- interview staff involved and any other witnesses
- inform the pupil's parents/carers and social worker if relevant
- record any disagreements expressed by the pupil or adults about the event
- take any appropriate further action eg. Barnet's Child Protection Procedures.

Planning for Physical Intervention

Where we think a pupil might require physical restraint, we plan in advance and know who will do what. This planning includes helping pupils to avoid provoking situations, helping them find success and minimise frustration, and develop our own skills. It also helps us to see better where we can head off difficulties when we spot them early enough.

The plan will include:

- involving the parents and the pupil to gain their views and to ensure that they are clear about what specific action the school might need to take
- a risk assessment that considers carefully the likely outcomes to the pupil and others of undertaking intervention or not
- managing the pupil e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict
- at what stage and what types of holds to be used
- identifying key staff who should know exactly what action they should be taking. Any member of staff who may have to use a physical intervention should always be fully briefed about the child in question, and it is best if they are well known to the child
- ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate
- identifying training needs and updates.

Training

We are clear that training of staff is vital in this area if we are to be seen to adopt the best practice and maintain a record of safe management of all school situations.

Training may include:

- awareness training
- general training on behaviour management
- training on avoiding and coping with crisis/difficult/physically challenging events for identified pupils
- specific training and skill development on use of the some basic 'breakaway' or 'hold' techniques that are safe and useful to know, for all or some staff

Complaints

We hope that by adopting this policy and keeping parents well informed, this will help to avoid the need for complaints. Any disputes that do arise about the use of force by a member of staff will be dealt with in accordance with the Barnet's Child Protection Procedures and Gan Alon's Complaint Procedure.