

Inspire - Enable - Achieve



The Vale Federation Positive Handling Policy

Revised December 2018

This policy was adopted on

December 2018

The policy is to be reviewed by

December 2019



The Vale Federation of Special Schools: Positive Handling Policy

Rationale and Purpose

Within the context of our special schools, which cater for pupils who display challenging behaviour arising from their social and emotional needs, as well as children who display challenging behaviour relating to their learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder, it is acknowledged that there will be times where it is necessary to use physical intervention. Physical intervention will be used as a last resort. If a member of staff ever needs to intervene physically, they will follow this policy.

Introduction

There are pupils within the Vale Federation who do present with behavioural difficulties which sometimes present a risk to themselves and others. Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 describes the circumstances in which teachers and others authorised by the Principal may use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils. This policy details how we implement the guidance in the Vale Federation of Special Schools. It should be considered along the most recent Local Authority policy statements and recent local and national guidance.

The term 'Positive Handling' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. Included in this framework are a small number of responses which may involve the use of force to control or restrain a pupil. Restrictive physical intervention is when a member of staff uses force intentionally to restrict a child's movement against his or her will.

All physical interventions at the Vale Federation are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management.

Using physical intervention

The use of restrictive physical intervention may be justified where a pupil is:

1. committing an offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil)
2. causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself); or
3. prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Restrictive physical intervention may also be appropriate where, although none of the above have yet happened, they are judged as highly likely to be about to happen.

We are very cautious about using restrictive physical intervention where there are no immediate concerns about possible injury or exceptional damage to property. Restrictive physical intervention would only be used in exceptional circumstances, with staff that know the student well and who are able to make informed judgements about the relative risks of using, or not using, restrictive physical intervention; for example, stopping a child leaving the school site.

If we judge that restrictive physical intervention would make the situation worse, we would not use it, but would do something else (like go to seek help, make the area safe or warn about what might happen next and issue an instruction to stop) consistent with our duty of care.

Physical intervention must never be used as a punishment.

Alternatives to physical intervention

To reduce risk, staff can:

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason.
- Give clear directions for pupils to stop.
- Remind them about rules and likely outcomes.
- Remove an audience or take vulnerable pupils to a safer place.
- Make the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons.
- Use positive touch to guide or escort pupils to somewhere less pressured.
- Ensure that colleagues know what is happening and get help.

The last resort principle

At the Vale Federation we only use physical restraint when there is no realistic alternative. This does not mean that we always expect people to methodically work their way through a series of failing strategies, before attempting an intervention in which they have some confidence. Nor does it mean always waiting until the danger is imminent, by which time the prospect of safely managing it may be significantly reduced. It does mean that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative. It also means that we expect staff to experiment and think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective.

Reasonable and proportionate

Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate. People should not react in anger. If they feel they are becoming angry they should consider withdrawing to allow someone else to deal with the situation. Where staff act in good faith, and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported.

Unreasonable use of force

It is not reasonable to use force simply to enforce compliance in circumstances where there is no risk. It is not reasonable to use any more force than is necessary to achieve a reduction in risk. Under no circumstances should pain be deliberately inflicted. Other than as an emergency measure to protect health and safety, force should never be used to keep a pupil secluded. Seclusion is only lawful by specific court order and cannot become part of a planned strategy at a school.

General Services Association

It is the policy of the Vale Federation that all staff working closely with pupils are trained in the positive handling strategies and techniques of General Services Association. This provides a positive approach to behaviour management and protective handling strategies. The emphasis is always on positive prevention and de-escalation. Only those staff who have received General Services Association training are authorised to manage students in restraint procedures.

Behaviour management plans

All pupils who have been identified as presenting a risk should have a behaviour management plan. The plan details any strategies which have been found to be effective for that individual, along with any particular responses which are not recommended. If particular physical techniques have been found to be effective they should be named, along with alerts to any which have proved ineffective or which caused problems in the past.

Responding to emergencies

Even the best planning systems cannot cover every eventuality and the Vale Federation recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet. The key principals are that any physical intervention should be:

- in the best interest of the child;
- reasonable and proportionate;
- intended to reduce risk;
- the least intrusive and restrictive of those options available which are likely to be effective.

Wherever a physical intervention has to be made there should be a verbal warning. Where possible, staff should always attempt to use diversion or de-escalation in preference to physical interventions. They should only use the techniques and methods approved for use through the General Services training.

Recording

Whenever physical intervention is used, the incident must be recorded using Behaviour Watch, an electronic recording system. All staff involved in an incident should contribute to the record which should be completed within 24 hours.

Staff should:

- read through the recording form carefully
- take time to think about what happened and explain it clearly
- complete all names in full
- sign and date all forms
- bear in mind that these records will be retained and could form part of a future investigation.

All incidents of restraint must be reported to parents/carers.

Follow up

Following an incident, consideration may be given to conducting a further risk assessment, and reviewing the individual behaviour management plan. Staff are encouraged to share and reflect on their experience of incidents with colleagues to review their safe working practice