



Subject: <b>Positive Handling</b>	Number: <b>POL00136</b>
Approved by:	Type: <b>Policy</b>
<b>Managing Director</b>	Issued: <b>June 2022</b>
	Revision: <b>2.1</b>
	Effective: <b>September 2024</b>

1. Objectives

The Robert Holme Academy believe that building positive personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils is most important to pupil wellbeing.

It is recognised that most pupils in our school respond positively to the discipline and control practised by staff which is outlined in our staff handbook and behaviour policy. It is also acknowledged that in extreme circumstances, staff may be required to use reasonable force when there is an obvious risk to the safety of pupils, staff and property. If used at all, the use of force to control or restrain pupils will be used as part of a respectful and supportive relationship with a pupil in order to ensure minimal risk of injury to the pupil and staff.

We believe our whole school approach to behaviour management minimises the likelihood of requiring positive handling and staff who may need to physically intervene will only do so after all other appropriate behaviour management options have been exhausted. We also have a variety of measures in place intended to reduce the likelihood of the need for positive handling to be used. These include, for example:

- a supportive and calm working environment;
- positive and respectful relationships amongst staff and pupils;
- a whole school approach to sustaining social and emotional skills;
- a rigorous approach to staff training and development.

In particular, staff understand the importance of listening to and respecting pupils to create an environment that is calm and supportive, especially when dealing with pupils who may have emotional and behavioural needs, which may increase their aggression. Staff also understand the importance of responding to the feelings of the pupil, which lie beneath the behaviour, as well as the behaviour itself. If a pupil is behaving disruptively or anti-socially, every non-physical strategy will be used to manage the behaviour positively to prevent a deterioration of the situation. Staff therefore view physical intervention with a child as a ‘last resort’ and for the purposes of maintaining a safe environment.

We recognise that the behaviour of our pupils reflects their needs, emotional state and concerns. We understand that when pupils have their needs met, while feeling valued and respected there is no longer a reason to use challenging or disruptive behaviour. We believe that being aggressive or chastising a pupil for poor conduct may address the behaviour in the short term but does not give the pupil the support they crave or provide guidance they need to act appropriately in difficult situations.

We believe all pupils, but especially those who display difficult behaviours, need the consistency of a reliable and caring adults who will always be available to provide support and guidance, especially during difficult times. We therefore aim to provide positive ways for pupils to communicate their needs to others, while providing important social and problem-solving skills that will help them throughout their life.



### 2. **Scope and Applicability**

This policy applies to staff members at the Robert Holme Academy and describes the approaches to be taken to deal with a serious breakdown in discipline and behaviour. The Education & Inspections Act 2006 allows teachers and other staff who have control or charge of pupils to use force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- causing injury to themselves or others;
- committing an offence;
- damaging property;
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order & discipline.

This applies both on and off site on trips and visits. Reasonable force is a last resort and is only used in the extreme. Reasonable force is only part of our whole behaviour management strategy which can be seen in our Behaviour Policy. If used at all, the use of reasonable force will be used in the context of respectful, supportive relationship with the pupil to ensure minimal risk of injury to anyone. In writing this policy, it is acknowledged that reasonable adjustments will be made for pupils with special education needs and disabilities.

The Robert Holme Academy use the term 'Positive Handling' to describe interventions that are required to use reasonable force according to the following principles:

- positive handling should use the minimum level of force, for the shortest amount of time necessary;
- positive handling should only be used when all other strategies have failed;
- actions should be proportionate nature and scale to both the behaviour and pupil being controlled and the nature of harm they may cause;
- positive handling must be used in ways that maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned including staff;
- as far as is feasible, under given circumstances, there must be more than one member of staff present if a pupil is in restraint;
- positive handling should only be carried out in an act of care and control with the intention to re-establish verbal control as soon as possible;
- all positive handling must be recorded as soon as possible in the incident book (before the end of the school day);
- any use of restraint must be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible so that decisions can be made with regards to any further actions required.

Positive handling techniques are not treated in isolation and the Robert Holme Academy is committed to ensuring that, because of incidents, learning opportunities are created for pupils that allow them to 'own' and take responsibility for their behaviour.

In addition, Robert Holme Academy offer further support and guidance to staff following an incident if they require it. We believe that the relationship between the pupil and staff involved in an incident must be rebuilt, in-line with our core values.

### 3. **Procedure**

#### 3.1 **Responsibilities**

The Managing Director and Headteacher are responsible for maintaining the safety of staff and pupils, while taking appropriate steps to prevent serious breaches of safety and welfare.

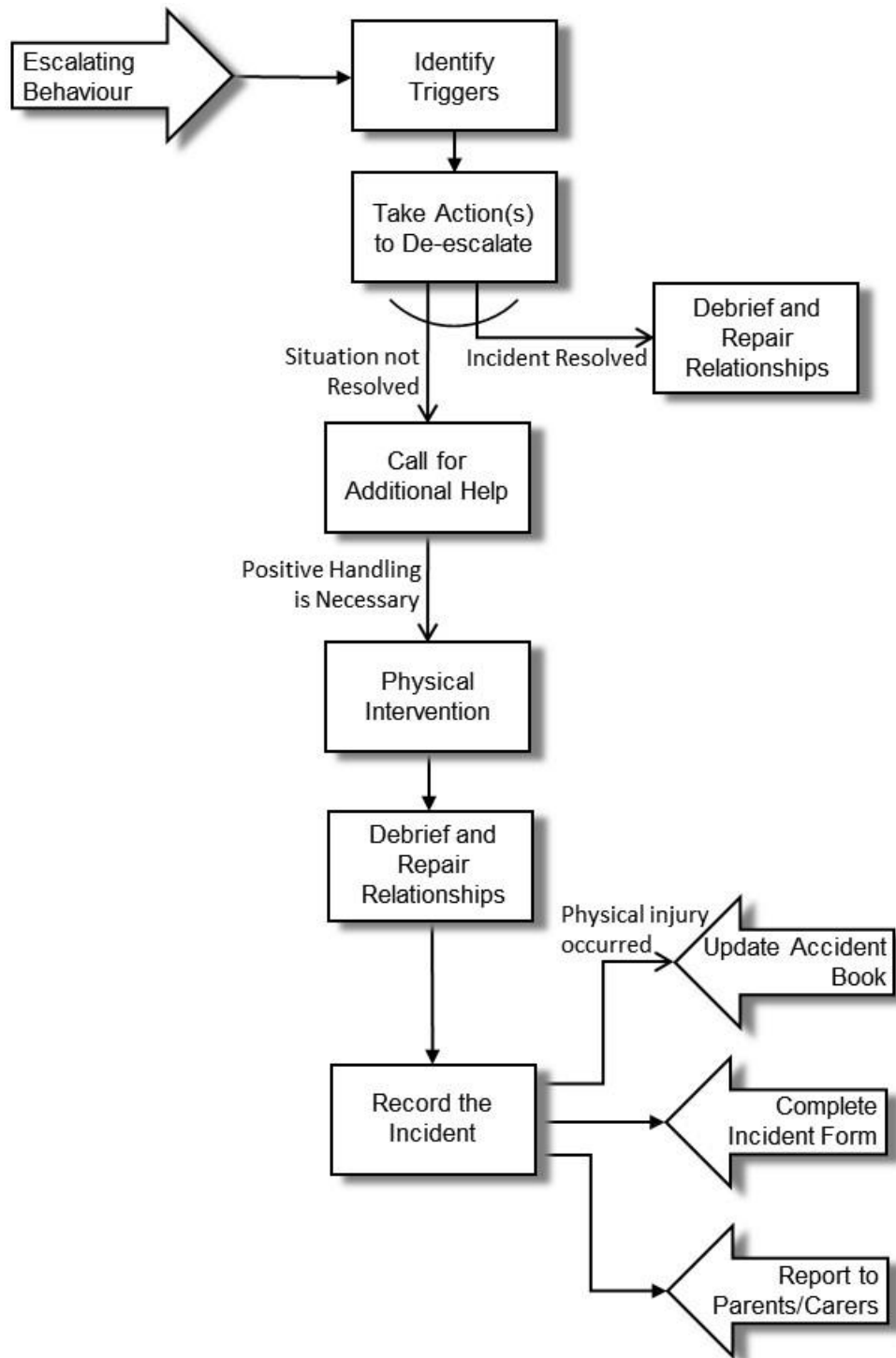
The Managing Director and Headteacher are also responsible for pro-actively monitoring behaviours of staff and pupils to minimise the risk of serious breakdown in behaviours that could lead to more serious escalations.



Staff are responsible for taking appropriate action, which may include positive handling and reasonable force, to prevent injury or damage to school equipment and/or fixtures and fittings.

Staff are also responsible reporting the issues that impact on the safe, efficient and effective operation of the Robert Holme Academy.

3.2 Process





### 3.3 *Identify Triggers*

Where appropriate, Positive Handling Plans are written into the pupil's Individual Risk Assessment. This is the responsibility of the keyworker and are designed with any professional collaboration required and agreed with parents/carers. Risk assessments are used to identify potential triggers and known de-escalation techniques for the individual. Members of staff who have contact with these pupils are made aware of the potential triggers and preferred de-escalation techniques.

A Pupil exhibiting escalating behaviour is typically expressing to staff something is making them anxious, angry or feeling that their needs are not being met. There are likely to be specific triggers for the behaviour. Identifying the root causes and taking appropriate action to mitigate the triggers will help to de-escalate the problem.

Triggers include, but are not limited to, being:

- hungry;
- scared;
- hurt;
- tired;
- bored;
- sad;
- frustrated;
- angry;
- anxious;
- or any combination of these.

Above all, staff recognise that a pupil engaging in challenging behaviour for a reason. Staff therefore understand that, while a pupil may be exhibiting behaviour that appears to be disruptive, destructive or even dangerous, the pupil may feel unsafe or out of control, so they take inappropriate action over the things they can control, such as running off, breaking something or hitting out.

In some cases, a pupil may simply feel that getting attention for being negative may be better than no attention. In some instances, pupils may find self-regulation of emotions difficult. This could be due to previous abuse or maltreatment. Pupils may also not have had appropriate responses modelled in their behaviour.

Staff are therefore mindful of potential triggers and must, as far as possible, identify the potential root causes so that appropriate actions can be taken to de-escalate a deteriorating situation, while recognising that the pupils behaviour is likely to be dependent on both the situation they are in and the relationships they have with others around them.

### 3.4 *Take Actions to De-escalate*

A pupil may not be able to understand express their needs or motivation for poor behaviour, so it is necessary for staff to look at the various options to address deteriorating behaviour before it escalates.

De-escalation techniques are most successful when used early, before the pupil becomes physically challenging or disruptive. It is therefore necessary to be aware of and spot early signs of distress.

These include, for example:

- fidgeting;
- avoiding tasks;
- shaking;
- making noises;
- signs of tension such as a clenched jaw; or
- speech becoming more rapid or high-pitched.



Staff acknowledge that a pupil is engaging in poor or disruptive behaviour for a reason. This may be to get attention, stop an activity they can't achieve or satisfying sensory or emotional needs, even though they may not be able to verbally express the problem or understand what is expected of their behaviour in a challenging situation. Various options for acting are therefore taken into consideration. These are explored with the pupil to address the root cause.

Staff use modelling techniques to demonstrate the behaviour they want the pupil to emulate, while maintaining relaxed and open body language.

As far as possible, staff appear calm and self-assured while making sure that they are not displaying the same signs of aggression that can be seen in the pupil. Staff do not hold eye contact for too long and avoid standing square to the pupil.

Staff also maintain neutral facial expressions. Small and subtle expressions can indicate surprised or anger, so these must be controlled.

Staff also allow room around the pupil and avoid entering the pupils personal space, which can indicate aggression and escalation when a pupil is agitated. Staying some distance from a pupil can help to keep staff safe should the pupil become physically aggressive.

Staff are training to control their breathing and suggest the pupil also calms their breathing during an incident. This helps to reduce stress and encourages pupil to match a slower breathing pattern.

It is hard for a pupil to have an argument with someone who is not responding aggressively back, so Staff are required to lower their voice and keep and tone even during an incident.

Distraction and diversionary techniques are also used. When a pupil is aggressive, they are acting with their own fight-or-flight instincts and may not be mindful of their actions and consequences. Here, staff use distractions by changing the subject to divert the pupil from their aggression.

Staff avoid getting drawn into secondary behaviours such as arguing back, as these are often used by the pupil to distract or upset the member of staff. Here, staff are encouraged to acknowledge the pupils feelings and show they are respected and listened to. Staff are also encouraged to tell the pupil what they want them to do rather than what they do not want them to do. For example, 'I want you to sit down' should be used instead of 'stop arguing with me'.

If possible, an alternative member of staff may take over from the current member of staff. This provides the opportunity for the cycle of tension or deadlock to be broken. However, it is critical for staff to be consistent in their approach and desired outcomes. Pupils are not permitted to play one member of staff against another.

The pupil is also given plenty of time to take up an action following any instruction, and every effort is made to avoid backing them into a corner, both verbally and physically.

Specific actions that are avoided include:

- making threats or promises that cannot be carry through;
- being defensive or taking behaviours or insults personally, as what is being said may seem insulting when directed to staff, but aggression is typically not about a specific member of staff;
- using sarcasm or humiliating the pupil.

### 3.5 ***Calling for Additional Help***

It is recognised that, no matter how carefully and skilfully a member of staff tries to de-escalate a situation, it may still reach crisis point. In these instances, and as far as possible, staff should summoned additional help. This is done using a the site radio system by using the PTT button and explaining the need for help. At least one member of staff should be available to come to immediate assistance.

Only in extreme circumstances, where injury or serious damage is likely to occur, is the emergency button is used to be used on the radio as this will set distress alarms off on the whole radio system, including flashing red lights on all receivers. This alarm indicates immediate and rapid help is required.



### 3.6 *Physical Intervention*

Physical intervention is only applied in extreme circumstances i.e. self injury or injury to others is likely and in cases where all other interventions have failed. As far as possible other pupils and bystanders are moved to safety.

When physical restraint becomes necessary staff are required to:

- tell the pupil what you are doing and why;
- use the minimum force necessary;
- involve other members staff where loss of control is likely;
- tell the pupil what they must do for to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition);
- use simple and clear language;
- hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow;
- relax restraint in response to the pupil's compliance.

Staff must not:

- act in temper;
- be engaged in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil;
- involve other pupils in the restraint;
- touch or hold the pupil in a way that could be viewed as sexually inappropriate conduct;
- twist or force limbs back against a joint;
- bend fingers or pull hair;
- hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing, such as around the neck;
- slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil;
- use physical restraint or intervention as a punishment.

### 3.7 *Actions Immediately Following an Incident*

Time is taken after any outburst or incident to debrief, repair and rebuild the relationships. Without this relationships are likely to continue to deteriorate. Staff are required to problem-solve the situation and teach new behaviours where needed. Staff ensure that any sanctions are measured and appropriate to the incident that has happened, while making sure that unacceptable behaviour is challenged and this is important than the severity of what happens.

### 3.8 *Recording the Incident*

All use of positive handling should be recorded. This record should be logged in the Serious Incident (Positive Handling) Book, which statutory for all special school provisions. This hard-backed book with numbered pages, retained in the main office. This should be signed by all staff involved.

Where an incident has resulted in the use of reasonable force, Parents/carers should be informed on the same day as an incident. A copy of the incident report can be provided if requested.

If an incident results in the need for First Aid, the incident and first aid should be recorded in the accident book. The referring log number for the Serious Incident Book should be noted (and vice versa).

### 3.9 *Monitor Incidents*

Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert Senior Leadership Team to the needs of any pupil whose behaviour may require the use of reasonable force. Senior Leadership Team monitor all incidents of Positive Handling on a weekly basis.



**3.10 Reporting Mistreatment**

The Robert Holme Academy is committed to the highest standards of quality, openness, accountability and integrity. It is important that any malpractice, misconduct or ill treatment is reported and dealt with appropriately. The Robert Holme Academy is committed to supporting staff members that feel malpractice or deficiencies are occurring irrespective of whether they are impacted directly by any wrongdoing.

In order to provide a safe environment and service, the Robert Holme Academy recognises the importance of staff being able to openly report concerns as they may be the first to suspect or witness that wrongdoing may be taking place. This includes situations where a member of staff feels another member of staff has over-reacted to a situation or where they feel unreasonable force has been used to deal with a pupil. The process to be followed under this circumstance is provided in the whistleblowing policy.

In many cases, the earlier an issue or concern is raised, the sooner corrective action can take place. Staff are therefore encouraged to raise any concerns they have in relation to the conduct of other members of staff, the way we operate or any other issues that they feel compromise a safe and happy working environment.





#### 4 References

Further information can be found in:

1. DfE statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2023) Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1021914/KCSIE\\_2021\\_September\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1021914/KCSIE_2021_September_guidance.pdf)
2. DfE 'Working together to safeguard children' (July 2018) Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/942454/Working\\_together\\_to\\_safeguard\\_children\\_inter\\_agency\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf)
3. DfE Behaviour and discipline in schools Advice for headteachers and school staff (January 2016) available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/488034/Behaviour\\_and\\_Discipline\\_in\\_Schools\\_-\\_A\\_guide\\_for\\_headteachers\\_and\\_School\\_Staff.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488034/Behaviour_and_Discipline_in_Schools_-_A_guide_for_headteachers_and_School_Staff.pdf)
4. NSPCC CASPAR briefing A summary of changes introduced by Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023 Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/keeping-children-safe-in-education-caspar-briefing>
5. NSPCC How safe are our children? An overview of data on abuse of adolescents (2020) Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/2287/how-safe-are-our-children-2020.pdf>
6. DfE Use of reasonable force Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies (July 2013) Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444051/Use\\_of\\_reasonable\\_force\\_advice\\_Reviewed\\_July\\_2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444051/Use_of_reasonable_force_advice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf)
7. DfE Searching, screening and confiscation Advice for headteachers, school staff and governing bodies (January 2018) Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/674416/Searching\\_screening\\_and\\_confiscation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674416/Searching_screening_and_confiscation.pdf)