

Oakwood School & Assessment Centre

POLICY FOR THE USE OF PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

1 Here in Oakwood we aim to create a safe and secure environment where all pupils are enabled to achieve their full potential and to be educated with respect and dignity.

The staff at Oakwood aim to provide a curriculum, which is based on the provision of opportunities for learning through play, practical activities and routines, which promote learning. They also aim to teach the children an established body of knowledge and skills. In order for a child with learning difficulties to access the curriculum they need to develop independence, confidence and self-esteem and be actively involved in their learning.

Teachers then need to be sensitive and knowledgeable; arousing the child's curiosity and interest and so accessing the curriculum.

In the early stages of learning children may need physical guidance. This may take the form of

- Hand over hand
- Leading a pupil by the hand
- Physically mirroring the child's movements
- Physical support and guidance

In order to fully access their learning environment many children with sensory impairment may require a greater level of physical intervention, this may include aromatherapy, Jacuzzi and tactile stimulation.

2 We aim to provide a child-centred environment and take a holistic approach to education. We view our pupils as children first. We believe that when a young child is upset, ill or distressed, we should comfort them in an appropriate manner. This may involve physical intervention. Appropriate interventions include:

- Putting an arm around a child
- Gently stroking a child's head
- Giving a hug

3 No matter how skilfully and sensitively pupils are managed a small minority will occasionally engage in challenging or aggressive behaviour which threatens the safety of themselves, other pupils or staff. At Oakwood we have a pastoral responsibility towards the pupils in our charge and must therefore take all reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare of our pupils is safe-guarded and that their safety is preserved. Unfortunately, despite every effort to de-escalate a situation there may be times when staff may use physical intervention in order to minimise the adverse consequences of dangerous or aggressive behaviour.

The law recognises that there are occasions when such intervention is not only recommended but also highly desirable, e.g.

- To prevent self-injurious behaviour
- To protect oneself from injury
- To prevent other people being harmed
- To prevent damage to property

From a legal perspective, The Children (NI) Order 1996 clearly establishes that when such decisions are being taken “the child’s welfare shall be the paramount consideration”.

Lyon (1994) suggests

“When severely challenging behaviour manifests itself, this principle dictates that all possible responses are considered; and then that the least restrictive and detrimental alternative is employed to manage the behaviour; and that this is engaged in for the shortest period of time”.

At Oakwood we believe that at every stage and in every situation a response should be adopted that is in the paramount interests of that individual child.

Physical intervention is not seen as self-contained procedures, which are introduced when behaviour escalates to unacceptable levels. Rather, they should only be introduced as part of a graduated response, which seeks to minimise conflict and avoid confrontations. When the school becomes aware that a pupil may display challenging or dangerous behaviours then a positive behaviour support plan must be drawn up in order to help the child to self-regulate / seek help. In most instances this should be enough to avoid the need for any form of physical intervention. However, there may be times when physical intervention cannot be avoided. The teacher should identify those children for whom such intervention may be necessary and liaise with school management team to plan a response should the necessity arise. To this end a risk assessment will be carried out.

On completion of a risk assessment the teacher will

- Consult with the parents
- Brief other staff
- Devise strategies for managing the pupil
- Ensure additional support can be summoned wherever possible

Physical intervention in these circumstances may take several forms but will always follow Team Teach approved protocols.

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil’s path
- Holding
- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- Shepherding a pupil away
- In extreme circumstances, using more restrictive holds.

Such interventions should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a pupil's actions or by removing a physical object, which could be of harm.

The use of restraint is only likely to be needed in exceptional circumstances if a pupil appears to be unable to exercise self-control of his or her emotions and/or behaviour and is presenting a threat to himself or others.

All behavioural incidences that require physical intervention will be recorded.

Children with challenging behaviour make demands on parents and staff alike. Our challenge is to respond to their needs.

Prevention of situations where physical intervention has to be considered is at all times preferable to having to react to such situations. An ethos within the school which encourages good behaviour and a sense of shared community is important. At an individual level, teachers should focus on class and pupil management techniques which minimise conflict and encourage pupils to take less challenging approaches to situations.

Amendments for the period of COVID 19 Protocols

Despite every effort being made to implement social distancing within the classroom for a significant number of children such a measure cannot be used. Many children in Oakwood are unable to understand such an abstract construct. Furthermore, given the nature of some of the conditions that our children have they are likely to display problematic behaviour at times. In addition, many children in Oakwood have difficulty with hand washing and elements of more usual measures to contain the spread of germs such as coughing into an elbow, using a tissue. This means that our staff may have to intervene physically.

Classroom staff are advised to wear a face covering at all times and must don PPE when providing for intimate or personal care.

For some children it may be necessary for staff to wear a visor to protect from saliva and other bodily fluids. A full risk assessment will be carried out for children who may pose additional risks to staff.

Staff must sanitise or wash their hands frequently and especially when having intervened physically with a child before engaging with anyone else.

PPE must be donned / doffed in accordance with the protocols provided in line with their training.

Art 3: The best interest of the child is at the heart of everything we do.

Art 12: Every child has the right to be heard.

Art 19: Every pupil has the right to be safe.



