

# OAKWOOD SCHOOL AND 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
- Taking a child on your knee
- 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. Staff may use physical intervention in order to minimise the adverse consequences of violent, aggressive or reckless behaviour.

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

- 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 be introduced a part of a graduated response, which seeks to minimise conflict and avoid confrontations. When the school becomes aware that a pupil may behave in a way that may require the use of physical intervention, the school management team will plan a response should the situation arise. To this end a risk assessment will be carried out.

On completion of a risk assessment the school management will

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

Physical intervention in these circumstances may take several forms

- 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 and to teach them to lead fulfilling lives in spite of their problematic behaviours.