



Positive Handling Policy

In keeping with the ethos of Navan Educate Together National School, this policy reflects our commitment to providing a safe and secure and positive learning environment for all pupils. It applies to all staff and pupils in Navan Educate Together National School.

Navan Educate Together National School promotes the use of positive approaches with children.

Where these strategies are not working it is foreseeable that a pupil might engage in high-risk behaviours requiring a physical intervention or restrictive practice, this policy applies.

On occasion, the use of restrictive interventions may be required as a last resort and for the purpose of protecting child's wellbeing and the wellbeing others, but this is always the least restrictive approach possible, for the shortest period of time possible and proportionate to the risks.

Navan Educate Together National School use these restrictive practices, in exceptional circumstances, as outlined in this policy.

Rationale

Navan Educate Together National School in the first instance applies the principles outlined in our Code of Behaviour Policy which provide guidelines to staff on the use of day-to-day positive behavioural management strategies. These are designed to help all pupils to modify/manage their own behaviour in the long-term strategies. These are designed to help all pupils to modify/manage their own behaviour in the long-term.

We apply a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) model where the pupil is supported on a three-tiered level: a school wide PBS approach, a classroom-based PBS approach and an individually targeted approach. With the latter, every pupil who presents with behaviours of concern has a Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP). This plan is specific to the pupil, developed by the teacher and special needs assistants, with advice acquired from multi-disciplinary support services as appropriate/available and in consultation with the pupil (where appropriate) and parent(s)/guardian(s), whose signed consent is sought for the plan.

This PBS approach is about understanding the function of a behaviour through recording and reviewing of the behaviour, to facilitate the teaching of functionally skills to replace the behaviour of concern.

The PBS approach acknowledges that children develop their safety awareness and behavioural self-management at different rates and communicate their need for support in managing their behaviour in different ways.

As teachers, we modify our approach through listening to the message being communicated. Positive Behaviour Support Plans outline all the proactive strategies to be put in place to reduce a pupil's challenging behaviour and its impact on him/her/others.

If these strategies and supports are not always sufficient to maintain the safety and wellbeing of the child or others, the plan will include a reactive strategy for what to do when the behaviours are occurring, such as a low arousal approach or removal of other pupils to a place of safety. As much as possible, our reactive strategy is based upon the message/function of the behaviour.

This means that we facilitate a child to 'solve the problem' (access our attention, change their location, finish work, request pain relief, etc) using other skills. We do this to resolve the incident as quickly and as safely as possible. Our philosophy is to regulate before we educate. This is particularly important for pupils with anxiety and /or ASD.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is a risk that a person may be in immediate danger as a result of aggressive challenging behaviour or from a health and safety point of view, the use of restrictive strategies may be necessary (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Act 37a). In such instances, this Positive Handling Policy on the use of restrictive practice applies.

If it is necessary to use a restrictive practice, it must be the lowest level of restriction that is effective for a particular intervention and should be applied for the least amount of time possible. The detail of how and in what circumstances the restrictive practices are used with the pupil is included in his/her School Positive Behaviour Support Plan. The guidelines below are followed which include constant monitoring and review.

The Board of Management takes seriously its duty of care to pupils, employees and visitors noting that:

The paramount concerns are for the safety and welfare of the pupils in our school as well as for the safety and welfare of the adults who look after them. Therefore, we will aim to implement our duty of care to all affected by our work at all times.

Legal Framework

The policy is based on guidance from the following:

- Education and Welfare Act 2000
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) (Amendment) Regulations 2007, (as well as other statutes and standards)
- Children First Guidance 2011
- Department of Education Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017
- Guidelines for Schools on Supporting Students with Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties – An information guide for Primary Schools: DES 2013

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- NCSE (2015) Policy advice paper No. 5: Supporting children with ASD in schools

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies and structures:

- Child Safe Guarding Statement
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Admissions and Enrolment
- Health and Safety
- Intimate Care Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Aims and objectives:

- To provide clear guidelines to staff, pupils and parents/guardians regarding the use of restrictive practices in our school, including the use of time out of class and withdrawal from class
- To create a culture within the school of where there is minimal use of restrictive practices where any restricted practices used are: the least restrictive possible, used for the shortest duration possible and proportionate to the presenting risks.
- To promote the children's development of effective relationships, mood management and interpersonal skills.
- To develop individual proactive strategies (outlined in the pupil's School Based Positive Behaviour Support Plan), where applicable, that reduce the likelihood of challenging behaviour occurring and manage its impact on the child/others if/when it does occur.
- To ensure that parent(s)/guardian(s) are consulted and consent to the ways in which their child's behaviour is supported while at school.
- To adopt and maintain a low arousal approach throughout the school, keeping the environment as calm as possible.
- To manage serious incidents if they occur.
- To reduce the risks associated with serious incidents such as injuries to pupils, staff or others or serious damage to property.

Section 1: Physical Contact

There are times when physical contact is used in school, such as patting a child in affirmation, administering first aid and meeting intimate care needs. However, our duty of care to others means that it may on occasion be necessary to use physical contact to restrain a child who is putting themselves or another person at risk of injury. This policy governs the use of these practices.

The following table, *which is not exhaustive*, outlines the circumstances where physical contact may be used in school.

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
Curriculum	Reassurance/ Comfort	Intimate Care/ First Aid/Safety	Non-Contact Restrictions/ Containment	Use of Physical Intervention/ Force
PE/ Games	Pat on arm for praise/ reassurance	Cleaning cuts	High handles or coded access on doors	Disengaging from a grab/ hair pull
Music	Holding hand of upset child or to prevent absconding	Toileting	Locks on cleaning cupboards or lunch cupboards	Escorting a resisting pupil to a safer location
Drama	High Fives	Lifting a child down from a height	Fences around playgrounds	Breaking up a fight/ blocking a pupil's path
Sensory Programmes	Hugs	Dressing/ personal hygiene	Harnesses on transport	Restraint
Physical Prompting to support learning	Sitting on laps (very young children)	Taking a dangerous object from a child	Prevention from participating in certain curricular activities that may pose unacceptable risks	Withdrawal

Categories 1 through 3 and are necessary in order to take care of and teach our pupils and are not considered to be restrictive. Categories 4 and 5, however, *are* restrictive and require careful thought and consideration before being employed by staff. ***Any use of such restrictions will be discussed with the Principal and agreed with parents.***

Section 2: Prevention

Navan Educate Together National School seeks in the first instance to be proactive at all times to prevent and minimise the need to use physical interventions and restrictive practices by employing de-escalation strategies and environmental alterations as follows:

1. De-escalation Strategies

Sensory breaks, calm stance and facial expression of staff, careful use of tone of voice and choice of words by staff, change of staff, distraction/diversion, use of humour, negotiation, offering choices, outlining limits/boundaries, positive reminders, planned ignoring, reassurance, short tasks only, time given to process/cool down, verbal supports, visual schedules, praise, use of rewards, close supervision.

2. Environmental Alterations

Comfort areas, pupil support rooms, sensory break rooms, 1:1 teaching areas, access to preferred activities where possible, access to preferred or skilled staff where possible, timetables organised to minimise risks, reduced pupil/staff ratios, increased access to specialist staff, opportunities provided to 'burn off energy', fixed furniture in some areas, high handles on some doors, locks on some doors, reduced access to equipment in some rooms, coded access to front door and staff room, fenced in playgrounds

3. Pupils with Positive Behaviour Plans (see Section 3) are prioritised for meetings with staff and parents to discuss and review prevention strategies.

Section 3: Positive Behaviour Plans

These are devised for pupils assessed as being of greatest risk of needing restrictive physical interventions, with advice acquired from multi-disciplinary support services as appropriate/available.

This plan should ideally contain the following:

- a brief history of the pupil
- a brief outline of likes/dislikes and known triggers
- a functional assessment of the behaviour using information from several sources such as parent(s)/guardian(s), previous staff, carers.
- a multi-element behaviour support plan outlining environmental alterations, direct interventions, skills teaching and reactive strategies
- de-escalation strategies to employ when behaviours start to occur
- recommended physical interventions which may be employed when de-escalation strategies are unsuccessful or not possible
- planned reviews of any recommended restrictive practices
- a list of persons to whom the plan needs to be communicated

It should be signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) and Principal, Teacher(s) and SNA(s).

SECTION 4: The Certified Training System in use in Navan Educate Together National School is 'Pivotal MAPA® - Management of Actual or Potential Aggression'

The Pivotal MAPA® programme provides comprehensive behaviour management solutions for mainstream and special needs education.

Pivotal MAPA® builds skills in prevention and de-escalation strategies, including Pivotal Scripted Interventions, managing behavioural risk using MAPA® disengagements and holding skills, and important Restorative Approaches which support a positive school culture. Pivotal MAPA® helps schools address the national Use of Force Guidance through a unique risk assessment model that strengthens professional decision making.

Pivotal MAPA® training:

- Is BILD and CPD accredited that prioritises Care, Welfare, Safety, and SecuritySM as underpinning values.
- Improves staff confidence, knowledge, morale and skills in the classroom and throughout the school when faced with a range of behavioural situations.
- Enhances the calm, consistent behaviour of adults working in schools.
- Includes a range of flexible and versatile approaches for children of all ages in all settings.
- Promotes a consistent approach and language across the school, building a positive culture around pupil behaviour.
- Decreases risks during behavioural incidents through practice of verbal scripts to prevent escalation, as well as safe handling responses for incidents involving physical aggression, including fights.
- Helps schools consider the national Use of Force Guidance and respond to risk behaviour through a unique decision-making model.

Teaching and SNA staff undertake 15 hours face to face training led by qualified in house trainer with a refresher course undertaken every two years. The courses are specifically designed to meet the school's needs in this area. A list of trained staff and tutors is available from the Principal.

SECTION 5: The following persons are authorised to use restraint in the Navan Educate Together National School in the circumstances outlined below:

A. Unforeseen or Emergency Situations:

Where an unforeseen or emergency situation arises e.g., a child suddenly tries to climb over a fence or run out on a road, or attempts to hurt another unexpectedly – **all staff** must use their judgement and take appropriate action to safeguard pupils or staff whilst calling for assistance from trained staff.

B. Pupils with Positive Behaviour Plans:

Navan Educate Together National School will endeavour to ensure that staff with up-to-date training and knowledge of the pupil's plan are available to these pupils. In the event that this is not possible any staff member should take appropriate action to safeguard the situation whilst calling for assistance from trained staff.

SECTION 6: Deciding whether or not to use restraint

Navan Educate Together National School endeavours to encourage staff to **STOP AND THINK** before employing a physical intervention as follows:

ACT	BALANCE	CHOOSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt a calm, non-threatening stance and posture• Use a slow controlled voice• Give clear verbal directions• Pause and allow time for compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The likely outcomes if force is used against the likely outcomes if it is not• Short term risks versus long term risks• Best interests of the child against the best interests of other children and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persons who are most likely to succeed• Best place available• Best time available• Minimum use of force necessary to achieve the desired result

SECTION 7: Last resort/Early Intervention

Some children many display patterns of behaviour which alert staff to a developing crisis. Early action may prevent a risk of injury, thus justifying the use of the physical intervention. In the case that the school does not have the staff to support the pupil's current outburst or the outburst does not abate, parents will be called to support the school to manage the situation.

Sometimes a child cannot manage in a classroom setting for a variety of reasons and needs to be withdrawn to allow teaching and learning to continue for the rest of the pupils. This can happen in two ways:

- 1. Time Out** – This may be used informally for pupils who need time or space to calm/cool down, e.g., child is encouraged or prompted to move to another table, chair or designated classroom area for a short period of time or may be sent 'on a message'. The purpose of this is to divert or distract the pupil.
- 2. Withdrawal/Comfort** – This may be used to move a child to another place outside of the classroom where he or she is continually supported or monitored by staff either inside or outside the area the child is in. This may involve physically intervening to move the child and/or preventing the child from leaving the area until staff consider that it is safe to do so. Staff must continuously attempt to distract or divert the child and return the child to his or classroom as soon as it is safe to do so. This may take some time if the pupil demonstrates that he/she requires a break from activities that he/she finds over-stimulating. Doors are not secured in this instance. *A Positive Behaviour Plan agreed with parents is needed for this intervention if physical interventions are required to move the pupil from the classroom.* The purpose of this is to safeguard pupils and staff in situations that have the potential to be high risk to themselves or others.

The class teacher, special education teacher and the SNA will collaborate with parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding all aspects of their child's education, care and

management. The school will endeavour to keep parents informed in a manner that is reasonable and in the best interest of the child. This will take place in the form of face-to-face meetings, phone calls, communication journals, emails and letters.

The school's Code of Behaviour applies to all pupils.

SECTION 8: Post Incident Review Process

Following an incident, the priority is to look after the pupils and staff involved before reports are filled out and reviews held.

Incident Report

Incident reports should be filled out by the staff involved following the use of restraint. The best time to fill out an incident report is when the situation has settled.

The form is then checked by the Principal to decide if any follow up action is required to provide any further care or reassurance to pupils or staff, to review the interventions used by staff and to inform any future recommendations.

The incidents are recorded in the Pupil's Positive Behaviour Plan and will be discussed with parents.

SECTION 9: Review Procedures

This policy will be subjected to periodic review, in the light of changing information and in consultation with the wider community.

Implementation Date

This policy will apply once ratified by the BOM.

Ratification

This policy is circulated to all staff members and displayed on the school website.

Ratified by the Board of Management on **14th April 2021**

Signed: **Anthony Mackey (Chairperson of BoM)**

Review Dates: