

## 1.13A PHYSICAL HANDLING IN EARLY YEARS AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL SETTINGS

### Background

Cuckoo Meadow pre-school aims to help children take responsibility for their own behaviour. This can be done through a combination of approaches which include:-

- Positive role modelling
- Planning a range of interesting and challenging activities
- Setting and enforcing appropriate boundaries and expectations
- Providing positive feedback

However, there are very occasional times when a child's behaviour presents particular challenges that may require physical handling. This policy sets out expectations for the use of physical handling.

### Definitions

There are three main types of physical handling.

*Positive handling:* The positive use of touch is a normal part of human interaction. Touch might be appropriate in a range of situations.

- Giving guidance to children (such as how to hold a paintbrush, or when climbing)
- Providing emotional support (such as placing an arm around a distressed child)
- Physical care (such as first aid or toileting).

Staff at Cuckoo Meadow exercise appropriate care when using touch. There are some children for whom touch would be inappropriate such as those with a history of physical or sexual abuse, or those from certain cultural groups. Our policy is not intended to imply that staff should no longer touch children.

*Physical intervention:* Physical intervention can include mechanical and environmental means such as stair gates or locked doors. These may be appropriate ways of ensuring a child's safety.

*Restrictive physical intervention:* This is when a member of staff uses physical force intentionally to restrict a child's movement against his or her will. In most cases this will be through the use of the adult's body rather than mechanical or environmental methods. This guidance refers mainly to the use of restrictive bodily physical intervention and is based on national guidance. (see appendix 1 of the hard copy of this policy)

### Principles for the use of restrictive physical intervention

#### Positive behaviour management approaches

At Cuckoo Meadow pre-school, restrictive physical handling is used in the context of positive behaviour management approaches.

We only use restrictive physical intervention in extreme circumstances. It is not the preferred way of managing our children's behaviour. Physical intervention is used in the context of our well established and well implemented positive framework. We always aim to do all we can in order to avoid using restrictive physical intervention. However there are clearly rare situations of such extreme danger that create an immediate need for the use of restrictive physical intervention. In these circumstances it can be used with other strategies such as saying "stop".

#### Paramountcy.

Cuckoo Meadow pre-school will only use restrictive physical intervention when staff believe its use is in the child's best interests.

#### Duty of care

Staff at Cuckoo Meadow have a duty of care towards the children. When children are in danger of hurting themselves, others or of causing significant damage to property, staff have a responsibility to intervene. In most cases, this involves an attempt to divert the child to another activity or a simple instruction to "stop!" However, if it is judged as necessary, staff may use restrictive physical intervention.

#### Reasonable minimal force

When physical intervention is used, staff at Cuckoo Meadow will use as little restrictive force as necessary in order to maintain safety, and for as short a period as possible.

### **When can restrictive physical intervention be used?**

Restrictive physical intervention can be justified when:

- Someone is injuring themselves or others
- Someone is damaging property
- There is suspicion that, although injury, damage or other crime has not yet happened, it is about to happen.

Duty of care means that staff might use restrictive physical intervention if a child is trying to leave the site and it is judged that the child would be at risk. Staff would also use other protective measures, such as securing the site and ensuring adequate staffing levels. This duty of care also extends beyond the site boundaries: when staff have control or charge of children off site.

Cuckoo Meadow pre-school recognises that there may be times when, restrictive physical intervention is justified but the situation might be made worse if it is used. In this situation staff would not use it, but would do something else (like issue an instruction to stop, seek help, or make the area safe) consistent with their duty of care.

The aim in using restrictive physical intervention is to restore safety, both for the child and those around him or her. Restrictive physical intervention is never used out of anger, as a punishment or as an alternative to measures which are less intrusive and which staff judge would be effective.

### **Who can use restrictive physical intervention?**

At Cuckoo Meadow, we aim to use a member of staff who knows the child well to be involved in a restrictive physical intervention. This person is most likely to be able to use other methods to support the child and keep them safe without using physical intervention. In an emergency, anyone can use restrictive physical intervention as long as it is consistent with our policy.

Where individual children's behaviour means that there is a probable need to use restrictive physical intervention, our pre-school will identify staff that are most appropriate to be involved. We ensure that such staff have received appropriate training and support in behaviour management as well as physical intervention. The staff and children's physical and emotional health is an important consideration when such plans are made.

### **What type of restrictive physical intervention can and cannot be used?**

At Cuckoo Meadow pre-school any use of physical intervention is consistent with the principle of reasonable minimal force. When it is judged that restrictive physical intervention is necessary, staff :-

- Aim for side-by-side contact with the child. Avoid positioning themselves in front (to reduce the risk of being kicked) or behind (to reduce the risk of allegations of sexual misconduct).
- Aim for no gap between the adult's and child's body, where they are side by side. This minimises the risk of impact and damage.
- Aim to keep the adult's back as straight as possible.
- Beware in particular of head positioning, to avoid head butts from the child.
- Hold children by "long" bones, i.e. avoid grasping at joints where pain and damage are most likely.
- Ensure that there is no restriction to the child's ability to breathe. In particular, this means avoiding holding a child around the chest cavity or stomach.
- Avoid lifting children.

We do not use seclusion (which is where children are forced to spend time alone in a locked room). Restrictive physical intervention is not used to bring children to, or hold them in, time-out.

There may be situations where it is necessary for staff to receive specific training in the use of restrictive physical intervention. Where this is the case, we only seek this training through a model that is accredited by BILD (British Institute of Learning Disabilities). See Appendix 2 of the hard PLA copy of this policy . Staff also have access to appropriate refresher training.

### **Planning**

In an emergency, staff at Cuckoo Meadow do their best within their duty of care and using reasonable minimal force. After an emergency the situation is reviewed and plans for an appropriate future response are made based on a risk assessment which considers:-

- What the risks are
- Who is at risk and how
- What can be done to manage the risk

The risk assessment is used to help write the individual behaviour plan that is developed to support a child. If this behaviour plan includes restrictive physical intervention it will be just one part of a whole approach to supporting a child's behaviour. The behaviour plan should outline:-

- An understanding of what the child is trying to achieve or communicate through their behaviour
- How the environment can be adapted to better meet the child's needs
- How the child can be taught and encouraged to use new, more appropriate behaviours
- How the child can be rewarded when he or she makes progress
- How staff respond when the child's behaviour is challenging (responsive strategies).

### **Responsive strategies**

Cuckoo Meadow pre-school pays particular attention to responsive strategies. There are a range of approaches such as humour, distraction, relocation and offering choices which are direct alternatives to using restrictive physical intervention. Responsive strategies are chosen in the light of a risk assessment, which considers:-

- The risks presented by the child's behaviour
- The potential targets of such risks
- Preventive and responsive strategies to manage these risks.

Cuckoo Meadow pre-school will draw from as many different viewpoints as possible when it is known that an individual child's behaviour is likely to require some form of restrictive physical intervention. In particular, the child's parents/carers will be involved with staff from the pre-school who work with the child and any visiting support staff (such as Area SENCOs, Educational Psychologists, Portage Plus workers, the Behaviour Support Team, Speech and Language Therapists and Social Workers). The outcome from these planning meetings will be recorded and signature will be sought from the parent/carer to confirm their knowledge of the planned approach. These plans will be reviewed at least once every four to six months, or more frequently if there are major changes to the child's circumstances.

### **Recording and reporting**

At Cuckoo Meadow any use of restrictive physical intervention is recorded<sup>1</sup>. This is done as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident. According to the nature of the incident, the incident is noted in other records, such as the accident book or child tracking sheets. See Appendix 3 of the PLA hard copy of this policy (copies of this form are kept in the pre-school r.p.i. file)

After using restrictive physical intervention, Cuckoo Meadow pre-school informs the parents by phone (or by letter or note home with the child if this is not possible). Parents are given a copy of the record form.

### **Supporting and reviewing**

It is distressing to be involved in a restrictive physical intervention, whether as the person doing the holding, the child being held, or someone observing or hearing about what happened. At Cuckoo Meadow, after a restrictive physical intervention, support is given to the child so that they can understand why they were held. A record is kept about how the child felt about this where this is possible<sup>2</sup>. Where appropriate, staff may have the same sort of conversation with other children who observed what happened. In all cases, staff wait until the child has calmed down enough to be able to talk productively and understand this conversation. If necessary, an independent member of staff will check for injury and provide appropriate first aid.

Support is given to the adults who were involved, either actively or as observers. The adults are given the chance to talk through what has happened with the most appropriate person from the staff team.

The key aim of after-incident support is to repair any potential strain to the relationship between the child and the adult that restrained him or her. After a restrictive physical intervention, staff consider reviewing the individual behaviour plan so that the risk of needing to use restrictive physical intervention again is reduced.

### **Monitoring**

Cuckoo Meadow pre-school committee review this policy annually. The committee has the opportunity to seek support from the Area SENCO where appropriate. Monitoring the use of restrictive physical intervention helps identify trends and therefore helps develop our pre-school's ability to meet the needs of our children without using restrictive physical intervention.

### **Complaints**

The use of physical intervention can lead to allegations of inappropriate or excessive use. Where anyone (child, carer, staff member or visitor) has a concern, this is dealt with through the pre-school's usual complaints procedure.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Cuckoo meadow Pre-school

Held on .....

Signed on behalf of the pre-school .....

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- <sup>1</sup> The records will show: who was involved (child and staff, including observers); the reason physical intervention was considered appropriate; how the child was held; when it happened (date and time) and for how long, any injury or subsequent distress, and what was done in relation to this.
- <sup>2</sup> There is guidance on how to do this in Appendix 4 (copies are kept in the pre-school r.p.i. file) Staff should support the child to help them record their views.